



**Center for Strategic and International Studies**

**Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy**

1800 K Street, N.W. • Suite 400 • Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 1 (202) 775-3270 • Fax: 1 (202) 457-8746

Email: [BurkeChair@csis.org](mailto:BurkeChair@csis.org)

# **Iraq's Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War**

**Anthony H. Cordesman**

**Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy**

**[acordesman@aol.com](mailto:acordesman@aol.com)**

**With the Assistance of Eric M. Brewer and Sara Bjerg Moller**

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## Executive Summary

The rising insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide Iraq and thrust it into full-scale civil war. It dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has become 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.

In military terms, the insurgency has evolved into a “long war,” or war of attrition that has produced ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq's army. It is a conflict with no clear end and which can either gradually fade if the Iraqi political process and development of Iraqi forces succeeds; or suddenly divide the country in ways that no amount of Coalition effort may be able to avoid.

There is no clear or meaningful difference between insurgency and civil war, or between largely national terrorism and civil war for that matter. They are all forms of civil conflict. The insurgency in Iraq, however, has evolved over time in ways that increase the risk of intense or full-scale civil war. It is increasingly driven by sectarian and ethnic struggles, rather than national movements and causes.

The forces in the insurgency include a number of different elements. Shi'ite and Kurdish groups now dominate the government. Their militias and Shi'ite and Kurdish dominated elements of the Iraqi forces do, however, play a role in what is already a low-level civil conflict. They would play a far greater role if Iraq drifts into the kind of civil war that divides the country. There are Sunni insurgency movements, most with Ba'ath origin, that are more secular and nationalist in character, and concerned with Sunni rights and preventing Shi'ite dominance. These groups probably have a large base of popular Sunni support, but have been increasingly overshadowed by the Islamist extremists.

The current violence is dominated by Sunni Islamist extremists who oppose any negotiations or arrangement with the new Iraqi government and compromise with Coalition forces. These extremists now focus more on attacking Shi'ites, Kurds, and those Sunnis who support the new government or who might participate in the political process than on Coalition forces. Nonetheless, they still attack Coalition, diplomatic, NGO, and other non-Iraqi targets. They are seeking to force the US and its allies to withdraw from Iraq, and to defeat them through a war of attrition, but their primary goal is to prevent Iraq from emerging as unified national state dominated by a Shi'ite majority

This report provides an overview of both how the Iraqi insurgency has moved towards civil conflict from its inception in the spring of 2003 through the first months of 2006, and of the ways in which insurgent tactics and methods have changed over time. It is divided into five general sections.

- The first section examines Iraq under the rule of Saddam, the immediate post-war aftermath and the development of a violent insurgency in the spring and summer of 2003. It chronicles the insurgency's inception and how it has evolved from 2003 until 2006 and examines Coalition operations to counter it.
- The second evaluates insurgent patterns of attacks, and Coalition and Iraqi casualties. It also examines insurgent tactics, methods of attack, and the political, psychological and informational warfare lessons from 2003-2006.

- The third section assesses the composition of the insurgency including Iraqi Sunni Arabs (both “Islamists and “Nationalists”), foreign jihadists, and the uncertain status of the Shi’ites. It also addresses the degree to which these factions cooperate or conflict and the role of Iraqi’s neighbors in the insurgency.
- The fourth considers Iraqi views of the threat.
- The fifth and final section offers an assessment of probable outcomes of the conflict and lessons of the war.

## **Trends in the Fighting and the Risk of More Intense Civil War**

The insurgency remains highly sectarian and highly regional. It not only is driven by a relatively small number of Sunni insurgents, it is concentrated in a limited portion of Iraq. Some 83% of the attacks from August 29, 2005 through January 20, 2006 occurred in only four of Iraq’s 18 provinces, although these provinces do include Baghdad and Mosul and have some 43% of the population. Twelve provinces, with over 50% of Iraq’s population, have been the scene of only 6% of the attacks.

At the same time, the insurgents have shown a consistent capability to attack at two major levels of operations: First, through a wide range of constant low-level methods that have a serious cumulative effect. Second, through large attacks designed to capture media attention, intimidate and kill the government’s supporters, and prevent any form of normalization by provoking Shi’ite and Kurdish response and a more intense civil war. The attacks on Shi’ite targets have increasingly led to Shi’ite reprisals and broader Sunni anger and fear in response.

If one looks at the cycles in the evolving struggle, there are no clear signs that the struggle is being lost or won. For example, the number of attacks peaked to some 700 per week in October 2005, before the October 15<sup>th</sup> referendum on the constitution compared to 430 per week in mid-January. This was more a function of insurgent efforts to peak operations in sensitive periods than any outcome of the fighting. Similarly, the number of US killed has averaged some 65 per month since March 2003. The total of US killed was 96 in October 2005, 84 in November, 68 in December, and 63 in January 2006.<sup>i</sup> This reflected shifts in the cycles of attacks and in their targets. US experts estimated that some 500 Iraqis were killed between the December 15, 2005 elections and mid-January 2006, an “average” period in US casualties.<sup>ii</sup>

The key issue is not so much the intensity of the fighting, but whether the more extreme Sunni Islamists can paralyze or defeat the political process and intensify the level of civil conflict on all sides.

### **Trends in Late 2005**

US and MNF-I officials provided the following summary of trends at the time of the December 2005 elections.

- Despite predictions of major violence, there were relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the October 15, constitutional referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital’s 1,200 polling stations were attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty. Violence returned in late October, and shows no sign of leveling off before the December elections.
- Sunni participation in the December 15, 2005 was higher than during the constitutional referendum and Sunni turnout in the October referendum was higher than anticipated. Most political parties did, however, divide along sectarian and ethnic lines. The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats and the final results for the election awarded the following numbers to the main parties: United Iraq Alliance (Shi’ites) 128 seats, Kurdish coalition 53, The Iraqi List (Secular “Allawi list”) 25, Iraqi Accordance Front (Sunnis)

44; Iraqi front for National Dialogue (Sunni) 11. Among the major parties, the Shi'ites won 47% of the 275 seats; the Kurds won 19%, the Sunnis won 20%, and Allawi's secular nationalist won 9%.

- According to CENTCOM, 90 percent of the insurgency was Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower.<sup>iii</sup> While relatively small, this foreign element was recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.
- Insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces began to increase dramatically during the final months of 2004. This trend continued into 2005, when, following the January 30 elections, insurgents began to go after softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than the well trained and well equipped US forces.
- An increase in attacks on Iraqi security forces coincided with an increase in attacks on infrastructure targets. Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attacks in recent months. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005.
- Targeted political assassinations also appeared to be increasing during the summer and fall of 2005. Popular targets include local political and religious leaders, the heads of local police forces and ministry officials from Baghdad. These attacks intensified in the weeks leading up to December 15 elections.
- In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. There appeared to be an up-turn in these assassinations in late summer and early fall 2005. The number of insurgent attacks against mosques and religious gatherings also increased during this period.
- As has happened in the past before elections, an upsurge in violence in late November 2005 marked a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the Iraqi political process, specifically the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections. But the escalation of sectarian violence was also in response to the November 13 discovery of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry building in Baghdad. The US discovery of a secret torture center administered by Shi'ite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.
- Attacks against foreigners in Iraq were on the rise. Insurgents resumed their kidnappings of foreigners in the fall of 2005, after almost a year of calm. During October and November, insurgents kidnapped at least seven foreigners (2 Moroccans; 2 Canadians; 1 Brit; 1 American; and 1 German). The tactic appears to have peaked in late 2004 however.

### **Trends in Early 2006**

The December 15, 2005 election did no more to stabilize the situation and limited the insurgency than the transfer of power from the CPA to the Iraqi interim government in June 2004, or any of the other elections that followed. MNF-I intelligence estimates that the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi forces, Iraqi civilians and acts of sabotage rose by 29% in 2005. The total rose from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005.<sup>iv</sup> These attacks have had a relatively consistent average success rate of 24% (attacks that cause damage or casualties.)<sup>v</sup>

Put differently, the average number of attacks per month in the Coalition count (which tended to sharply undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians) rose from an average of around 750 in late 2004 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in October 2005, and was 2,500 in December 2005. The average had been well over 2,000 per month from April 2004 onwards.<sup>vi</sup>

At the same time, MNF-I data do reflect a continuing shift towards attacks on Iraqis, rather than Coalition troops. A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%.<sup>vii</sup> US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. The number of U.S. casualties also dropped because the

insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it had become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

The GAO summarized the status of the insurgency as follows in testimony to Congress on February 6, 2006,<sup>viii</sup>

The insurgency intensified through October 2005 and has remained strong since then. As we reported in March 2005, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—grew in complexity, intensity, and lethality from June 2003 through early 2005.<sup>5</sup> According to a February 2006 testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, insurgents are using increasingly lethal improvised explosive devices and continue to adapt to coalition countermeasures...enemy-initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure increased in number over time. The highest peak occurred during October 2005, around the time of Ramadan and the October referendum on Iraq's constitution. This followed earlier peaks in August and November 2004 and January 2005. According to a senior U.S. military officer, attack levels ebb and flow as the various insurgent groups—almost all of which are an intrinsic part of Iraq's population—rearm and attack again.

As the administration has reported, insurgents share the goal of expelling the coalition from Iraq and destabilizing the Iraqi government to pursue their individual and, at times, conflicting goals.<sup>7</sup> Iraqi Sunnis make up the largest portion of the insurgency and present the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. In February 2006, the Director of National Intelligence reported that the Iraqi Sunnis' disaffection is likely to remain high in 2006, even if a broad, inclusive national government emerges. These insurgents continue to demonstrate the ability to recruit, supply, and attack coalition and Iraqi security forces. Their leaders continue to exploit Islamic themes, nationalism, and personal grievances to fuel opposition to the government and recruit more fighters.

According to the Director, the most extreme Sunni jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq, will remain unreconciled and continue to attack Iraqi and coalition forces. The remainder of the insurgency consists of radical Shi'ite groups, some of whom are supported by Iran, violent extremists, criminals, and, to a lesser degree, foreign fighters. According to the Director of National Intelligence, Iran provides guidance and training to select Iraqi Shi'ite political groups and weapons and training to Shi'ite militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks. Iran also has contributed to the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by enabling Shi'ite militants to build improvised explosive devices with explosively formed projectiles, similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

### **Changing Patterns in Attacks on Iraqi and Coalition Targets**

These trends scarcely mean the insurgency is "winning," although it is hard to dismiss the risk that it may be able to paralyze political progress and create a more intense civil war. The previous data show that insurgency has not been able to increase its success rate, establish sanctuaries, win larger-scale military clashes, or dominate the field. It is active largely in only four of Iraq's 18 governorates. (Some 59% of all US military deaths have occurred in only two governorates: Al Anbar and Baghdad.)<sup>ix</sup> Much of its activity consists of bombings of soft civilian targets designed largely to provoke a more intense civil war or halt the development of an effective Iraqi government, rather than progress towards control at even the local level. So far, the insurgency has done little to show it can successfully attack combat-ready Iraqi units, as distinguished from attacks on vulnerable casernes, recruiting areas, trainees or other relatively easy targets.

The insurgents have, however, learned and adapted through experience. They have shown the ability to increase the number of attacks over time, and they have hit successfully at many important political and economic targets. Provoking civil war and undermining the Iraqi political process may not bring the insurgents victory, but it can deny it to the Iraqi government and the

US. The Sunni insurgents continue to strike successfully at politically, religiously, and ethnically important Shi'ite and Kurdish targets with suicide and other large bombings.

The insurgents have continued to carry out a large number of successful killings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions. These have included a significant increase in the number of successful attacks on Iraqi officials, Iraqi forces, and their families. Well over 2,700 Iraqi officials and Iraqi forces were killed in 2005. The Department of Defense estimated that 2,603 members of the Iraqi forces had been killed in action by October 2005, far more than the 1,506 members of US forces that had been killed in action up to that date.<sup>x</sup> The insurgents continue to succeed in intimidating their fellow Sunnis. There is no way to count or fully assess the pattern of such low level attacks, or separate them from crime or Shi'ite reprisals, but no one doubts that they remain a major problem.

Suicide attacks have increased, and killed and wounded Iraqis in large numbers. The number of car bombs rose from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005, the number of suicide car bombs rose from 133 to 411, and the number of suicide vest attacks rose from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005.<sup>xi</sup> In case after case, Shi'ite civilians and Sunnis cooperating with the government were successfully targeted in ways designed to create a serious civil war.

The use of roadside bombs (improvised explosive devices IEDs) remains a major problem for US and other Coalition forces. The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. While the success rate of IED attacks dropped significantly, from 25-30% in 2004 to 10% in 2005, they still had a major impact. During 2005, there were 415 IED deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths, or 61.6 % of all combat deaths. IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941, some 71.6% of the wounded. From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 US service members out of a total of 369 total combat deaths, or 63.4%. They accounted for 2,314 wounded out of 2,980 total combat wounded, or 77.7 %.

To put these numbers in perspective, IEDs caused 900 deaths out of a total of 1,748 combat deaths, or 51.5 % during the entire post-Saddam fall from March 2003 and January 2006. IEDs caused 9,327 wounded out of a total of 16,606 or 56.2%.<sup>xii</sup> However, the numbers of personnel killed and wounded by IEDs are scarcely the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped but the number of attacks has gone up. IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt operations, disrupt economic and aid activity, and interact with attacks on Iraqi civilians and forces to limit political progress and help try to provoke civil war.

One other point is worth noting. There is no evidence as yet that Iraq is somehow a unique "magnet" for global terrorist activity. It certainly has a powerful political and ideological impact, and is a key source of Arab and Islamic anger. The number of foreign volunteers remains so limited, however, that Iraq must be regarded as just one of several areas of Islamic extremist activity – others include Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Chechnya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, and Yemen.

### **The Economic Side of the Insurgency**

The insurgents have also continued to be successful in attacking the Iraqi economy and the Coalition aid effort, as well as human targets. They have often paralyzed aid efforts, particularly in Sunni or mixed areas where such efforts might win over current or potential insurgents. They have forced a massive reprogramming of aid into short-term, security-oriented activity, and well over 20% of aid spending now goes simply to providing security for aid activity. The attacks have done much to discourage or reduce investment and development even in the more secure

governorates, and have blocked or sharply limited efforts to renovate and improve Iraq's infrastructure. They have largely prevented efforts to expand Iraq's oil exports -- its key source of government earnings.

Insurgents had carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicates that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600-700. His breakdown of the number of attacks was: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and 1 tank farm. In addition, there were at least sixty-four incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq's petroleum sector, ranging from high ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100.<sup>xiii</sup>

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

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

### **The Changing Risk of Civil War**

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

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

More than 12 million Iraqi's voted in the December 2005 election. Sunni turnout increased markedly from the January elections. In Nanawa and Salah ad Din, it grew from 17% and 19% respectively to 70% and 98%. In al-Anbar Province it grew from 2% in January to 86% in December. Nationally, voter turnout was 77%, an increase from 58% in January.<sup>xviii</sup> Of the 1,985 election complaints received by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, only 3% were considered to have possibly affected the results. These complaints amounted to no more than 1% of the total vote, which was voided and excluded from the final count.<sup>xix</sup>

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

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

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

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

The key issues involved include:

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



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

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

### **A New Focus on Attacks on Religious Shrines**

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

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

Even so, the destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi'ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq. In the five days that followed, some estimated that over 1,000 Iraqis were killed, that some 300 Sunni and Shi'ite mosques came under attack, and the country seemed to be on the brink of a large-scale civil war.<sup>xx</sup> The Iraqi government and MNF-I have put these totals at one-third to one-half these "worst case" estimates, but the fact is that no precise numbers exist, and sectarian attacks have continued in the weeks that followed.

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

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

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

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

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

The violence resulted in the announcement by the dominant Sunni party that it would suspend talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands. The immediate attention given to these demands by the Iraqi government, and a telephone call from President Bush to the leaders of the seven major political factions urging them to reinstitute talks, brought Sunnis back

to a meeting with their Shi'ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of "terrific political symbolism."<sup>xxxix</sup>

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

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

## **Insurgent Tactics and Goals**

If one turns to the tactical level, many of the trends are clearer. The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated moves with well-organized cells. It is extremely difficult to attack and defeat because it does not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy within the larger movements. The larger movements seem to have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or even small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.

- The insurgency has effectively found a form of low technology "swarm" tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a counter. It can move slowly, in cycles, and episodically, concentrating on highly vulnerable targets at the time of its choosing. Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can "swarm" slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to "swarm" against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.
- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against. It takes advantage of substantial popular support in Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics

deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.

- The insurgency attacks above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are also designed paralyze the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

The Shi'ite and Kurdish side of the insurgency assumes a far more indirect role, and is more an actor in the low-level civil war than a player in the insurgency, but presents a serious problem. Shi'ite elements of the local police and Ministry of the Interior are attacking Sunnis and committing serious abuses. The Kurds are exploiting their control of the three provinces that made up the Kurdish enclave under Saddam Hussein in ways that give them advantages over other ethnic groups in the region, and present the threat of soft ethnic cleansing in the area of Kirkuk. The inclusiveness of the national government is at risk, as is the effort to create truly nation Iraqi forces.

## **Probable Outcomes**

The positive side is that Shi'ite, Kurdish, and some key Sunni leaders still actively work for a united Iraq. More and more Iraqi forces are coming on-line, playing an active role, and taking over their own battlespace. The insurgency so far lacks major foreign support, although it does get limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign fighters. It does not have the support of most Shi'ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population.

*If* Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, *if* the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and *if* the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

The negative side is that there is a serious risk of full-scale civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi'ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi'ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi'ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

In short, the odds of insurgent success at best are even. Iraq could degenerate into full-scale civil conflict or remain divided and/or unstable for some years to come. There already is limited popular support in the US and Britain for a continued military role and major new aid programs, and continued political turmoil or serious civil war could make a continued Coalition presence untenable and drive US and British forces out of Iraq. It seems likely that the US will have to

slow its plans to reduce its military presence, adjust to new threats, and intensify its efforts to shape effective security and police forces if it is to deal with the growing risk of civil conflict during the period in which the new government must come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution -- a period which now seems likely to last until at least September of 2006.

Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitutional referendum and need for action on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will drive Iraq's political and religious leaders and various elements of the Iraqi forces into warring Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions. Even the most committed leaders may be forced to abandon the search for a national and inclusive political structure if sectarian and ethnic fighting escalates out of control. Those that do not, may be replaced by far more extreme voices.

The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi'ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Sunnis, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

## **The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk**

Whatever happens, the US and its allies need to consider the lessons of the "war after the war" in Iraq. One key lesson is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about "lessons," as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. "Oil spots," "hearts and minds," "Special Forces," walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

### **The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment**

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalitions' side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid "Phase IV" and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the "waste" of US troops on "low priority" missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated," and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency where it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall Saddam's regimes, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, failed to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency has legitimate causes, and chose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi'ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to be preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

### **The Limits of "Oil Spots"**

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is useful if it simply means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

At a different level, however, "oil spots" are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Iraq is not atypical of many insurgencies in the fact that the key areas where insurgencies are active are also centers of ethnic and sectarian tension, and that the insurgency within these areas is also a low-level civil war.

In cities like Baghdad and Mosul, the most important potential "oil spots," it simply is not practical to try to separate the constant risk of more intense civil conflict from defeating the insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has intensified in spite of local security efforts, and a concept that ultimately failed in Vietnam is in many ways simply not applicable to Iraq.

Neither option can really be chosen over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country -- where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethnic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be

difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in sectarian and ethnic based insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot solve either the security or political problem without a local ally's aid.

### **The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques**

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea even for the warfighting part of the conflict. This is particularly true when the insurgency is far more "human-centric" than net-centric and when insurgency is mixed with civil ethnic and sectarian conflict

For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practice, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia choose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated by modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.<sup>xxx</sup>

The same is true of the British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different targets at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the



counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "counterinsurgency," "small wars," "a modular army," and "pacification" come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning that in many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

### **The "Undrainable Swamp"**

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents' incentives to join civil society. In short, to "drain the swamp."

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In Iraq's case, in Vietnam, and in many other cases, the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, "crusader," or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from its own. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can also take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power-set of local political movements drives the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will

generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.

### **The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion**

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are “simple, quick and wrong.” History shows all too clearly that this “simple, quick and wrong” approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, “a triumph of hope over experience.” The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a “worst case” or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed or because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

### **The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unattended Consequences"**

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the “fog of war” evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by the “law of unintended consequences.” Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis is based on what we think we know going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political,

social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges, think tanks and universities during the Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

### **The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play, the Counterinsurgency Game**

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all—even if this does mean years of instability and accepting the uncertainties of civil conflict

It is far easier to blunder into a war like the Iraq War than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency, and civil conflict, downplay economic and security risks, and mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said "USA Water," while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the "Investor's Journal" in Vietnamese and English. This was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

### **Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?**

This raises another lesson the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to play it, particularly if the nation is divided along sectarian, ethnic, or tribal lines in ways where there is no clear "good side" or positive force for change. Robert Osgood made the point a long time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself if they had known when the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms. Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

No nation is every likely to stay a “failed nation.” This does not mean, however, that the US can “fix” any given country in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world’s worst problems are its most tragic problems, but this does not mean that the US can decisively change them with affordable amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform. If anything, Iraq is a warning that the US does not know how to measure and characterize the risks of intervention, is not structured to combine nation building and counterinsurgency on a massive scale, and cannot impose its system and values on another people unless they actually want them. In retrospect, the US could almost certainly have done far more good spreading the same resources among the nations and peoples where they would have had real benefits, and by concentrating on the wars it actually had to fight.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that give both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer in future crises may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, *and alternative means* honestly and in depth.

### **Counterinsurgency Does Not Always Mean Winning**

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point in “staying the course” through a major Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn’t a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

### **Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives**

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host

government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose. You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you can't lose, having no limits, and then losing. This should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.

### **If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting**

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency in a weak and divided nation. If the US must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, civil war and ethnic and sectarian conflict, and risks that will require more forces and resources. If such "long wars" are too costly relative to the value of the objective, the US must set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them -- regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

### **The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.**

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. To some extent, it will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can't figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must do far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can't deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

### **Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets**

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any

aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now spent or committed its way through nearly \$20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can't protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post-March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" has been illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is irrelevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don't win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

### **Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures**

The US announced on February 4th that its new Quadrennial Defense Review was based on a strategy of long wars, and an enduring conflict with terrorists and Islamist extremists. As the Iraq War and so many similar conflicts have shown, "long wars" can also take the form of long nation buildings, long stability operations, and long counter insurgencies. This means they can only be fought with patience, over a period of years, and with sustained investment in terms of US presence, military expenditures, and aid money.

In the case of Iraq, virtually every senior officer and official came to realize by 2005 that a short campaign plan had failed to prepare the US and Coalition for a meaningful effort, helped create a serious insurgency, and led to a situation that cost thousands of additional killed and wounded and meant tens of billions of additional dollars were needed to have any chance of success. Talk of major reductions in US forces moved to end-2006, and many experts talked about 2007. Most senior serving officers privately talked about a major advisory and combat support effort through 2010. A "three month" departure had turned into what threatened to be a decade-long presence *if* the US and its allies were to succeed. Estimates of total costs in the hundreds of billions of dollars that senior officials in the Bush Administration had dismissed in going to war had already become a reality, and the US was well on its way to a war that would cost at least 3,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

The message is clear. Any plan for counterinsurgency and stability operations must include years of effort, not months. Spending plans for military operations and all forms of aid must be shaped accordingly. The American tendency to begin operations with the same plan for immediate success -- "simple, quick, and wrong" -- needs to be replaced with an honest assessment of the fact that history takes time. The tendency to oversell the ease of operations, demand quick and decisive success, is a natural one for both policymakers and senior military officers. It is also a path to failure and defeat. At best, it is likely to be paid for in unnecessary body bags and billions of dollars.

### **Honestly Winning the Support of the American People**

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush Administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda lose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and its allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn't a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US "spins" each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don't end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President's term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executors, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

## Lessons for Warfighting

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lessons about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn't matter how well the war went last month; it doesn't matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don't know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority.** It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Mahdi's victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn't a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don't win. Technology doesn't win.



- **Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it.** The character of America's political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think *they* can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth, although the US does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with “toys.”** Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: twin IR sensors, shaped charges, radio-controlled devices, and foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.
- **Fifth, the force must have the right balance of numbers and expertise.** Many have argued since the beginning of the Iraq War that the Coalition needed far more manpower for stability operations. This is a solution to some problems, where a simple security presence will deter terrorism and the growth of an insurgency. It is, also, however, a dangerous illusion in other cases. Large numbers of forces that will never have the right language and area skills with any serious proficiency, which lack the necessary specialist training, and have a different culture and religion will simply compound local resentments and the feeling the US or US-led force is at best an occupier and at worst an enemy. “Stabilizers” can easily become targets, and deployed large numbers of forces means more incidents with the local population, more problems in getting the host country to take responsibility, the growth of more rear-area military bureaucracy, and dealing with large number of no or little-purpose troops that need to be protected.

At the same time, too few ordinary troops can be equally dangerous, particularly in establishing initial security and presence. Small elites cannot do large or routine jobs. There must be enough military and civilians in country to establish basic security. There is no point in wasting Special Forces, translators, military police, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism experts, civil-military experts and other scarce elite forces in “presence” and “support” missions.

Finding the right balance will be difficult and case specific, and must deal with contingency risks and not simply the outcome policymakers and military planners want. The key to success is to fit the force to the case, and not to the desire or the doctrine.

- **Sixth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner.** If it is true that the US can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it doesn’t mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior or the ministry of finance, just doesn’t work.

In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. Incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices

- **Seventh, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on “democracy.” In most of the world, “legitimacy” has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability, a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don't win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

- **Eighth, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaff the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn't require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to “civilianize” some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier that is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, human-centric warfare does not mean “super-soldiers” or super-intelligence officers. Military forces -- and the civilian support needed for stability operations, nation building, and counterinsurgency -- do need better training in the nature of such operations, local languages, and local cultures. *But*, military forces and civilians that are outstanding is a dangerous illusion. Effective operations require both adequate force quality and adequate force quantity, and the

understanding that most people are, by definition, "average." Elites are an essential part of military operations, but only a part.

This demand for elites and super-intelligence officers is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn't important? Of course it doesn't; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.

## Table of Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
SADDAM HUSSEIN'S "POWDER KEG" .....	2
AMERICA'S STRATEGIC MISTAKES .....	4
<i>Failure at the Grand Strategic Level</i> .....	4
<i>A Litany of Lesser Mistakes</i> .....	5
<b>II. THE EVOLVING NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY.....</b>	<b>8</b>
DENIAL AS A METHOD OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE.....	8
BASELINE/POST-CONFLICT: 1 MAY 2003 – FALL 2003 .....	9
THE INSURGENCY BECOMES SERIOUS: FALL TO END 2003 .....	11
SERIOUS FIGHTING IN THE PRE-TRANSFER OF POWER PERIOD: WINTER-SPRING 2004 .....	12
PRE-SOVEREIGNTY: 1 APRIL – 28 JUNE 2004 .....	12
EARLY SOVEREIGNTY: 29 JUNE – 26 NOVEMBER 2004 .....	13
<i>Shifts in the Nature of the Insurgency</i> .....	13
<i>More Attacks on Iraqis</i> .....	14
<i>Estimating the Impact of the Insurgency through October 2004</i> .....	15
THE COURSE OF THE INSURGENCY IN EARLY 2005.....	16
<i>The Uncertain Impact of the January 30, 2005 Election</i> .....	17
<i>A New Resurgence of Sectarian Violence</i> .....	18
<i>Warnings that Iraqi Forces Could Feed the Insurgency</i> .....	20
<i>The Overall Trends in the Insurgency During 2004</i> .....	23
A NEW RISE IN THE VIOLENCE -- POST-SOVEREIGNTY: APRIL 28, 2005-OCTOBER 14, 2005 .....	24
<i>A Shi'ite-Kurdish Government Becomes a Natural Target</i> .....	25
<i>Warnings About Iraqi Forces and the Ministry of Interior</i> .....	28
COALITION AND IRAQI GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGNS IN THE SUMMER AND WINTER OF 2005 .....	28
OPERATION IRON FIST, RIVER GATE AND STEEL CURTAIN (OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2005) .....	32
THE PERIOD BEFORE THE ELECTIONS: OCTOBER 15, 2005-DECEMBER 15, 2005 .....	33
THE DECEMBER 15 ELECTION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INSURGENCY.....	35
POST-ELECTION: DECEMBER 16, 2005-ONWARD .....	40
<i>The Attack on the Askariya Shrine and the Increase of Low-Level Civil Conflict</i> .....	42
<i>Soft Sectarian Cleansing and Internal Displacement</i> .....	46
<i>US-Iraqi Campaigns in Early 2006</i> .....	47
<i>Efforts at a National Unity Government</i> .....	48
THE COURSE OF THE INSURGENCY TO DATE .....	50
<b>III. PATTERN OF ATTACKS.....</b>	<b>53</b>
SUMMARY ATTACK PATTERNS .....	53
TOTAL IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE (IED) BOMBINGS, VEHICLE BORNE BOMBINGS (VBIEDs), AND SUICIDE BOMBINGS .....	59
SABOTAGE AND INFRASTRUCTURE ATTACKS .....	65
<i>Coalition Casualties</i> .....	72
<i>US Casualties</i> .....	76
PATTERNS IN IRAQI FORCES AND GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES .....	79
<i>MNF-I/US Estimates</i> .....	79
<i>Iraqi Government Estimates</i> .....	79
PATTERNS IN IRAQI CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.....	82
<i>NGO Estimates: Iraqi Body Count</i> .....	82
<i>Iraqi Government Estimates</i> .....	82
<b>IV. EVOLVING TACTICS .....</b>	<b>86</b>

POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND INFORMATION WARFARE.....	86
METHODS OF ATTACK AND COMBAT .....	107
OVERALL PATTERNS.....	119
<b>V. CHARACTERIZING THE INSURGENCY .....</b>	<b>122</b>
THE REGIONAL, SECTARIAN, AND ETHNIC NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY .....	125
ESTIMATES OF TOTAL INSURGENT FORCES .....	130
THE IRAQI INSURGENCY VS. OTHER INSURGENCIES .....	131
COMPARISONS OF INSURGENT AND IRAQI FORCES .....	133
THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY PROBLEM .....	133
<i>Insurgent Intelligence Capabilities</i> .....	133
<i>Counterintelligence and Iraqi Government Efforts</i> .....	134
FINANCING THE INSURGENCY .....	135
THE ROLE OF CRIME AND CRIMINALS .....	136
<i>The Impact of Crime on the Insurgency</i> .....	137
<i>The Strength of Criminal Activity</i> .....	138
<b>VI. THE DOMINANT ROLE OF IRAQI SUNNI ARAB INSURGENTS.....</b>	<b>139</b>
THE AREAS OF MAJOR SUNNI INSURGENT INFLUENCE .....	141
SUNNI ISLAMIST EXTREMIST AND NEO-SALAFI VS. "NATIONALIST" INSURGENTS .....	142
THE NATURE AND ROLE NEO-SALAFI AND ISLAMIST EXTREMIST GROUPS .....	143
<i>An Addiction to Violence and Extremism</i> .....	143
<i>Guessing at Their Strength</i> .....	144
KEY ISLAMIST EXTREMIST GROUPS .....	146
<i>The State Department Estimate</i> .....	146
<i>Other Estimates</i> .....	147
<i>The Crisis Group Estimate</i> .....	148
AL QA'IDA IN THE TWO RIVERS AND THE "ZARQAWI FACTOR" .....	149
<i>The Zarqawi Organization Structure and Its Strength</i> .....	150
<i>The Zarqawi Hunt</i> .....	153
<i>Zarqawi Ties to Bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups</i> .....	156
<i>Zarqawi and Attacks on Sunnis and Civilians</i> .....	156
<i>The Zarqawi "War" Against Shi'ites</i> .....	159
<i>"Overkill" Against Fellow Muslims and the "Iraqization" of Al Qa'ida</i> .....	160
<i>Zarqawi and Syria</i> .....	162
<i>Expanding the Battle: Operations Outside Iraq</i> .....	162
<i>Zarqawi and "Weapons of Mass Media"</i> .....	167
OTHER SUNNI ARAB INSURGENT GROUPS: THE "NATIONALISTS?" .....	168
<i>Planning Before, During, and Immediately After the War?</i> .....	168
<i>The Motives of the More "Nationalist" Insurgents</i> .....	170
<i>Ba'athists, Non-Ba'athists, or Semi-Ba'athists?</i> .....	170
<i>Other "Nationalist" Sunni Insurgents</i> .....	171
<i>The Search for Power and the Possibility of Dialogue</i> .....	172
TENSIONS AND CLASHES BETWEEN SUNNI "NATIONALISTS" VERSUS SUNNI "ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS?" .....	172
<i>Divisions Over Playing a Role in the Political Process</i> .....	173
<i>Iraqi Government Negotiations with "Nationalist" Insurgents</i> .....	175
THE ROLE OF SUNNI ARAB MILITIAS.....	177
<i>The Positive Side of the Militia Story</i> .....	179
<i>The Negative Side</i> .....	180
ASSESSING THE FUTURE POTENTIAL OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY .....	180
<i>The "Nationalist" Need for Compromise</i> .....	181
<i>The "Islamist" Need for Civil War</i> .....	181
<b>VII. THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .....</b>	<b>183</b>
THE UNCERTAIN NUMBER, SOURCE, AND ROLE OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .....	183

NUMBER AND NATIONAL ORIGIN OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .....	184
<i>Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study</i> .....	188
SYRIA AND FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .....	190
IRAN AND FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .....	191
<b>VIII. THE UNCERTAIN STATUS OF THE SHI'ITES .....</b>	<b>193</b>
SHI'ITE FACTIONS AND THE VARIOUS MILITIAS .....	193
<i>Uncertain Links Between the Shi'ite Militias and the Government</i> .....	195
<i>The Role of the Badr Organization</i> .....	195
<i>Death Squads and Mystery Killings</i> .....	196
<i>Links to the Iraqi Police and Special Security Forces</i> .....	197
THE ROLE OF MOQTADA AL-SADR .....	199
<i>The Rise and Temporary Fall of the Mahdi Militia</i> .....	200
<i>Resurgence in 2005</i> .....	200
<i>Sadr, the December 2005 Elections, and the New Government</i> .....	201
<i>Sadr, Iran, and Iraq</i> .....	202
<i>Sadr and the Attack on the Askariya Shrine</i> .....	202
<i>Sadr, Civil War, the US, and the Coalition</i> .....	203
INTERNAL SHI'ITE DIVISIONS .....	204
INSURGENT PRESSURE ON THE SHI'ITES TO MOVE TOWARD CIVIL WAR .....	204
<i>Accelerating Violence in 2005</i> .....	204
<i>Violence in 2006</i> .....	207
<b>IX. THE KURDS AND OTHER MINORITIES .....</b>	<b>209</b>
KURDISH PARTIES AND THE KURDISH MILITIAS .....	209
TENSIONS BETWEEN THE KURDS AND OTHER IRAQIS .....	209
UNCERTAIN KURDISH UNITY .....	211
THE PROBLEM OF RESOURCES AND OIL .....	212
THE TURKISH QUESTION .....	212
<b>X. THE ROLE OF OUTSIDERS IN THE INSURGENCY .....</b>	<b>214</b>
CREATING A "SHI'ITE CRESCENT"? .....	214
THE VIEWS OF THE ARAB GULF STATES .....	215
A CLASH WITHIN A CIVILIZATION? .....	215
<i>The Problem of Syria</i> .....	216
<i>The Problem of Iran</i> .....	222
<i>The Problem of Turkey</i> .....	228
<i>The Problem of Jordan</i> .....	228
<b>XI. IRAQI VIEWS OF THE THREAT .....</b>	<b>230</b>
IRAQ'S VIEW OF THE THREAT .....	230
IRAQI PUBLIC OPINION POLLS .....	231
<i>Iraqi Attitudes After the Invasion</i> .....	231
<i>Iraqi Attitudes in October 2005</i> .....	232
<i>Iraqi Attitudes in Early 2006</i> .....	236
<i>Iraqi Attitudes Towards Iraqi Forces and US Withdrawal and Military Assistance</i> .....	236
THE IMPACT OF IRAQI OPINION ON THE INSURGENCY; 2006 AS A TIPPING YEAR IN THE "LONG WAR"? .....	239
<i>Hardline Insurgents Act Independently of Iraqi and Iraqi Sunni Popular Opinion</i> .....	239
<i>For Some, Joining the Political Process Can Be a Tactic to Support the Insurgency</i> .....	240
WHAT THE ELECTIONS DID AND DID NOT SHOW ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE INSURGENCY VERSUS IRAQI	
POLITICAL UNITY .....	241
<i>Indicators: Voting in the four most troubled provinces where the insurgency has the most support (Anbar, Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Diyala)</i> .....	242
<i>Indicators: Nationalist versus Sectarian and Ethnic Parties</i> .....	243
<i>Indicators: Voting in the Kurdish Areas</i> .....	244

<i>Non-Indicators: Shi'ite Intentions and Unity</i> .....	244
PUBLIC OPINION, THE INSURGENCY, AND THE FRAGILE STRUCTURE OF IRAQI POLITICS IN 2006.....	246
<i>Other Factors Shaping Attitudes Towards the Insurgency and Government</i> .....	246
<i>Insurgent Capability to Exploit the Lack of Popular Support for the US and Coalition Forces</i> .....	249
<i>Iraqi Attitudes Towards Security by Region, Sect, and Ethnicity</i> .....	249
<i>Support for Insurgent Actions Outside Iraq</i> .....	251
<i>Sunni versus Shi'ite Differences Over Other Aspects of Iraqi Life</i> .....	252
<i>Implications for the Future</i> .....	254
<b>XII. PROBABLE OUTCOMES AND THE LESSONS OF WAR</b> .....	<b>256</b>
THE LESSONS OF COMPLEXITY, UNCERTAINTY, AND RISK.....	257
<i>The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment</i> .....	257
<i>The Limits of "Oil Spots"</i> .....	259
<i>The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques</i> .....	260
<i>The "Undrainable Swamp"</i> .....	261
<i>The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion</i> .....	262
<i>The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unattended Consequences"</i> .....	262
THE LESSON OF STRATEGIC INDIFFERENCE; OF KNOWING WHEN TO PLAY -- AND WHEN NOT TO PLAY, THE COUNTERINSURGENCY GAME .....	263
<i>Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?</i> .....	264
<i>Counterinsurgency Does Not always Mean Winning</i> .....	265
<i>Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives</i> .....	265
IF THE US MUST FIGHT A COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN, IT MUST FOCUS FIRMLY ON THE STRATEGIC, POLITICAL, AND ALLIED DIMENSION OF THE FIGHTING.....	266
<i>The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting</i> .....	266
<i>Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets</i> .....	266
<i>Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures</i> .....	267
HONESTLY WINNING THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE .....	267
LESSONS FOR WARFIGHTING .....	268
<b>ENDNOTES</b> .....	<b>2</b>

## Table of Figures

FIGURE II. 1: ILLUSTRATIVE PATTERNS IN TARGETING AND CASUALTIES: SEPTEMBER 2003-OCTOBER 2004.....	16
FIGURE II.2: INSURGENT ATTACKS BY KEY TARGET: JANUARY 2004-JANUARY 2005.....	24
FIGURE II.3: THE KEY URBAN AREAS IN THE INSURGENCY .....	32
MAP II.1: GOVERNORATE BOUNDARIES .....	36
FIGURE III.4: DECEMBER 2005 ELECTION RESULTS: COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES .....	37
FIGURE III.5: PERCENTAGE OF VOTE WON BY FOUR MAJOR COALITION PARTIES IN EACH OF IRAQ'S 18 PROVINCES. .....	38
FIGURE III.1: ATTACKS BY IRAQI GOVERNORATE OR PROVINCE: AUGUST 29, 2005 TO JANUARY 20, 2006.....	55
FIGURE III.2: APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MAJOR ATTACKS PER MONTH: JUNE 2003-FEBRUARY 2005 .....	56
FIGURE III.3: AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS BY TIME PERIOD: JANUARY 2004 – JANUARY 2006.....	57
FIGURE III.4: TOTAL AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS VERSUS EFFECTIVE ATTACKS BY TIME PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2004 – NOVEMBER 2005 .....	58
FIGURE III.5: PATTERNS OF IED ATTACKS: JANUARY 2004 TO OCTOBER 2005 .....	61
FIGURE III.6: US IED DEATHS: JULY 2003 TO JANUARY 2006.....	62
FIGURE III.7: PATTERNS IN CAR BOMBINGS AND SUICIDE BOMBINGS: MAY-OCTOBER 2005 – PART ONE.....	63
FIGURE III.8: PATTERNS IN CAR BOMBINGS AND SUICIDE BOMBINGS: MAY – OCTOBER 2005 – PART TWO .....	64
FIGURE III.9: PERCENT OF CAR BOMBS INTERCEPTED/DEFUSED: APRIL 2005 – JANUARY 2006.....	65
MAP III.1: IRAQI OIL FIELDS AND PIPELINES.....	69
FIGURE III.10: AVERAGE MONTHLY ATTACKS ON INFRASTRUCTURE BY TIME PERIOD .....	70
FIGURE III.11: AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS ON INFRASTRUCTURE BY TIME PERIOD: JANUARY 1, 2004 – JANUARY 20, 2006 .....	71
FIGURE III.12: CASUALTY PATTERNS IN IRAQI AND COALITION FORCES OVER TIME .....	73
FIGURE III.13: COALITION DEATHS BY COUNTRY AND MONTH: MARCH 2003 TO JANUARY 2006.....	74
FIGURE III.14: COALITION CASUALTIES BY IRAQI GOVERNORATE OR PROVINCE .....	75
FIGURE III.15: US CASUALTIES IN THE IRAQ WAR: TOTAL KILLED VS. WOUNDED, MARCH 2003-FEBRUARY 6, 2006.....	77
FIGURE III.16: US CASUALTIES IN THE IRAQ WAR: KILLED VS. WOUNDED, MARCH 2003-FEBRUARY 6, 2006.....	78
FIGURE III.17: AVERAGE DAILY IRAQI MILITARY AND OFFICIAL CASUALTIES BY MONTH: JANUARY 2004-SEPTEMBER 2005 .....	81
FIGURE III.18: IRAQI FATALITIES BY CITY: MARCH 2003-FEBRUARY 2005.....	84
FIGURE III.19: TOTAL IRAQI MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CASUALTIES BY MONTH: JANUARY 2005-JANUARY 2006.....	85
MAP V.1: ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES .....	126
FIGURE V.1: THE REGIONAL AND SECTARIAN NATURE OF THE FIGHTING, TOTAL ATTACKS BY PROVINCE: AUGUST 29-SEPTEMBER 16, 2005 .....	128
FIGURE V.2: REGIONAL AND SECTARIAN NATURE OF THE FIGHTING, DAILY ATTACKS BY PROVINCE: AUGUST 29, 2005-JANUARY 20, 2006.....	129
FIGURE V.3: RATIOS OF INSURGENTS TO POPULATION AND GUERRILLAS TO UNDERGROUND MEMBERS .....	132
FIGURE VI.1: ZARQAWI'S NETWORK IN 2005.....	152
MAP VI.1: TRIBES AND SUBTRIBES OF IRAQ .....	178
FIGURE VI.2: FOREIGN MILITANTS IN IRAQ .....	187
FIGURE VI.3: SAUDI MILITANTS IN IRAQ AS OF SEPTEMBER 2005 .....	188
FIGURE XI.1: IRAQI PERCEPTIONS OF INSURGENTS .....	233
FIGURE XI.2: IRAQI SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE IN THE IRAQI ARMY .....	235
FIGURE XI.3: IRAQI ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ IN EARLY 2006.....	238
FIGURE XI.4: ARE LOCAL CONDITIONS GOOD? CHANGE IN RESULTS FROM 2004 TO 2005 .....	242
FIGURE IX.5: IRAQI POLITICAL DIVISIONS BY IRAQI ETHNIC GROUP AND ARAB RELIGIOUS SECT .....	248
FIGURE IX.6: IRAQI PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY BY AREA.....	251
FIGURE IX.7: MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DETERMINING ATTITUDE TOWARDS US IN 2005 .....	252
FIGURE IX.8: IRAQI ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE US AID EFFORT IN IRAQ .....	254



## Maps

Map II.1: Governorate Boundaries .....	36
Map III.1: Iraqi Oil Fields and Pipelines .....	69
Map V.1: Ethnic Distribution and Political Boundaries.....	126
Map VI.1: Tribes and Subtribes of Iraq .....	178

# I. Introduction

The rising insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide Iraq and thrust it into full-scale civil war. It dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has become 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.

In military terms, the insurgency has evolved into a “long war,” or war of attrition that has produced ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq’s army. It is a conflict with no clear end and which can either gradually fade if the Iraqi political process and development of Iraqi forces succeeds; or suddenly divide the country in ways that no amount of Coalition effort may be able to avoid.

There is no clear or meaningful difference between insurgency and civil war, or between largely national terrorism and civil war for that matter. They are all forms of civil conflict. The insurgency in Iraq, however, has evolved over time in ways that increase the risk of intense or full-scale civil war. It is increasingly driven by sectarian and ethnic struggles, rather than national movements and causes.

The forces in insurgency include a number of different elements. Shi’ite and Kurdish groups now dominate the government. Their militias and Shi’ite and Kurdish dominated elements of the Iraqi forces do, however, play a role in what is already a low-level civil conflict. They would play a far greater role if Iraq drifts into the kind of civil war that divides the country. There are Sunni insurgency movements, most with Ba’ath origin, that are more secular and nationalist in character, and concerned with Sunni rights and preventing Shi’ite dominance. These groups probably have a large base of popular Sunni support, but have been increasingly overshadowed by the Islamist extremists.

The current violence is dominated, however, by Sunni Islamist extremists who oppose any negotiations or arrangement with the new Iraqi government and compromise with Coalition forces. These extremists now focus more on attacking Shi’ites, Kurds, and those Sunnis who support the new government or who might participate in the political process than on Coalition forces. Nonetheless, they still attack Coalition, diplomatic, NGO, and other non-Iraqi targets. They are seeking to force the US and its allies to withdraw from Iraq, and to defeat them through a war of attrition, but their primary goal is to prevent Iraq from emerging as unified national state dominated by a Shi’ite majority

This report provides an overview of both how the Iraqi insurgency has moved towards civil conflict from its inception in the spring of 2003 through the first months of 2006, and of the ways in which insurgent tactics and methods have changed over time. It is divided into five general sections.

- The first section examines Iraq under the rule of Saddam, the immediate post-war aftermath and the development of a violent insurgency in the spring and summer of 2003. It chronicles the insurgency’s inception and how it has evolved from 2003 until 2006 and examines Coalition operations to counter it.
- The second evaluates insurgent patterns of attack, and Coalition and Iraqi casualties. It also examines insurgent tactics, methods of attack, and the political, psychological and informational warfare lessons from 2003-2006.

- The third section assesses the composition of the insurgency including Iraqi Sunni Arabs (both “Islamists and “Nationalists”), foreign jihadists, and the uncertain status of the Shi’ites. It also addresses the degree to which these factions cooperate or conflict and the role of outsiders in the insurgency.
- The fourth considers Iraqi views of the threat.
- The fifth and final section offers an assessment of probable outcomes of the conflict and lessons of the war.

### ***Saddam Hussein’s “Powder keg”***

The Coalition must take much of the blame for the way the insurgency has unfolded, but it seems almost certain that the fall of Saddam Hussein would have exposed deep fracture lines in Iraq, almost regardless of how it occurred. Arab Sunni rule over an Arab Shi’ite majority is a key legacy of both the Ottoman Empire and the British “divide and rule” tactics that formed the Iraqi state. The forced inclusion of the Kurds in Iraq, British suppression of a largely Shi’ite rebellion, and the British choice of an expatriate Sunni monarch helped reinforce Sunni control at the expense of the Shi’ites and Kurds. So did the violent suppression of repeated Kurdish uprisings

Iraq’s violent politics further compounded these problems. Although Shi’ites and Kurds did play a role in Iraq’s post monarchy politics, most power struggles were between rival Sunni elites. The defeat of yet another Kurdish rebellion in the mid-1970s helped cement suppression of rival sectarian and ethnic factions by force. So did Saddam’s rise to power. He never tolerated political dissent in any form, and began the bloody purging and suppression of all organized political resistance when he took full power in 1979.

Under Saddam, Iraq came to be ruled by a small, largely rural Sunni Arab elite that used the Ba’ath Party and the state to maintain itself in power. Its economy remained relatively undeveloped; agriculture was never properly modernized or made productive, inefficient state-industries undercut development, as did a rigid state-controlled financial sector and a mix of barriers to trade and outside investment. Worse, the economy effectively became a command kleptocracy where Saddam Hussein used the nation’s wealth to secure power and support his ambitions, and his ruling elite exploited their positions for their own personal benefit.

The nation was impoverished and driven into massive debt in the early 1980s by Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Iran and effort to seize its oil-rich territory in the southwest of Iran. While most of Iraq’s Shi’ites and many of its Kurds remained loyal to the government, some did not. Shi’ite dissidents were ruthlessly punished, and the Kurds whose loyalty was uncertain or tilted towards Iran were attacked, relocated, and often killed. Many Kurdish and Shi’ite conscripts were assigned to Iraq’s low grade infantry units, often acting as little more than a forward defensive shield for Iraq’s Republican Guards and main regular army units.

The politics of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980-1988, were essentially the politics of ruthless repression. Political dissent of any kind became even more dangerous. Kurdish efforts to exploit the war and achieve some degree of autonomy or independence were met with murder, the use of poison gas, and “ethnic cleansing.” Hundreds of thousands of Arab Shi’ites were driven out of the country, and many formed an armed opposition with Iranian support. While most of the remaining Arab Shi’ites remained loyal, their secular and religious leaders were kept under constant surveillance and sometimes imprisoned and killed. The marsh areas along the Iranian border were a key center of the fighting between Iran and Iraq, but still became a sanctuary for deserters and Shi’ite opposition elements.

Eight years of war crippled the development of the nation's economy, infrastructure, education, and efforts to properly develop its oil wealth. In the process, Shi'ite and Kurdish regions took far more serious cuts in civil spending than the major cities and "loyal" Sunni areas.

In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in efforts to solve his economic problems by seizing its oil resources. The result was the Gulf War, a massive military defeat, and a new burden of reparations for the war, and then to more than a decade of UN and international sanctions further crippling every aspect of the nation's development.

Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War in 1991, following its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, did more than further impoverish the country. Uprisings in the Shi'ite areas in the south were suppressed with all of the regime's customary violence and then followed by a mix of repression and low-level civil war that lasted until Saddam was driven from power. While this conflict received only limited attention from the outside world, it often involved significant local clashes between Iraqi government forces and those of Shi'ite opposition movements based in, and backed by, Iran. The post-Iraq War discovery of mass graves of Shi'ite fighters and civilians are a grim testimony to how serious this "quiet" fighting could be. This further divided Shi'ite and Sunni and also left a lasting legacy of anger against the US and Britain for not supporting the uprisings against Saddam and protecting the Shi'ites.

A similar set of uprisings in the Kurdish north created a flood of refugees into Turkey following the defeat of the Kurds. This forced the US to use airpower to protect the Kurds, and create an international aid effort to support them. This gave the Kurds a level of protection the Arab Shi'ites lacked, but left them in a kind of limbo where they had de facto autonomy, but lived with nearly one-third of Iraq's military forces deployed on the edge of their "security zone." Divisions between the two main Kurdish factions led to low-level fighting and even to one faction supporting an attack by Saddam on the other. The end result, however, was to further increase the Kurdish desire for independence, while keeping many dispossessed Kurds out of their original homes in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul.<sup>1</sup>

From 1991 until the Coalition invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein created further problems by encouraging tribal divisions and favoring those tribes and clans that supported his rule and regime. He exploited religion by increasingly publicly embracing Islam, and privately favoring Sunni factions and religious leaders that supported him while penalizing Shi'ite religious leaders and centers he saw as a threat. At the same time, funds were poured into Sunni areas in the West, government and security jobs were given to Sunnis, and scarce resources went into military industries that heavily favored Sunni employment. The result was to distort the economy and urban structure of Iraq in ways that favored Sunni towns and cities in areas like Tikrit, Samarra, Fallujah, Ramadi and other largely loyalist Sunni towns.

Saddam Hussein's regime manipulated rationing, control of imports, and state funds. Saddam corrupted the UN oil for food program for his own benefit, further undercutting economic development, causing serious human hardship, and crippling part of the country's infrastructure and medical services.

The funding of education, medical services, and infrastructure was used as a political weapon in an effort to exploit the suffering of the Iraqi people to break out of UN sanctions. Revenues were used selectively to favor key power centers like Baghdad, and major potential centers of urban unrest, while leaving other areas with limited or no essential services like water, power, and sewers.

Rather than seek to restore and develop the nation's oil and gas wealth, existing fields were overproduced, funds were redirected for the use of the regime, and exports were manipulated to obtain kickbacks and get political support from nations like Syria. These efforts were cloaked by a propaganda campaign blaming the US, UN, outside powers, and UN sanctions for all of the mistakes of the regime.

Iraq's ethnic and sectarian fracture lines were rarely openly apparent, but tensions between the Sunni-dominated ruling elite and the Shi'ites and Kurds became steadily worse. The gaps between the elite and ordinary Iraqi also worsened, and much of the middle class was impoverished. By comparison, Tito's regime in the former Yugoslavia was both progressive and benign. At the time the US-led coalition invaded, Iraq was divided by far greater pressures, and had far less capability for political leadership. It was a time bomb waiting to explode, fueled by both its original heritage of ethnic and sectarian division and by over twenty years of direct misrule by Saddam Hussein.

### ***America's Strategic Mistakes***

The United States made major strategic mistakes in preparing to deal with this situation. It did demonstrate that it could fight the war it planned to fight: a conventional regional war with remarkable efficiency, at low cost, and very quickly. The problem was that it focused on conventional warfare, and driving Saddam from power.

The US failed to realistically plan for, and then execute the other phases of war: conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building. The US chose a strategy whose post-conflict goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and failed to plan for the real nature of "peace" that was certain to follow.

The impact of these failures was compounded after Saddam's fall when it became apparent to Iraqis and the world that the basic rationale for going to war was based on false intelligence estimates and Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction did not exist.

### ***Failure at the Grand Strategic Level***

The worst mistakes, however, were made at the grand strategic level. The Bush Administration and the senior leadership of the US military made the far more serious mistake of wishing away virtually all of the real world problems in stability operations and nation building, and making massive policy and military errors that created much of the climate that allowed the insurgency in Iraq to emerge.

The full chronology of what happened is still far from clear, and it's not yet possible to understand exactly what happened or assign responsibility with full credibility. It is clear, however, that many of the key decisions involved were made in ways that bypassed the interagency process within the US government, ignored the warnings of US area and intelligence experts, ignored prior military war and stability planning by the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), and ignored the warnings of policy makers and experts in other key coalition states like the United Kingdom.

Too much credence was given to ideologues and true believers in the ease with which such a war could be fought and in effective nation building. These included leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized "think tanks." The same was true of various Iraqi exile groups that grossly exaggerated the level of Iraqi popular support for a

“liberating” invasion, the ease with which Saddam Hussein’s regime could be replaced, and underestimated both the scale of Iraqi’s ethnic and sectarian divisions and economic problems.

These problems were compounded by leadership within the Office of the Secretary of Defense that put intense pressure on the US military to plan for the lowest possible level of US military deployment, and then for delays in that deployment because of the political need to avoid appearing precipitous to the UN. At the same time, the leadership of the US military actively resisted planning for, and involvement in, large-scale and enduring stability and nation building activity, and failed to plan and deploy for the risk of a significant insurgency.

### *A Litany of Lesser Mistakes*

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

- A failure to accurately assess the nature of Iraqi nationalism, the true level of culture differences, and the scale of Iraq’s problems. This failure of strategic assessment included the failure to see the scale of Iraq’s ethnic and sectarian differences, its economic weaknesses and problems, the difficulty of modernizing an infrastructure sized more to 16-17 million than the current population of 25-26 million, unrealistic estimates of “oil wealth,” the probable hardcore support for the former regime in Sunni areas, secular versus theocratic tensions, the impact of tribalism, the impact of demographics in a society so young and with so many employment problems, and a host of other real-world problems that became US and Coalition difficulties the moment Coalition forces crossed the border.
- The failure to plan and execute effective broader information operations before, during and after the invasion to win the “hearts and minds of Iraqis,” persuade them that the Coalition came as liberators that would leave rather than occupiers who would stay and exploit Iraq, and that the Coalition would provide aid and support to a truly independent government and state. A secondary failure was not to anticipate and defuse the flood of conspiracy theories certain to follow Coalition military action.
- The failure to create and provide anything approaching the kind and number of civilian elements in the US government necessary for nation building and stability operations. These problems were particular serious in the State Department and other civilian agencies, and much of the civilian capability the US did have was not recruited or willing to take risks in the field.
- The failure to plan and execute efforts to maintain the process of governance at the local, provincial, and central level; to anticipate the risk of government collapse and the risk of looting, and to create a plan for restructuring the military, police, and security forces -- all of which needed to be proclaimed and publicized before, during, and immediately after the initial invasion to win the support of Iraqi officials and officers who were not linked to active support of Saddam Hussein and past abuses, and to preserving the core of governance that could lead to the rapid creation of both a legitimate government and security.
- Broad failures by what a leading officer involved in planning operations in Iraq called “quiescent US military and Intelligence community leaders who observed the distortion/cherry picking of data that lead to erroneous conclusions and poor planning,” but failed to press their case or force the issue.
- Over-reliance on exile groups with limited credibility and influence in Iraq.
- Failure to anticipate and prepare for Iraqi expectations after the collapse of Saddam’s regime, and for the fact that many Iraqis would oppose the invasion and see any sustained US and coalition presence as a hostile occupation.
- Miscalculations about UN support, NATO & coalitions, and transit through Turkey.

- Failing to provide the personnel and skills necessary to secure Iraqi rear areas and urban areas as the Coalition advanced, and to prevent the massive looting of government offices and facilities, military bases, and arms depots during and after the fighting: A process that effectively destroyed the existing structure of governance and security without making any initial effort to replace it. It was not until May 2003, roughly two months after the fall of Baghdad, that a 4,000 man US military police effort was authorized for deployment to Baghdad, and it then took time to arrive. No serious effort to rebuild Iraqi police forces took place until June 2004, in spite of mass desertions right after the fighting and the turmoil caused by disbanding the Ba'ath Party and military and security forces.<sup>2</sup>
- The creation of a small cadre of civilians and military in the Office of Reconstruction and Assistance (ORHA), many initially recruited for only three-month tours. ORHA planned to operate in an Iraq where all ministries and functions of government remained intact. It was charged with a largely perfunctory nation building task, given negligible human and financial resources, not allowed meaningful liaison with regional powers, and not integrated with the military command. Effective civil military coordination never took place between ORHA and the US command during or after the war, and its mission was given so little initial priority that it did not even come to Baghdad until April 21, 2003 -- twelve days after US forces -- on the grounds it did not have suitable security.
- Failing not only to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, but also to deploy elements of US forces capable of dealing with counterinsurgency, civil-military operations, and nation building as US forces advanced and in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the regime. Creating regional commands based on administrative convenience, rather than need, and leaving most of the initial tasks of stability operations and nation building up to improvisation by individual local commanders who had minimal or no expert civilian support.
- Replacing ORHA after the fall of Saddam Hussein with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and suddenly improvising a vast nation building and stability effort, recruiting and funding such an operation with little time for planning, and then attempting to carry out the resulting mission along heavily ideological lines that attempt to impose American methods and values on Iraq.
- Placing the CPA and US commands in separate areas, creating large, secure zones that isolated the US effort from Iraqis, and carrying out only limited coordination with other Coalition allies.
- Staffing the CPA largely with people recruited for short tours and often chosen on the basis of political and ideological vetting, rather than experience and competence.
- This failure was compounded by a lack of language and area skills and training on the part of most US military forces, and intelligence capabilities designed to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT), technical collection, analytic capabilities, and "fusion" centers necessary for stability, counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations.
- A failure to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous.
- Planning for premature US military withdrawals from Iraq before the situation was clear or secure, with major reductions initially planned to begin some three months after the fall of Saddam's regime, rather than planning, training, and equipping for a sustained period of stability operations.
- A failure to react to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces -- a failure that placed a major and avoidable burden on US and other coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile forces.
- Planning for several years of occupation, once the CPA was created, and for a situation where a US-led coalition could improve its own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years -- rather than expedite the transfer of sovereignty back to Iraq as quickly as possible. The record is mixed, but the CPA only seems to have decided to expedite the transfer of sovereignty in October 2003, after the insurgency had already become serious, and its choice of June 2004 for doing so was largely arbitrary. Even then, it failed to make its plans sufficiently convincing to most of the Iraqi people.

Foresight is always far more difficult than “20-20 hindsight.” Many, if not most, of these problems however, were brought to the attention of the President, National Security Council, State Department, Department of Defense, intelligence community and in interagency forums in the summer and fall of 2002. No one accurately prophesized all of the future, but many inside and outside government warned what it might be. The problem was not that the “system” did not work in providing many key elements of an accurate assessment, it was that the most senior political and military decision makers ignored what they felt was negative advice out of a combination of sincere belief, ideological conviction, and political and bureaucratic convenience.

Over time, these failures pushed the US to the limit of the ground forces it can easily deploy. They have helped cause the death of thousands of Americans and other Coalition forces after the fall of Saddam, and led to well over 17,000 wounded. They also helped to kill and wound tens of thousands of Iraqis. They also help make the political problems caused by Iraq's sectarian and ethnic divisions far worse, made Iraq far more vulnerable to outside neo-Salafi Islamist extremist influences, and laid the groundwork for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi governance and military, security, and police forces.

No one can claim that all of these US failures were avoidable, or Iraq would not have had serious problems in any case. The fact remains, however, that most such failures were the result of decisions made at the highest levels of US policy and the direct responsibility of the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and service chiefs.



## **II. The Evolving Nature of the Insurgency**

The mistakes the Coalition made before and during the effort to drive Saddam Hussein from power were compounded by the mistakes it made as the insurgency unfolded. The US-led Coalition initially sought to impose its own rule on Iraq and tried to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force geared to defend Iraq's borders against external aggression.

The Coalition was slow to understand that only an Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces, would be seen as legitimate and avoid growing Iraqi hostility. It failed to understand the scale of the sectarian and ethnic divisions Iraq faced and that it favored Iraqi exiles and the Kurds in ways that push many Sunnis into active opposition.

### ***Denial as a Method of Counter-Insurgency Warfare***

US policymakers and many in the US military initially lived in a state of near-denial about the rise of terrorism and insurgency. The US assumed for much of the first year after the fall of Saddam Hussein that it was dealing with a limited number of insurgents that Coalition forces would defeat well before the election. It did not see the threat level that would emerge if it did not provide jobs or pensions for Iraqi career officers, or co-opt them into the nation building effort.

It was slow to see that some form of transition payments were necessary for the young Iraqi soldiers that faced massive, nation-wide unemployment. The US still failed to acknowledge the true scale of the insurgent threat and the extent to which popular resentment of Coalition forces would rise if it did not act immediately to rebuild a convincing mix of Iraqi military and security forces.

The US failed to establish the proper political conditions to reduce Iraqi popular resentment of the Coalition forces and create a political climate that would ease the task of replacing them with effective Iraqi forces. It failed to make it clear to the Iraqi people that the US and Britain had no economic ambitions in Iraq and would not establish permanent bases, or keep Iraqi forces weak to ensure their control. In fact, Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, the first American Administrator in Iraq, suggested in early 2004 that US forces might remain in Iraq for "the next few decades," adding that securing basing rights for the US should be a top priority.<sup>3</sup>

During the summer and fall of 2003, however Iraqi insurgents emerged as a growing threat with significant popular support in Arab Sunni areas, and developed a steadily more sophisticated mix of tactics. In the process, a native and foreign Islamist extremist threat also developed which increasingly sought to divide Iraq's Sunni Arabs from its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities.

The US was slow to react to the growth of the insurgency in Iraq, to admit it was largely domestic in character, and to admit it had significant popular support. The US military and intelligence effort in the field only began to understand that the terrorist and insurgent threat was serious and growing in the fall of 2003.

Senior US officials and officers kept referring to the attackers as "terrorists", kept issuing estimates that they could not number more than 5,000, and claimed they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists (FRLs) that had little popular support. The US largely ignored the warnings Iraqi opinion polls provided about the unpopularity of the war and Coalition, and claimed that Coalition political, economic, and security efforts were either

successful or would soon become so. In short, the US failed to honestly assess the facts on the ground in a manner reminiscent of Vietnam.

The continuing US focus on "FRLs" also ignored the true nature of the insurgency. The US was dealing with a mixture of Iraqi nationalism, Sunni resentment and anger, popular opposition to any form of Western occupation, and a slowly growing number of foreign and Iraqi neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists. It also faced a lesser but still significant threat from Iraqi Shi'ite Islamist "activists." The problem was broad support, not a small group of "bitter enders."

The US was slow to understand the role of the media. Iraqi and foreign journalists provided an inadvertent (and sometimes deliberate) propaganda arm, and media coverage of insurgent activity and attacks provided a de facto command and communications net to insurgents. This informal "net" provided warning, showed insurgents what tactics did and did not work, and allowed them to coordinate their attacks to reinforce those of other insurgent cells and groups without formal ties or coordination.

The Coalition did not try to create Iraqi forces with the capability to deal with serious insurgency and security challenges for more than a year, and then was slow to put these plans into practice. The US did not attempt to seriously train and equip Iraqi forces for proactive security and counterinsurgency missions until April 2004 – nearly a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein and two-thirds of a year after a major insurgency problem began to emerge.<sup>4</sup> It then took until the fall of 2004 to bring a critical mass of advisors and military aid together for the army. The risk of sectarian divisions within the Ministry of Interior was ignored for far too long and it was not until the fall of 2005 that the Coalition began to understand just how critical the police were as a component of Iraqi forces.

As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush Administration still grossly understated the seriousness of the insurgency in their public announcements, and growing Iraqi hostility to the use of Coalition forces. Administration spokesmen still talked about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many Coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as comprised of at least 12,000-16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension, and growing ethnic tension in the north.

### ***Baseline/Post-Conflict: 1 May 2003 – Fall 2003***

If one looks at the initial pattern of attacks, the insurgency was slow to gather momentum, and initially was dominated largely by former regime loyalists. Most of the early militants seem to have been former Saddam Hussein loyalists (FRLs), or Iraqi Sunni nationalists, with little impact by Iraqi Islamist extremists or foreign jihadists. It was tapes from Saddam Hussein and Ba'athists that urged militants to continue fighting, rather than tapes from Abu Musab Zarqawi, were broadcast around the country. The bulk of the money came from Ba'athist sources, and most training cadres and leaders were still largely FRLs.

Much of the initial violence during May and June 2003 was centered on Fallujah and Baghdad, in the area known as the "Sunni triangle". Attacks against mosques and oil facilities were targets from the start. So was the targeting of local Iraqi officials and recruits. In general, however, the insurgents concentrated on Coalition targets, NGOs, and foreign diplomats.

A chronology of some of the early incidents illustrates both how the insurgency emerged and the types of attacks insurgents carried out in the initial months following the fall of Saddam's regime:

- **May 1, 2003:** President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq. Seven U.S. soldiers were wounded in a grenade attack upon an American base in Fallujah, a stronghold for Saddam Hussein loyalists. Earlier, U.S. troops killed 15 civilians at a protest in the city.
- **May 27, 2003:** Two U.S. soldiers die in an organized attack on an army checkpoint in Fallujah.
- **June 15, 2003:** Hundreds of American soldiers swept through Fallujah in an operation called "Desert Scorpion". The operation is intended to defeat organized Iraqi resistance.
- **June 30, 2003:** Three blasts rock Fallujah. One, at the Al-Hassan mosque, kills a Muslim cleric and six theology students, and injures 15 others. U.S. Central Command reports that "something like an ammunition dump" exploded near the mosque.
- **July 1, 2003:** An explosion destroys a Sunni mosque in Fallujah, killing at least 10 Iraqis, including the chief cleric, and injuring four others. Many Iraqis blame an American missile for the destruction and chant, "America is the enemy of God."
- **July 5, 2003:** An explosion at a police-training center in Ramadi killed seven Iraqi police recruits and wounded 40.
- **July 16, 2003:** Attacks in western Iraq claim the lives of a pro-U.S. mayor and his son.
- **August 7, 2003:** A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.
- **August 15, 2003:** Saboteurs blow up a crude oil export pipeline in northern Iraq, igniting a fire and disrupting oil exports to Turkey.
- **August 19, 2003:** A truck bomb explodes outside U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 were injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers.
- **August 29, 2003:** An explosion at a Najaf mosque kills 95, including one of Iraq's most prominent Shi'ite leaders, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim. Another 125 are wounded.

As time passed, and the insurgents became more organized, the lethality and frequency of attacks increased. There were more attacks on US and Coalition forces, some by members of newly formed militias roaming the streets of Iraq's major cities. Nevertheless, US and Coalition casualties were still limited. A total of 37 US soldiers were killed in May. The death toll for US troops in June was 30. In July the death toll reached 47, but leveled off in August and September to 35 and 30 respectively. The monthly death toll was still only 43 in October, although it suddenly rose to 82 in November, almost doubling from previous months.

The US initially perceived many of the insurgent attacks as part of the normal breakdown in law and order following any war and not as the seeds of an insurgency. It also saw the solution as finding new jobs for the militias rather than dealing with actual insurgent opposition. As a result, the US sometimes focused on crime rather than the insurgents, and the sought to avoid confronting the militias and focused on co-opting them.

Soldiers were under direct orders to only confiscate those weapons they came across while on patrol. A May 5, 2003 article in The Miami Herald described the role of the militias at this time as follows:<sup>5</sup>

Thousands of gunmen appear each Friday in the slum formerly known as Saddam City, with the blessings of some Shi'ite clerics, ostensibly to protect worshipers. Members, who say they answer to the sheiks at the Hikma mosque, claim they're 5,000 to 6,000 strong and on guard against attacks from any leftover Fedayeen Saddam or other Ba'ath Party loyalists.

"I am taking orders from the mosque. I am a soldier," said Samer Elias, 28, a former Iraqi Army infantryman commanding a checkpoint a few blocks from the mosque.

...Kurdish political parties have posted a few armed fighters at their Baghdad offices to inspect all visitors and guard against attack. They're the vanguard of an estimated 30,000 Kurdish forces, roughly 15,000 each in the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, loyal to Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talibani, at times rival warlords for leadership of Kurdish northern Iraq.

...But the best-organized, most evident Iraqi militia is the 1,800-strong Free Iraqi Forces who answer to Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, the Pentagon-backed opposition movement that set up shop at the Iraqi Hunting Club in the desirable Mansour District.

## ***The Insurgency Becomes Serious: Fall to End 2003***

Focused killings of Iraqi officials and recruits, and anti-US/Coalition violence, had clearly become serious by October and November 2003. US forces faced an average of 15-20 attacks per day during this period. The level of sophistication of attacks also increased steadily. The first coordinated suicide bombing occurred in October 2003. The following month, militants shot down two US helicopters. Together, these incidents signaled the start of a much more serious insurgency.

Insurgent attacks during this period included:

- **October 9, 2003:** A suicide bomber drove his car into a police station in Baghdad, killing nine. Two U.S. soldiers die and four are injured in an ambush in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2003:** A suicide car bombing near the Baghdad Hotel killed eight and wounded 32.
- **October 14, 2003:** A suicide car bomb exploded outside the Turkish embassy in Baghdad, killing one Iraqi and wounding at least 13.
- **October 17, 2003:** Three U.S. soldiers and at least seven Iraqis are killed in a gun battle outside the office of a Shia cleric in Karbala.
- **October 19, 2003:** Two American soldiers died in an ambush outside Kirkuk.
- **October 26, 2003:** A rocket hit the Rashid hotel in Baghdad, narrowly missing Paul Wolfowitz, the American deputy secretary of defense. A U.S. colonel died; 18 others were wounded.
- **October 27, 2003:** Four coordinated suicide attacks in Baghdad killed 43 and wounded more than 200. The targets were the headquarters of the Red Crescent (Islamic Red Cross) and three police stations. It was the bloodiest day since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.
- **November 2, 2003:** In the single deadliest strike on U.S. forces since the war began, guerrillas shot down an American Chinook helicopter south of Fallujah, killing 16 U.S. soldiers and injuring 21 others.
- **November 7, 2003:** Six U.S. soldiers died when their Black Hawk helicopter crashed after being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade.
- **November 12, 2003:** A car bomb outside an Italian military police station in Nasiriya killed 18 Italian officers and at least eight Iraqis. The U.S. launched Operation Iron Hammer against suspected Hussein loyalists.
- **November 21, 2003:** A suicide bombing outside the PUK office in Kirkuk killed four.
- **November 29, 2003:** Two U.S. soldiers, seven Spanish intelligence officers, two Japanese diplomats, and a Colombian oil worker died in separate guerrilla attacks.
- **November 30, 2003:** U.S. forces repelled three ambushes on American convoys in Samarra, killing 46 Iraqis and capturing eight.

The capture of Saddam Hussein outside Tikrit in early December 2003 did not reduce the level of insurgent violence. The US death toll for December was 40. By January 31, US fatalities from

the post-combat period numbered 381, compared to 138 from the combat phase of hostilities. Between December and January, insurgents shot down five US military helicopters.

### ***Serious Fighting in the Pre-Transfer of Power Period: Winter-Spring 2004***

The lethality and sophistication of insurgency attacks increased dramatically in February and March 2004, and focused more on ethnic and sectarian targets:

- **February 1, 2004:** 109 people died and 247 are wounded in two suicide attacks during celebrations at the headquarters of two leading Kurdish parties in Irbil. One American soldier was killed and 12 were wounded in a rocket attack. 20 people trying to loot an ammunition dump in southwestern Iraq were killed when the munitions unexpectedly explode.
- **February 10, 2004:** A car bomb exploded outside a police station in Iskandariya, killing at least 55 and wounding up to 65.
- **February 11, 2004:** In yet another attempt to disrupt the creation of security forces, a suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into a crowd of Iraqi Army recruits in central Baghdad, killing at least 47 and wounding 50 others.
- **February 14, 2004:** Roughly 70 guerrillas firing rockets, mortars and machineguns raided police headquarters and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in Fallujah in an effort to free foreign prisoners. 15 policemen, four insurgents and at least four civilians died in the attack. The dead guerrillas appeared to be Lebanese and Iranian nationals. At least 70 prisoners escaped, many – 18 by one account – fled with the attackers.
- **February 23, 2004:** At least 10 people were killed and over 35 injured when a car bomb exploded outside a Kirkuk police station.
- **March 2, 2004:** In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of the war, at least five bombs exploded near Shi'ite religious ceremonies in Baghdad and Karbala as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims packed the streets for the Ashoura ceremony. At least 270 people died; 573 were wounded.
- **March 9, 2004:** Iraqi policemen murdered two CPA officials and their Iraqi translator outside Baghdad. The "targeting killings" were the first American civilian deaths in Iraq.
- **March 23, 2004:** 11 Iraqi policemen were killed in separate attacks in Kirkuk and Hillah.
- **March 24, 2004:** Fallujah continued to be a hotbed of insurgent activity, as attackers ambushed a U.S. military patrol, killing three civilians and wounding two American soldiers.

Local Iraqi security forces, including police recruits, were signaled out for attack, and this initially reduced Coalition casualties. US fatalities for the month of February fell to 21; the lowest since May 2003. But March produced the second highest death toll for US troops-52- since the end of the war.

### ***Pre-Sovereignty: 1 April – 28 June 2004***

By early spring 2004, the insurgency had evolved into a two-pronged offensive. Coalition forces now faced a war on two fronts: against the Sunnis in central Iraq and against the Shi'ites in the south. At the same time, Sunni Islamist extremist groups began to play a more active role, both in terms of attacks and in circulating propaganda, tapes, and training aids.

The Shi'ite threat was largely from the Moqtada al-Sadr, a Shi'ite cleric. In early April, his followers seized control of several cities. Violent clashes between US forces and Shi'ite militias erupted in Kufa, Najaf and Qut.

US forces continued to battle Sunni insurgents in Fallujah and elsewhere in the Sunni Triangle. The period between April and June 2004 was marked by frequent battles between US and insurgent forces and had clearly become guerilla war rather than a terrorist campaign.

The number of attacks against Iraqi civilians decreased noticeably, as insurgents concentrated their efforts on US forces. Because of the growing number of clashes between insurgents and Coalition forces, US fatalities for the month of April increased to 137, more than the previous three months combined. US fatalities for the month of May were 80.

Some of the intensity of the fighting was defused, however, when Sadr endorsed the Iraqi Interim Government and urged his followers to adhere to a previously negotiated ceasefire.

### ***Early Sovereignty: 29 June – 26 November 2004***

The transfer of power from the CPA to the interim Iraqi government did more to intensify the insurgency and broaden the base of insurgent attacks than reduce tension or “legitimize” the appointed Iraqi government.

At least 162 US soldiers were killed in the three months immediately following the June 28 handover; more than the entire number killed during the war itself. Insurgents continued their attacks against Coalition forces into the fall of 2004, killing 81 US soldiers in September and 65 in October. In August, more than 1,100 US troops were injured; the highest monthly total since the start of the US led invasion. Another grim milestone was passed on September 7, 2004, when US military fatalities reached 1,000.

### ***Shifts in the Nature of the Insurgency***

This period was marked by a dramatic increase in the role of Neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremist insurgents. A number of such groups, several pledging allegiance to Zarqawi, emerged during the fall of 2004. There were also signs that the insurgents had penetrated Iraqi security forces. On October 23, insurgents dressed in Iraqi police uniforms killed 49 Iraqi Army recruits as they returned from a training mission with US forces.

The insurgents also increased the number of kidnappings of foreigners in an attempt to get countries to withdraw from the Coalition. In a seven-week period in September and October, 2 Italian aid workers; a Japanese civilian; and the British-Iraqi director of CARE international, in addition to several American and British contractors were kidnapped. Some are released; others are beheaded.

The first major battle between US and insurgent forces, many of which were discovered to be Islamists, also took place during this period. In early November, US and token Iraqi forces entered Fallujah in a major assault designed to rid the city of insurgents. The fighting was sometimes intense and led to the destruction of parts of the city. The insurgents took heavy casualties and were forced to flee the city, but found that Iraqi forces were not yet ready for serious fighting or capable of securing the city and the Iraqi government was not yet capable of establishing an effective presence or governance. The end result undercut much of the impact of Coalition victory and exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and the Shi'ite dominated government.

Despite the Coalition offensive in Fallujah, insurgent activity rose elsewhere in the country. The ongoing insurgent attacks in Baghdad, Mosul, Balad and the Sunni Triangle demonstrated the strength of the Zarqawi network and the Iraqi insurgency. On November 14, Fallujah fell to

Coalition forces. The US military suffered 38 fatalities and more than 245 casualties. Between 1,200-1,600 insurgents were killed. Many more insurgents fled the city prior to the operation. November was the deadliest month for American troops since the invasion. Although 137 US soldiers were killed, fewer than half of them were killed in the Fallujah attack, signaling insurgents were resuming their offensive on US forces everywhere.

Sunni insurgents repeatedly showed they could strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite dominated cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra, in spite of US and Iraqi offensives. Increasingly bold and deadly insurgent attacks killed more than 80 Iraqis in a three-day period in early December.

In one of the more deadly incidents, insurgents attacked a bus of unarmed Iraqi civilian contractors, killing 17. In Baghdad, insurgents struck the Green Zone two days in a row, killing almost twenty and wounding several dozen. On December 15, insurgents attempted to overrun two police stations in Mosul but were repelled by Iraqi police and National Guards. One week later, insurgents mounted a second attack, this time on an Iraqi military outpost in Mosul. The security presence in Mosul remained fragile after 80% of the police force abandoned their post in November due to mounting security fears.

The December 21 bombing of a US military mess tent in Mosul, which killed at least 22 people, including 18 Americans, further demonstrated the reach of the insurgents during the winter 2004. The US death toll for December was 72.

The road from Baghdad to the international airport outside the city became a popular target for insurgents, and a symbol of the Coalition and Iraqi government's problems in bringing security to Iraq in late 2004. Iraqis referred to the route as "Death Street" and "IED alley", while US forces called it "Route Irish."<sup>6</sup> The continued violence in Sunni neighborhoods like Amariya, Hamra, Jihad, and Qaddisiya caused senior officials to use armored buses called "Rhinos" and helicopters when traveling in the area.<sup>7</sup>

### ***More Attacks on Iraqis***

The insurgents stepped up their attacks on Iraqis. In early fall, the Iraqi Health Ministry reported that nearly 3,200 Iraqi civilians had been killed since April. September and October 2004 proved to be particularly bloody months, with more than 34 car bomb attacks throughout the country-the highest monthly total since the US invasion-occurring in September alone. Other attacks during this period included:

- **September 6, 2004:** In Fallujah, a car bomb killed seven US Marines and three Iraqi soldiers.
- **September 7, 2004:** One American soldier and 33 Iraqi insurgents were killed in clashes in Sadr City.
- **September 12, 2004:** 80 civilians were killed by insurgents in a 24 hour period. Many of the attacks were synchronized bombings; a group calling itself Unity and Jihad, which is reportedly led by Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for many of the attacks.
- **September 14, 2004:** A car bomb outside Iraq's Army headquarters in Baghdad killed 47 recruits. 12 policemen were gunned down in drive-by shooting in Baquba. Zarqawi claimed responsibility for both attacks.
- **September 17, 2004:** A suicide car bomb killed at least 13 people near a police checkpoint in Baghdad. Elsewhere in Baghdad, US soldiers clashed with insurgents.
- **September 30, 2004:** Two car bombs ripped through a crowd celebrating the opening of a new sewer plant, killing 41 Iraqis, including at least 34 children; 139 were wounded.

- **October 4, 2004:** Three car bombs – two in Baghdad and one in Mosul – exploded, killing 26 people and injuring 100.
- **October 7, 2004:** Two rockets struck the Sheraton Baghdad hotel.
- **October 10, 2004:** At least 10 Iraqis died in explosions near the oil ministry and police academy. A suicide bomber fatally wounded a U.S. soldier outside the Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2004:** Six American troops died from hostile fire in Baghdad and in Al Anbar Province.
- **October 13, 2004:** Bombs in Baghdad, Mosul and the Al Anbar region killed seven U.S. soldiers.
- **October 14, 2004:** For the first time since the end of the war, insurgents penetrated the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, killing four Americans and six Iraqis.
- **October 15, 2004:** Car bombs near the Syrian border and in Mosul killed five American troops.
- **October 23, 2004:** Insurgents dressed as police officers executed 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq.
- **October 25, 2004:** An explosion near the Australian embassy in Baghdad killed three Iraqi and injured two Australian soldiers.
- **October 28, 2004:** A militant group called “The Army of Ansar al-Sunna” executed 11 Iraqi security officers taken hostage south of Baghdad. The group, which was blamed for numerous beheadings, was an offshoot of Ansar al-Islam.
- **October 30, 2004:** In the deadliest day for American forces in six months, nine Marines were killed and nine more were injured in insurgent attacks in the Al Anbar province. At least 25 Iraqi civilians died from insurgent violence and from reckless fire by Iraqi security forces. Seven died when insurgents attacked the Al Arabiya news network. A previously unknown group calling itself “The 1920 Revolution Brigades” took responsibility for the attack.
- **October 31, 2004:** Insurgents fired a rocket at a Tikrit hotel, killing 15 Iraqis and wounding eight.

### ***Estimating the Impact of the Insurgency through October 2004***

There are no reliable unclassified counts of insurgent attacks and incidents, or of the casualties on both sides during this period. No record seems to have been kept of many cases of individual killings, disappearances, and kidnappings and there is no clear basis for identifying who was responsible or whether insurgent action was involved, or the attack was simply a revenge killing or crime. Estimates of insurgent casualties are tenuous at best, and in all cases involving Iraqis the data that are available tend to focus on deaths and not wounded -- particularly if the wounded did not require hospitalization.

The NGO Coordinating Committee on Iraq did, however, make useful rough estimates of the patterns of attack between September 2003 and October 2004. These patterns seem broadly correct and both illustrate key patterns in the fighting, and the need for competent and combat-capable Iraqi government military, security, and police forces:

- From September 2003 through October 2004, there was a rough balance between the three primary methods of attack, namely improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire, and indirect fire, with a consistent but much smaller number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). Numbers of attacks varied significantly by month. There was a slow decline from well over 400 attacks each by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire weapons, and indirect fire weapons to around 300. There was, however, a slow increase in attacks using VBIEDs.
- Attack distribution varied, with a steadily rising number of attacks in the area of Mosul in the north. Baghdad, however, was the scene of roughly twice as many attacks and incidents as the other governorates,



with 300-400 a month on average. Al Anbar, Salah-al-din, and Ninewah have had roughly one-third to one half as many. Babil and Diyala average around 100 per month, lower levels of attack have taken place in Tamin and Basra.

- Attacks fit a broad pattern during the day, although 60% of the attacks reported are unspecified. Of those that do have a specific time reported, 10% are in the morning, 11% are in the afternoon, and 19% are at night.

A rough estimate of targets and casualties from September 2003 to October 2004 is shown in Figure II.1, and helps illustrate the continuing diversity of the attacks and their targets during the first periods of the insurgency:

**Figure II. 1: Illustrative Patterns in Targeting and Casualties: September 2003-October 2004**

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

### ***The Course of the Insurgency in Early 2005***

The insurgents made new efforts to attack both Iraq political figures and Iraqi forces during the period before the January 30, 2005 election

There were many attacks on election candidates and officials, and several hundred attempted and successful attacks during the campaign. In typical attack on January 16, insurgents try to assassinate Salama al-Khafaji, a candidate for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Khafaji survived the attack, but many other attacks were successful. The US lost 24 men and 60 were wounded in one attack on a mess tent in Mosul on December 21, 2004.<sup>8</sup> Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and some 175 wounded.<sup>9</sup> Coalition forces, backed by elements of Iraqi forces, were able to secure the country on election day, but only by pouring forces into the field and largely shutting down most movements along Iraqi roads and in Iraqi cities.

During the first two weeks of 2005, insurgent attacks included:

- **January 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber killed 18 National Guardsmen and a civilian in Balad.
- **January 4, 2005:** Insurgents assassinated the governor of Baghdad province. Zarqawi's group, calling itself Al Qa'ida in Iraq, claimed responsibility. Attacks throughout the country left five U.S. and 13 Iraqi servicemen dead.
- **January 10, 2005:** Insurgents gunned down Baghdad's deputy police chief and his son. Two U.S. soldiers died when a roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad.
- **January 12, 2005:** An ambush on a U.S.-Iraqi convoy in Mosul killed two Iraqi soldiers.
- **January 13, 2005:** A senior aide to Ayatollah Ali Sistani was assassinated in Salman Pak, a city south of Baghdad. Gunmen kill the director of a Baghdad election center.

### ***The Uncertain Impact of the January 30, 2005 Election***

While Sunnis largely boycotted the January 30, 2005 election, it did have broad enough Shi'ite and Kurdish support to convince some observers that the insurgency was weakening, and the Sunnis had no choice other than to join the Iraqi political process. For example, the Iraqi Interim Government claimed in early 2005 that some 16 of Iraq's 18 provinces were secure. While these claims were somewhat exaggerated, there was a significant level of security in 10 to 12 provinces. However, the insurgency was clearly not defeated, and was still capable of attacks in supposedly safe Shi'ite and Kurdish areas.

US intelligence experts were far less sanguine. Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, summarized the state of the insurgency as follows in February 2005:<sup>10</sup>

The insurgency in Iraq has grown in size and complexity over the past year. Attacks numbered approximately 25 per day one year ago. Today, they average in the 60s. Insurgents have demonstrated their ability to increase attacks around key events such as the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) transfer of power, Ramadan, and the recent election. Attacks on Iraq's election day reached approximately 300, double the previous one-day's high of approximately 150 reached during last year's Ramadan,

The pattern of attacks remains the same as last year. Approximately 80 percent of all attacks occur in Sunni dominated central Iraq. The Kurdish north and Shi'a south remain relatively calm. Coalition forces continue to be the primary targets. Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) officials are attacked to intimidate the Iraqi people and undermine control and legitimacy. Attacks against foreign nationals are intended to intimidate non-government organizations and contractors and inhibit reconstruction and recovery. Attacks against the country's infrastructure, especially electricity and the oil industry, are intended to stall economic recovery, increase popular discontent, and further undermine support for the IIG and Coalition.

Recent polls show confidence in the Iraqi Interim Government remains high in Kurdish communities and low in Sunni areas. Large majorities across all groups opposed attacks on Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi and foreign civilians. Majorities of all groups placed great importance in the election. Sunni concern over election security likely explains the relatively poor showing by the Sunni electorate in comparison with the Shi'a and Kurdish groups. Confidence in Coalition Forces is low. Most Iraqis see them as occupiers and a major cause of the insurgency.

We believe Sunni Arabs, dominated by Ba'athist and Former Regime Elements (FRE), comprise the core of the insurgency. Ba'athist/FRE and Sunni Arab networks are likely collaborating, providing funds and guidance across family, tribal, religious and peer group lines. Some coordination between Sunni and Shi'a groups is also likely.

Militant Shi'a elements, including those associated with Muqtada al Sadr, have periodically fought the Coalition. Following the latest round of fighting last August and September, we judge Sadr's forces are re-arming, re-organizing and training. Sadr is keeping his options open to either participate in the political process or employ his forces. Shi'a militants will remain a significant threat to the political process and fractures within the Shi'a community are a concern.

Jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida operative Abu Musab al Zarqawi, are responsible for many high-profile attacks. While Jihadist activity accounts for only a fraction of the overall violence, the strategic and symbolic nature of their attacks, combined with effective Information Operations, has a disproportionate impact.

Foreign fighters are a small component of the insurgency and comprise a very small percentage of all detainees. Syrian, Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Iranian nationals make up the majority of foreign fighters. Fighters, arms and other supplies continue to enter Iraq from virtually all of its neighbors despite increased border security.

Insurgent groups will continue to use violence to attempt to protect Sunni Arab interests and regain dominance, provoke civil war, and/or serve the interests of Neo-Salafi Sunni extremism. Subversion and infiltration of emerging government institutions, security and intelligence services will be a major problem for the new government. Jihadists will continue to attack in Iraq in pursuit of their long-term goals. Challenges to reconstruction, economic development and employment will continue. The keys to success will remain improving security with an Iraqi lead, rebuilding the civil infrastructure and economy and creating a political process that all major ethnic and sectarian groups see as legitimate.

Nevertheless, Administration spokespersons and several senior US officers claimed that the insurgency was losing ground. This, in part, was the result of the fact the US policymakers still focused more on the number of ex-Baathist leaders and insurgents it killed or captured at a time the insurgency was becoming steadily more Islamist extremist.

In making such claims, US sources noted that prior to the Iraqi election:<sup>11</sup>

- Some 40-60 towns and cities have been the scene of attacks each week since late August. Many are outside the "Sunni Triangle" and Al Anbar Province.
- The most violent city in terms of number of major incidents has been Baghdad, with 20-40 attacks a week.
- Mosul is second with 4-13 major attacks per week.
- The level of attacks in Basra has been relatively low by comparison, but peaks of 7 attacks per week have occurred in Basra and its environs.

In contrast, they stated that after the Iraqi election:

- Attacks against US soldiers per day have fallen to between 40 and 50. US officials state that this is approximately ½ the level one year ago.
- Approximately ½ of the attacks that do occur cause no casualties or property damage.

### ***A New Resurgence of Sectarian Violence***

By February 2005, it was clear that the violence had not abated. More than 130 Iraqis were killed in a 7-day period in early February:

- **February 3, 2005:** Insurgents killed 12 Iraqi soldiers in an ambush south of Kirkuk, executing the unarmed men one by one in the street.
  - Five policemen and a National Guardsman were killed in Baghdad.
- **February 6, 2005:** Insurgents attacked a convoy of trucks hauling cars destined for Iraq's Ministry of the Interior. The truck drivers were kidnapped and the cars destroyed.
- **February 7, 2005:** At least 27 Iraqis died in two suicide bombings, one targeted policemen collecting paychecks near a Mosul hospital, the other a police post in Baquba.
- **February 8, 2005:** A suicide bomb struck Baghdad's National Guard volunteer center, killing at least 20 potential recruits.
- **February 9, 2005:** Masked gunmen killed a television correspondent working for the American-funded network Al Hurra and his 3-year-old son in Basra.

- In Baghdad, insurgents assassinated a director of the Ministry of Housing and three Kurdistan Democratic Party officials. Zarqawi's group claimed responsibility.
  - 10 British soldiers died when a C-130 crashed.
- **February 10, 2005:** On the first day of the Muslim New Year, insurgent violence claimed more than 50 lives throughout Iraq.
- **February 11, 2005:** Insurgents attacked three Shi'ite targets – a mosque and two bakeries – in central Iraq, killing at least 21.

What was equally clear was that the insurgents had established a pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines. The drive to push Iraqi towards an intense and full-scale civil war was already underway, and had actually begun in 2003. This pattern becomes all too clear from a chronology of the key suicide bombings to date:

Aug. 19, 2003: A truck bomb explodes outside the U.N. headquarters building in Baghdad, killing 22 people.

Aug. 29, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside mosque in Najaf, killing more than 85 people, including Shi'ite leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim. Although officials never gave a final death toll, there were suspicions it may have been higher.

Oct. 27, 2003: Four suicide bombings target International Red Cross headquarters and four Iraqi police stations in Baghdad, killing 40 people, mostly Iraqis.

Feb. 1, 2004: Twin suicide bombers kill 109 people in two Kurdish party offices in Irbil.

Feb. 10, 2004: Suicide bomber explodes a truckload of explosives outside a police station in Iskandariyah, killing 53 people.

Feb. 11, 2004: Suicide attacker blows up a car packed with explosives in a crowd of Iraqis waiting outside an army recruiting center in Baghdad, killing 47 people.

March 2, 2004: Coordinated blasts from suicide bombers, mortars and planted explosives strike Shi'ite Muslim shrines in Karbala and in Baghdad, killing at least 181 and wounding 573.

April 21, 2004: Five blasts near police stations and police academy in southern city of Basra kill at least 55 people.

July 29, 2004: A suicide car bomb devastates a busy street in Baqouba, killing 70 people.

Aug. 26, 2004: A mortar barrage slams into a mosque filled with Iraqis preparing to march on the embattled city of Najaf, killing 27 people and wounding 63.

Sept. 14, 2004: A car bomb rips through a busy market near a Baghdad police headquarters where Iraqis were waiting to apply for jobs, and gunmen open fire on a van carrying police home from work in Baqouba, killing at least 59 people total and wounding at least 114.

Sept. 30, 2004: A series of bombs in Baghdad's al-Amel neighborhood kill 35 children and seven adults as U.S. troops hand out candy at a government ceremony to inaugurate a new sewage treatment plant.

Dec. 19, 2004: Car bombs tear through a Najaf funeral procession and Karbala's main bus station, killing at least 60 people and wounding more than 120 in the two Shi'ite holy cities.

Feb. 8, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up in the middle of a crowd of army recruits, killing 21 people.

Feb. 18, 2005: Two suicide bombers attack two mosques, leaving 28 people dead, while an explosion near a Shi'ite ceremony kills two other people.

Feb. 28, 2005: A suicide car bomber targets mostly Shi'ite police and National Guard recruits in Hillah, killing 125 and wounding more than 140. Some of the dead and injured are at a nearby market.

March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up at a Shi'ite mosque during a funeral in the northern city of Mosul, killing at least 47 people and wounding more than 100.

April 24, 2005: Insurgents stage coordinated double-bombings in Tikrit and a Shi'ite neighborhood in Baghdad, killing a total of 29 Iraqis and injuring 74.

May 1, 2005: A car bomb obliterates a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.

May 4, 2005: Bomb explodes among Iraqi civilians applying for police jobs in Kurdish city of Irbil, killing 60 people and wounding some 150.

July 16, 2005: Suicide bomber detonates explosives strapped to his body at a gas station near a Shi'ite mosque in central city of Musayyib, blowing up a fuel tanker and killing at least 54 people and wounded it least 82.

Even so, the US continued to make efforts to "spin" the course of the insurgency in a favorable way. On February 17, 2005, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Service Committee that classified estimates on the size of the insurgency were not static, but rather "a moving target." In the same session, General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also avoided hard numbers but described the insurgency as having limited capabilities; meaning that the insurgency could now "only" mount around 50 to 60 attacks on any given day.

Lt. General John F. Sattler, the head of the USMC Expeditionary Force claimed in March that insurgent attacks were averaging only 10 per day, with two producing significant casualties, versus 25 per day, with five producing significant casualties, before the battle of Fallujah in November 2004.

### ***Warnings that Iraqi Forces Could Feed the Insurgency***

There also were early warnings that the effort to create Iraqi forces could feed the insurgency unless truly national forces were created that did not abuse Iraqi civilians or support sectarian and ethnic causes. The US State Department human rights report for 2004 noted that Iraqi forces must operate in a climate of extraordinary violence and extremism on the part of their opponents, and make protecting Iraqi civilians their primary mission. It also, however, sounded an important warning about the actions of Iraqi police, security, and National Guard actions through December 31, 2004:<sup>12</sup>

With the ongoing insurgency limiting access to information, a number of instances in the Report have been difficult to verify. However, there were reports of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, and poor prison conditions--particularly in pretrial detention facilities--and arbitrary arrest and detention. There remained unresolved problems relating to the large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Corruption at all levels of the Government remained a problem. Some aspects of the judicial system were dysfunctional, and there were reports that the judiciary was subject to external influence. The exercise of labor rights remained limited, largely due to violence, unemployment, and maladapted organizational structures and laws; however, with international assistance, some progress was underway at year's end.

...With the ongoing insurgency, there was a climate of extreme violence in which persons were killed for political and other reasons. There were occasional reports of killings particularly at the local level by the Government or its agents, which may have been politically motivated. In early December, Basrah police reported that officers in the Internal Affairs Unit were involved in the killings of 10 members of the Ba'ath Party. Basrah police also reported that the same Internal Affairs Unit officers were involved in the killings of a mother and daughter accused of engaging in prostitution. The Basrah Chief of Intelligence was removed from his position as a result of the accusations; however, he retained command of the Internal Affairs Unit. An MOI investigation into the Basrah allegations was ongoing at year's end. Other instances reflected arbitrary actions by government agents. For example, on October 16, Baghdad police arrested, interrogated, and killed 12 kidnappers of 3 police officers.

... The TAL expressly prohibits torture in all its forms under all circumstances, as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), during this reporting period, torture and ill treatment of detainees by police was commonplace. In interviews with 90 prisoners conducted from August to October, 72 claimed that they had been tortured or mistreated. The reported abuses included some instances of beatings with cables and hosepipes, electric shocks to their earlobes and genitals, food and water deprivation, and overcrowding in standing room only cells.

Additionally, HRW reported that specialized agencies, including the Major Crimes Unit, Criminal Intelligence, Internal Affairs and possibly the Intelligence Service, were responsible for pretrial irregularities, such as arrest without warrant, lengthy periods of detention before referral to an investigative judge, and the denial of contact with family and legal counsel. Although detainees were primarily criminal suspects, they also included others, such as members of the Mahdi Militia and juveniles, who sometimes were caught in arrest sweeps.

There were instances of illegal treatment of detainees. For example, on November 1, Baghdad police arrested two Coalition Force citizen interpreters on charges involving the illegal use of small arms. After their arrest, police bound the detainees' arms behind them, pulling them upward with a rope and cutting off their circulation. This treatment was followed by beatings over a 48-hour period with a steel cable, in an effort to make the detainees confess. Both interpreters required medical treatment after their release to Coalition Forces. No further information on the incident was available at year's end. In another case, the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) gathered enough evidence to prosecute police officers in Baghdad who were systematically raping and torturing female detainees. Two of the officers received prison sentences; four others were demoted and reassigned.

There were also allegations that local police sometimes used excessive force against both citizens and foreigners. On November 28, a foreign national reported that police beat him at a police station in Kufa. According to the victim, he witnessed police beating detainees at a police station while he was filing a claim on another matter. When he questioned the treatment of the detainees, he was beaten and detained for 4 hours.

A number of complaints about Iraqi National Guard (ING) abuses surfaced during the year. For example, in November, the ING raided a house in southern Baghdad and arrested four alleged insurgents. The family was evicted and the ING burnt the house. In another incident, a doctor at the al-Kindi hospital in Baghdad said that the ING had tried to force him to treat one of their colleagues before other more serious cases. When he refused, they beat him. There also were many reported instances of ING looting and burning houses in Fallujah in November.

According to an ING official, disciplinary procedures were in place to deal with the mistreatment of citizens and a number of members of the ING were fired during the year for violations.

There were numerous reports and direct evidence that insurgents employed multiple forms of torture and inhumane treatment against their victims...Although there was significant improvement in Iraqi Corrections Service (ICS) prison conditions following the fall of the former regime, in many instances the facilities did not meet international penal standards. According to the Government, it generally permitted visits by independent human rights observers. In August, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited ICS facilities. The Ministry of Human Rights established a permanent office at the Abu Ghraib prison. HRW visited some ICS facilities.

After the fall of the former regime, prison functions were consolidated into the Ministry of Justice, and the ICS was transferred from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Government, ICS confined civilians under the rule of law, and a valid confinement order from a judge was required. Confinement was not connected with military intelligence operations nor was there any contact with military confinement functions.

...Allegations of inmate abuse by ICS Officers continued, although fewer than in the previous year. The ICS Internal Affairs Division claimed it conducted investigations of all detected or reported cases and that appropriate corrective action was taken if an allegation was verified. Although fewer than 10 cases were investigated between July and December, an individual with access to human rights complaints alleged that

hundreds of cases were pending accusing ICS officers of abuse and torture of detainees and prisoners, including women. No further information was available at year's end.

...At year's end, ICS was investigating eight cases in which inmates alleged police pre-detention abuse and torture. Overcrowding was a problem. Inmate disturbances and riots reduced available prison beds by approximately one-third, and pretrial detention facilities were often overcrowded. The insurrections in Sadr City and later in Najaf created additional overcrowding in detention facilities.

...Detainees were generally retained in custody pending the outcome of a criminal investigation. Individuals were generally arrested openly and warrants were issued only with sufficient evidence, although, there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrest and detention

There were no publicized cases of criminal proceedings brought against members of the security forces in connection with alleged violations of these rights, nor were there publicly known measures adopted to prevent recurrence.

Due to the insurgency, high-crime rates, and limited police training, innocent persons were sometimes arrested and detained erroneously

...The MOI's responsibilities extended only to internal security. MOI commands a number of uniformed forces, including the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and Department of Border Enforcement. The MOI also has criminal and domestic intelligence capabilities and regulates all domestic and foreign private security companies operating in the country. The MOI also has authority over the Civil Defense Directorate, the firefighters and emergency response organization, and the Facilities Protection Service shielding strategic infrastructure, government buildings, and cultural and educational assets.

...In the aftermath of the fall of the former regime, a police presence temporarily vanished, except in the Kurdish North. Police equipment was stolen. After April 2003, a large recruitment and training program was established, including hiring former police officers.

During the year, various specialized units were created, including an Emergency Response Unit (with capabilities similar to a SWAT team) and Public Order Battalions that perform riot control functions, as well as specialized counterinsurgency units.

More than any other group, the police have been a target of terrorist attacks. Over 1,500 IPS personnel have been killed between April 2003 and year's end. Additionally, pervasive lawlessness has led to an increase in violent and organized crime, particularly related to kidnappings.

...There was a widespread perception that police made false arrests to extort money. Some police officers did not present defendants to magistrates and held them in detention cells until their families paid bribes for their release. In the Central Criminal Court in Baghdad, the time between arrest and arraignment was often in excess of 30 days, despite the 24-hour requirement.

There were organized police abuses. For example, on September 4, approximately 150 police, none of whom had uniforms or badges, surrounded the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP), which is associated with the International Center for Reconciliation of the Coventry Cathedral, in response to an alert that a prominent former regime figure might be inside the Cathedral. Four individuals identified themselves as MOI officials, but did not show badges. Armed men, some with heavy weapons, broke down the doors and ransacked the IIP building, stealing phones and money. The incident ended with no serious injuries but without judicial follow-up.

On August 16, a ministry, reportedly wishing to occupy the real property used by a political party, caused party members to be arrested and detained for almost 60 days without charges. During their detention, a habeas corpus writ from the Chief Investigative Judge of the Central Criminal Court was ignored. The minister involved also refused to appear before the judge to explain his ministry's actions. The political party members were eventually released; however, the property involved remained under the control of the ministry at year's end.

...Reportedly, coerced confessions and interrogation continued to be the favored method of investigation by police. According to one government official, hundreds of cases were pending at year's end alleging torture. There have been several arrests, and both criminal and administrative punishments were handed out to police in cases where allegations of torture were substantiated.

Additionally, corruption continued to be a problem with the police. The CPI was investigating cases of police abuse involving unlawful arrests, beatings, and the theft of valuables from the homes of persons who were detained; however, the police often continued to use the methods employed by the previous regime. In addition to the CPI, several other mechanisms were put into place to address this problem, including an internal affairs capability, mentoring, and training programs that focus on accountability.

...Efforts to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the police were ongoing; however, there was little indication that the IIG took sufficient steps to address this problem adequately or to reinforce publicly the message that there will be no climate of impunity.

Because of arbitrary arrest and detention practices, some prisoners were held in incommunicado detention.

...Lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a significant problem due to backlogs in the judiciary and slow processing of criminal investigations. Approximately 3,000 inmates were in pretrial detention, and 1,000 were held post-trial.

...Corruption remained a problem in the criminal justice system. In the fall, the MOI referred allegations of misconduct involving a judge to the COJ. The allegations concerned professional misconduct; including bribery. At year's end, this case was still pending...

### ***The Overall Trends in the Insurgency During 2004***

Figure II.2 shows how the war intensified from early 2004 to early 2005. As shown, insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces increased dramatically during the final months of 2004. The insurgents began to focus on softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than well-trained and well-equipped US forces after the January 30, 2004 elections.

As the numbers of Iraqi forces grew, they invariably became a more visible target for insurgents. In addition, while the U.S. became more adept at protecting its own forces from roadside attacks, many routine and vulnerable missions have been turned over to ISF.<sup>13</sup> Insurgents found that Iraqi forces were easier targets and adjusted their tactics accordingly, recognizing that once the U.S. and Coalition forces leave Iraq the primary enemy would be the Iraqi government. One Iraqi official described the new insurgent tactic in the following way: "In the past, they were targeting the American forces because they were in charge of security...After the new Iraqi army and police were established...they shifted their attacks."<sup>14</sup>

This new focus on Iraqi targets had the short-term effect of decreasing the number of insurgent attacks against US forces by more than 25 per cent during the early months of 2005. The number of US fatalities also decreased during this period, from 107 in January 2005 to 58 in February 2005 and 36 in March 2005. However, this shift away from targeting US forces in favor of Iraqi forces was short-lived. US fatalities climbed to 52 in April and 80 in May 2005.<sup>15</sup> The number of daily attacks climbed during from 45 in March to more than 60 in April. After that point, the daily number of insurgent attacks increased steadily to the point where it averaged around 100 in October 2005.<sup>16</sup>

A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%.<sup>17</sup> US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. U.S. casualties also fell because the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it have become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

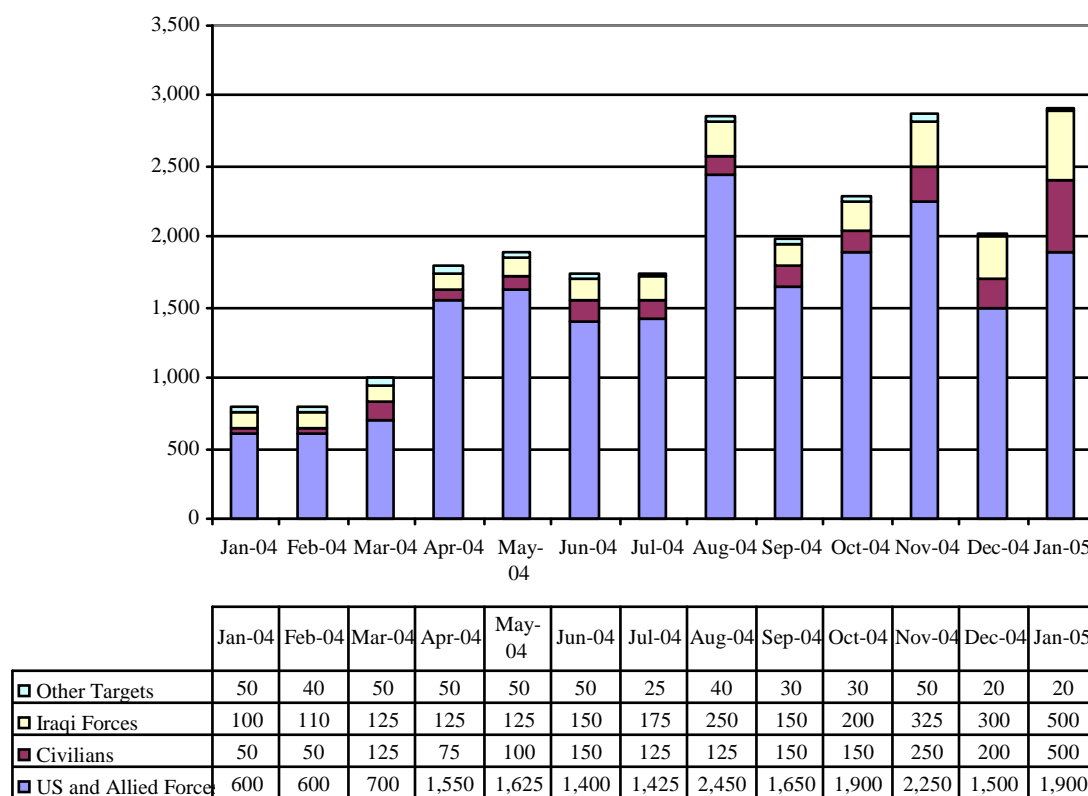
At the same time, the insurgents hit successfully at many important political and economic targets. Sunni insurgents continued to strike successfully at politically, religiously, and ethnically important Shi'ite and Kurdish targets with suicide and other large bombings. They carried out a



large number of successful killings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions. These included an increase in the number of successful attacks on Iraqi officials, Iraqi forces, and their families.<sup>18</sup>

The insurgents also continued to intimidate their fellow Sunnis. There is no way to count or fully assess the pattern of such low level attacks, or separate them from crime or Shi'ite reprisals, but no one doubts that they were a growing problem.

**Figure II.2: Insurgent Attacks by Key Target: January 2004-January 2005**



Note: Figures are rough estimates based on graphical data presented in the *New York Times*.

Source: "A Report Card on Iraqi Security," *New York Times*, April 11, 2005.

## ***A New Rise in the Violence -- Post-Sovereignty: April 28, 2005-October 14, 2005***

Much of the post-election optimism vanished as the spring went on. US intelligence warned that the insurgency was actually growing more serious, and that the risk of ethnic and sectarian violence was increasing. General George W. Casey, commander of MNF-I, consistently warned that the insurgency would take years to fully defeat, but stated on March 9, 2005 that "the level of attacks, the level of violence has dropped off significantly since the [Iraqi] elections."<sup>19</sup>

General Casey stated that insurgents operating from the Sunni areas had enough manpower, weaponry, ammunition, and money to launch between 50 and 60 attacks a day.<sup>20</sup> Casey did, however, point to the arrest of several suspected terrorist leaders. Though the terrorists retained enough ammunition and arms to continue fighting for years, Gen. Casey maintained that the

capture of certain leaders had degraded the insurgents' abilities to fashion IEDs, the deadliest weapon confronting US troops

The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard B. Myers did claim that same week that the number of attacks had fallen to 40-50 per day, far fewer than before the elections, but roughly the same as in March 2004.<sup>21</sup> The Iraqi interim Minister of the Interior, Falah al-Naqib, made similar claims, as did Lt. General Sir John Kiszely, then the British Commander in Iraq.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, senior US officers like General Abizaid gave more cautious briefings in May than officers had given in February, and talked about years of combat.<sup>23</sup> When Gen. Richard Myers stated in late May that the levels of insurgent attacks had decreased, the US simultaneously issued data showing their lethality had increased.<sup>24</sup>

The insurgency continued to inflict severe damage on Iraq's population in the spring of 2005. On April 13, insurgents blew up a fuel tanker in Baghdad and in a separate incident, attacked a US convoy on the road to the Baghdad International Airport, killing five Iraqis wounding four US contractors. In Kirkuk, insurgents killed 12 policemen and nine Iraqi soldiers; the latter were guarding Kirkuk's oil fields. Insurgents also detonated explosives targeting US forces and Iraqi police in Mosul. As these attacks demonstrate, insurgents had begun to step up their attacks on fuel convoys and oil infrastructure in the northern part of the country in an effort to disrupt life for everyday Iraqis.

Islamist movements steadily increased their profile in terms of claimed attacks, media exposure, propaganda like tapes and CDs, and the use of the Internet and web sites. The ongoing insurgent attacks, and increasing sectarian and ethnic divisions delayed the government's formation for almost three months. It was not until April 28<sup>th</sup> that pressure from Washington, Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders decided to submit an incomplete list of cabinet portfolios, rather than delay the formation of a new government any longer.

### ***A Shi'ite-Kurdish Government Becomes a Natural Target***

The sectarian and ethnic composition of the new government also made it a natural target for the insurgents. The cabinet, led by President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Jafaari, was clearly structured along ethnic and sectarian lines. It included 16 Shi'ites, 8 Kurds, 6 Sunni Arabs, 1 Christian and 1 Turcoman.<sup>25</sup> Figure III.1 shows the breakdown along ethnic lines, and the political process provided a warning that the insurgency would find more ethnic and sectarian fault lines to exploit.

**Figure III.1: Members of the Iraqi Cabinet as of May 8, 2005**

Name	Position	Ethnic Affiliation
Jalal Talabani	President	Kurdish
Ibrahim al-Jaafari	Prime Minister	Shi'ite
Ruz Nuri Shawis	Deputy Prime Minister (1)	Kurdish
Ahmed Chalabi	Deputy Prime Minister (2)	Shi'ite
Abid Mutlak al-Jubouri	Deputy Prime Minister (3)	Sunni

TBA*	Deputy Prime Minister (4)	TBA
Saadoun al-Dulami	Defense Minister	Sunni
Baqir Solagh (aka Bayan Jabr)	Interior Minister	Shi'ite
Muhsin Shlash	Electricity Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Mottalib Ali	Health Minister	Shi'ite
Sami al-Mudhaffar	Higher Education Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Falah Hassan	Education Minister	Shi'ite
Ali Allawi	Finance Minister	Shi'ite
Jassim Jaafar	Construction & Housing Minister	Shi'ite
Ali al-Bahadil	Agriculture Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Hussein Shandal	Justice Minister	Shi'ite
Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum	Oil Minister	Shi'ite
Salam al-Maliki	Transport Minister	Shi'ite
Suhaila Jaafar*	Migration and Displacement Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Karim al-Inizy	Minister of State for National Security Affairs	Shi'ite
Alaa Kadhim	Minister of State for Civil Community Affairs	Shi'ite
Hashim al-Hashimi	Minister of State for Tourism and Archaeology Affairs	Shi'ite
Safa al-Din al-Safi	Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs	Shi'ite
Osama al-Nujafi	Industry Minister	Sunni
Abdul Bassit Mawloud	Trade Minister	Sunni
Nouri Farhan al-Rawi	Culture Minister	Sunni
Azhar al-Sheikhli*	Minister of State for Women Affairs	Sunni
Saad al-Hardan	Minister of State for Provinces	Sunni
Narmin Othman* (Temporary)	Human Rights Minister	Sunni
Saadoun al-Dulami	Defense Minister	Sunni
Bassima Boutros*	Science and Technology Minister	Christian
Talib Aziz Zayni	Youth and Sports Minister	Turcoman
Barham Salih	Minister of Planning & Development	Kurdish

	Cooperation	
Nisrin Barwari*	Minister of Municipalities and Public Works	Kurdish
Juwan Fouad Masum*	Telecommunications Minister	Kurdish
Abdul Latif Rashid	Minister of Water Resources	Kurdish
Narmin Othman*	Minister of Environment	Kurdish
Idris Hadi	Labor and Social Affairs Minister	Kurdish
Hoshiyar Zebari	Foreign Minister	Kurdish

Note: An asterisk (\*) denotes female cabinet members.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the deadliest attacks of the insurgency occurred during this period. Many directed were against sectarian and ethnic targets and followed by hard-line Sunni Islamist statements justifying the attacks and trying to exploit the attacks to further divide the country:<sup>26</sup>

**May 1, 2005:** A car bomb targeted a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar, killing 25 people.

**May 4, 2005:** A bomb exploded among Iraqi civilians applying for police jobs in the Kurdish city of Irbil, killing 60.

**May 6, 2005:** Suicide bombers killed at least 26 Iraqis and wounded several dozen more in the Shi'ite town of Suwaira. Escalating violence has killed more than 200 people since the cabinet was announced eight days ago.

**July 16, 2005:** A suicide bomb attack near a Shi'ite mosque in Musayyib killed at least 54 people.

**July 24, 2005:** A truck bomb outside a Baghdad police station killed 39 people.

**August 17, 2005:** Three car bombs exploded near a bus station in Baghdad killing 43 people.

**September 14, 2005:** A suicide car bomb struck a work site in a Shi'ite neighborhood of Baghdad, killing 112 people.

**September 17, 2005:** A remote-controlled car bomb exploded near a market outside Baghdad, killing 30 people.

**September 29, 2005:** Three suicide car bombs struck the Shi'ite town of Balad, killing 102 people.

**October 11, 2005:** A suicide bomber struck an army recruiting center in Tal Afar, killing 30 people.

By April and May of 2005, it was all too clear that the election, and Coalition counterinsurgency activities, had not reduced the seriousness of the insurgency and that the insurgents had taken hold in part of Western Iraq. The US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive yet in the Syrian border area and hostile areas along the main route from Syria to Iraq in April 2005.

“Operation Matador,” and a series of follow-up attacks by Marine, US, and Iraqi forces in western Iraq, again showed that the insurgents could not survive if they stood and fought but often could if they dispersed.<sup>27</sup> Iraqi forces only played a limited support role in these battles, but did deploy in greater strength in other areas. These included a major 40,000-man Iraqi security operation – called “Operation Lightning”-- in the greater Baghdad area in June 2005. This operation too had its successes, but again could not destroy insurgent activity in any given area on a lasting basis.

There were some positive indicators. Twelve of the eighteen provinces remained relatively secure. The airport road also became less dangerous. This four-lane, six-mile stretch of highway leading from Baghdad to the international airport had been one of the most dangerous roads in the country: 37 people were killed or injured in ambushes on the airport road in April 2005 alone. But that figure fell dramatically in the fall of 2005. In October, there was only one injury. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch attributed the improved security to the presence of more Iraqi security forces.<sup>28</sup>

The difference is that the Iraqi police mechanized brigade actively patrols Route Irish [the name the US military gave the road,] 24 hours a day, seven days a week...It transformed it from the highway of death to one of the most safe and secure routes in all of Iraq, again a tribute to the capabilities of these trained and ready police forces.

### ***Warnings About Iraqi Forces and the Ministry of Interior***

There also were more warnings about the role of Iraqi forces. A report by the Inspector General of the State Department and the Inspector General of the Department of Defense noted that as of late April 2005,<sup>29</sup>

The International Police Liaison Officers' (IPLOs) daily reports chronicle disturbing accounts of instances in which IPS personnel are not professional in the performance of their duties. There are frequent reports of breakdowns in discipline, feuds among police units, and prisoner abuse. In the absence of viable tracking systems, the IG Team is not able to determine whether or to what degree Coalition-trained police may be perpetrators of such actions. The failure to impose proper discipline rests with IPS leaders (some of whom have been directly, even violently, involved in the unseemly questionable incidents). The examples set by poor leaders for Coalition-trained personnel (mostly new recruits) bode ill.

It was not until the summer of 2005 that the special security forces of the Ministry of Interior were seen as a major source of attacks on Sunnis, and potentially reacting to Sunni attacks on Shi'ites by taking the kind of reprisals that might drive the country towards civil war. However, the appointment of Jabr to the post of Ministry of the Interior that had drawn Sunni criticism after the January elections in 2005, then became steadily more a controversial as Shi'ite-dominated MOI security forces were increasingly implicated in retaliation killings against Sunnis.

### ***Coalition and Iraqi Government Campaigns in the Summer and Winter of 2005***

Nevertheless, ethnic and sectarian violence increased steadily during the rest of 2005, as many aspects of Sunni Islamist extremist activity became more intense and more focused on preventing the emergence of a successful Iraqi political process and driving the country towards civil war. Low-level violence and killings increased, and these began to provoke growing Shi'ite reprisals. Elements of the police and Ministry of Interior special security forces, and the Badr Organization, increasing killed or intimidated Shi'ites in reprisal for the rise in Sunni Islamist extremist attacks on Iraq civilians, Shi'ites and Kurds, and Iraqi politicians

Insurgent activity forced Coalition and Iraqi forces had to start a new series of offensives in the Sunni areas in Western Iraq. In the summer 2005, US and a limited number of Iraqi forces launched a series of operations in western Iraq designed to deny insurgents a stronghold and secure the region in the run-up to the October 15th referendum on the new draft constitution.

Most operations were conducted in Al Anbar province, along the Syrian border. Coalition operation forces ranged in size from several hundred to several thousand troops:

**May 29, 2005, "Operation Moon River Dragon:"** Iraqi troops from the 203<sup>rd</sup> Army Battalion in conjunction with US soldiers from Task Force Liberty entered Al Julaam in Western Iraq looking for a suspected insurgent leader. Speaking afterwards about the operation, US Army Capt. Robert Croft said: "The [Iraqi Army] presence completely changes the dynamic of the operation. People will cooperate with us just the same. However, when Iraqi soldiers are in the lead giving the instructions, things happen much more quickly and with less confusion. The effect is that the operation is safer for both U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians."<sup>30</sup>

**June 7, 2005:** US troops from 2nd Squadron, 34th Armored Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi forces from 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Iraqi Army Division carried out operations to disrupt anti-Iraqi forces in the southwest province of Ninewah. A joint operation launched on May 26 in Tal Afar uncovered nine weapons caches and captured 73 militants. The operations were part of 30 combined/independent operations being conducted throughout Iraq.

**June 17-22, 2005, "Operation Romhe (Spear):"** US-Iraqi forces conducted searches in Karabilah. Coalition forces discovered three car bomb factories and several weapons caches, and killed 47 insurgents.

**June 28-July 6, 2005, "Operation Saif (Sword):"** Coalition forces conducted operations designed to root out terrorists and foreign fighters living along the Euphrates River between the cities of Haditha and Hit. There were no American or Iraqi troop fatalities.

**July 4, 2005, "Operation Muthana Strike:"** Iraqi soldiers numbering 600 joined 250 US soldiers from Task Force Baghdad in conducting searches of safe houses nearby the Baghdad International Airport, leading to the capture of 100 suspected terrorists.<sup>31</sup>

**July 5, 2005, "Operation Bow Country:"** Iraqi Security Forces joined Coalition Forces in an early-morning raid in eastern Baghdad; a number of weapons and ammunition caches were uncovered.<sup>32</sup>

**July 7- ?, 2005, "Operation Qmtia (Scimitar):"** Approximately 100 Iraqi security forces and 500 US Marines conducted raids in Zaidon, 30 km south of Fallujah. The operation was designed to disrupt terrorist activity in the region.

**July 26-30, 2005, "Operation Thunder Cat:"** Iraqi and US soldiers conducted a series of cordon-and-attack missions resulting in the capture of 171 suspected terrorists.<sup>33</sup>

**July 2005-ongoing, "Operation Hunter (Sayaid):"** The operation, intended to disrupt insurgent activities, deny freedom of movement and reduce the insurgents ability to plan future attacks, was focused around the city of Qaim and along the Syrian border. The operation was expected to last until the December 15 elections.

**August 3-10, 2005, "Operation Quick Strike:"** US-Iraqi forces conducted operations designed to root out insurgents in Haditha, Haqliniyah, and Barwanah (Parwana). The combined force of 800 US Marines and 180 Iraqi soldiers captured 36 insurgents and defused nine car bombs and more than 28 IED's.

**August 4, 2005, "Operation Able Warrior:"** Coalition forces from Taskforce Baghdad conducted a series of raids designed to defeat insurgent forces operating west of Baghdad airport.

**September 10, 2005-?, "Operation Restoring Rights:"** U.S.-Iraqi forces totaling 8,500 entered Tal Afar in a new offensive designed to root out insurgents. The operation was expected to last several weeks. Tal Afar was home to roughly 500 insurgents

**September 11, 2005, "Operation Zoba'a (Cyclone):"** US and Iraqi forces conducted a series of raids designed to root out Al Qa'ida in Iraq insurgents operating in Rutbah.

**September 14, 2005, "Operation Flea Flicker:"** US and Iraqi forces searched houses in Zafaraniya, as part of an attempt to disrupt anti-Iraqi activity in the area in preparation for the October 15 constitutional referendum. Coalition forces detained several suspected insurgents and uncovered a number of weapons caches.<sup>34</sup>

**October 1-6, 2005, "Operation Kabda Bil Hadid (Iron Fist):"** US and Iraqi forces carried out operations in Anbar Province. More than 1,000 U.S. troops moved into the town of Sa'dah, in the al Qaim region, near

the Syrian border. Other cities targeted included Karabilah and Ubaydi. The goal of the operation was to interdict foreign fighters and provide security for the upcoming referendum. More than 50 Al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists are killed.

**October 4, 2005, "Operation River Gate:"** In the largest operation of 2005 (and the second in western Iraq this week), U.S. forces numbering 2,500 and Iraqi security forces carried out raids designed to deny insurgents the ability to operate in the Euphrates River towns of Haditha, Haqlaniyah and Barwanah (Parwana).

**October 28-29, 2005, "Operation Clean Sweep:"** Task Force Baghdad soldiers along with Iraqi Security Forces targeted more than 350 houses in southern Baghdad, capturing 49 terror suspects.<sup>35</sup>

**November 5-22 2005, "Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain):"** 2,500 US soldiers along with 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers launched attacks in western Al-Anbar province. The operation was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border and was the largest Coalition operation in months.<sup>36</sup>

**November 16, 2005, "Operation Numur (Panthers):"** The first of five operations involving Iraqi and US soldiers was launched. The operations, centered on Ramadi, were intended to secure the area for the upcoming December elections.

**November 19-21, 2005, "Operation Dhibbah (Bruins):"** Approximately 150 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines conducted operations in northern Ramadi as part of efforts to block off known terrorist escape routes.<sup>37</sup>

**November 23-24, 2005, "Operation Asad (Lions):"** 200 Iraqi Army soldiers along with 250 US soldiers conducted operations in the Tammim area of southern Ramadi. It was the third such series of disruption operations aimed at capturing or killing terrorists in the Ramadi area.<sup>38</sup>

**November 26-?, 2005, "Operation Nimur (Tigers):"** 550 Iraqi Army soldiers along with soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team carried out operations in the Ma'Laab District of eastern Ramadi aimed at securing the conditions for a successful December 15 election.<sup>39</sup>

**December 2-? 2005, "Operation Harba (Shank):"** 200 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines carried out operations in Al Anbar's capital of Ramadi. Operation Shank was the fifth in a series of operations aimed at disrupting terrorist groups in the area.

These operations had some positive impacts. In early September 2005, for example, US and Iraqi forces began "Operation Restoring Rights" on the insurgent stronghold of Tal Afar. It was the largest to-date urban assault since Fallujah. Troops faced little resistance, suspecting that most insurgents fled the city during the pre-assault evacuation of civilians. The developments in the fight for Tal Afar had the following impact:

- 157 terrorists were killed, 291 others were arrested. One Iraqi serviceman and six civilians were killed.
- In al-Sarai district of Tal-Afar, explosives were planted in most of the houses, which led to the destruction of 10-12 houses in the area.
- Dozens of other houses were destroyed in the last three months during combat operations. 10-15 thousand USD will be paid for the families who lost their homes.
- 20 trucks of supplies arrived in Tal-Afar from Baghdad. Ten ambulances were sent from Mosul to the nearby town. About 1,000 tents have been provided for the refugees who fled their town of Tal-Afar and seven medical facilities have been set on the outskirts of the northern town.
- The Iraqi government said it would deploy peacekeeping forces into the town of Tal-Afar after the combat operations in the region are over. In addition, it said that 1,000 residents of the town would be trained to maintain security and that tribes based in area will also play a major role in maintaining security and stability.<sup>40</sup>

The end result, however, was simply another cycle in the violence. The debate over Iraq's new constitution and the October 15, 2005 referendum on the constitution made some political progress, but also divided Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds over a host of issues including federation, the role of religion in the state, control of state revenues, and control of oil revenues.

The end result was a new wave of attacks on both Iraqi and US targets. The September death toll for US soldiers was 49, down from 85 in August. But those numbers do not tell the whole story. US fatalities in Iraq fluctuated throughout most of the summer in 2005, with no clear pattern discernable. 78 US soldiers were killed in June. The death toll for July was 54. The death toll for October was 92, nearly a 50 percent increase from the previous month. October was the second-deadliest month for US troops in 2005, second only to January. It was the fourth deadliest month since the war began. November's death toll was 85.

The insurgents also learned how to cooperate more effectively in achieving these ends, particularly the more organized Islamist extremist elements. The major Sunni Islamist extremist groups formed a loose alliance and informal "majlis." They developed a more sophisticated military literature and a wide range of training aids. They have begun to post battle-by-battle summaries of the lessons to be learned from each major encounter with Coalition and Iraqi forces, analyses drawn from other conflicts, and various manuals. Videotapes and DVDs supplemented these efforts. While some remained basic, others became highly sophisticated – reflecting the growing military background and expertise of some of the insurgents involved.<sup>41</sup>



**Figure II.3: The Key Urban Areas in the Insurgency**

Source: CIA World Factbook.

### ***Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain (October and November 2005)***

Coalition and Iraqi efforts further intensified in the late fall of 2005, in response to both new increases in insurgent violence, and as part of an effort to prepare for the election on December 15th. Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain were part of larger, ongoing operations, known as Sayaid (Hunter), launched in mid-to-late summer 2005. The western part of Iraq's Al-Anbar province was a key target because it had become a center of insurgent operations that had increasingly been driven westward.

Some US officials believed the insurgents had found their last foothold in the area along the border with Syria. In late summer 2005, there were reports that insurgents loyal to Zarqawi – or at least key Sunni Islamist extremist groups claiming some affiliation to Al Qaeda -- had taken over at least five Iraqi towns on the border with Syria. The insurgents, estimated to number between 300 and 400, were reported to be distributing “death letters” in which they ordered residents to leave their homes or face death.

According to Lt. Col. Julian Alford, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment stationed near Qaim, “It appears that al Qaeda in Iraq is kicking out local people from a lot of these towns out there.” US forces in the region, numbering 1,000 at the time, estimated that as many as 100 families per day were fleeing their homes. Fighters loyal to Zarqawi had been in complete control of the area for at least a month. No Iraqi soldiers or police officers were believed to be operating inside the towns of Dulaym al Husayba, Karabila, Sada and Al Ubaydi.<sup>42</sup>

In late September, The Washington Post reported that a gradual buildup of US and Iraqi forces in the Euphrates River valley was underway. US officials reported that the move was aimed at

securing the border area around Qaim and suppressing other insurgency activity in the region.<sup>43</sup> The move appears to have been undertaken in preparation for Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain), launched in the western part of Al-Anbar province on November 5, 2005. Operation Steel Curtain, like Operations Iron Fist and River Gate before it, is part of the larger Operation Hunter. Steel Curtain involved 2,500 US soldiers and 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Operation Steel Curtain concluded on November 22. During the 17-day operation, more than 139 terrorists were killed and 256 detained.

The offensives continued until the December 15 elections. They involved a wide range of efforts to secure hostile towns and cities and interdict insurgent movements. In July, for example, an Army squadron of Stryker vehicles set up an outpost near the town of Rawah, as part of the first phase of the operation. More than 1,000 US troops along with a battalion from the Iraqi Intervention Force cordoned off traffic in the area. In September, US warplanes blew up two small bridges in the towns of Karabilah and New Ubaydi, forcing all traffic in the region to use the US controlled Rawah river crossing.<sup>44</sup>

Air Force Brigadier General C.D. Alston said in late December that these joint operations were one of several factors contributing to what he characterized as the diminishing capability of insurgents to sustain attacks. He stated this was a key measure of effectiveness studied by U.S. officials when evaluating the strength of the insurgency.<sup>45</sup> Yet, none of the data discussed earlier or later in this report show any such pattern. The Coalition offensives, and constant pressure from other attacks on the insurgents, certainly had a major impact in limiting what the insurgency could do. At the same time, most major insurgent groups and cells remained intact, and the offensives taught the insurgents how to disperse, be less vulnerable and use other patterns of attack. They did not reduce the drift towards sectarian and ethnic conflict.

### ***The Period Before the Elections: October 15, 2005-December 15, 2005***

The various elements of the insurgency differed over how to deal with the December 15<sup>th</sup> parliamentary elections. Several Sunni nationalist insurgent groups appeared to have struck a deal with US officials that amounted to a short-term ceasefire to enable a relatively peaceful election period. One self-identified insurgent field commander told Time Magazine he had been given orders not to conduct attacks in the four days surrounding the election date.<sup>46</sup> There are several logical reasons to explain such a course of action:

Both Al Qa'ida in Iraq and Sunni nationalist insurgents claimed that they did not want to injure Sunnis who might go to the polls on Election Day.

Several Sunni groups appeared to be tacitly encouraging Sunni voters so as to secure a place in the Iraqi government, unlike last January's election.

Other Sunni groups may have made the tactical decision to wait out elections and then declare them illegitimate no matter what the results and resume attacks.

Other Sunni groups may have made the calculation that the election results could never satisfy Sunni voters. By waiting until the vote is over, such groups could then claim to have given democracy a chance, perhaps garnering renewed Sunni support.

It is likely that insurgent groups were deterred from attacks by the ban on motor vehicles and the massive security presence on Election Day.

Strategic considerations may have played a role in insurgent decisions to implement a short-term ceasefire, but it is likely that tight security measures deterred them as well. U.S. forces increased

to about 160,000 for the December 15 election, although they dropped to 138,000 (pre-election levels) in the first quarter of 2006.<sup>47</sup> Over 230,000 Iraqi soldiers and police were set up in what was called the “ring system” of defense in which police were stationed inside the polling stations, special battalions outside to man check points and conduct searches, and beyond them Iraqi Army battalions and Coalition forces waited as a last resort. In addition, all traffic was prohibited near polling places and between provinces.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, some of the deadliest attacks to date occurred during the election campaign:<sup>49</sup>

**October 31, 2005:** A car bomb exploded in Basra killing at least 20 people.

**November 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated a minibus near an outdoor market south of Baghdad, killing 20 people.

**November 10, 2005:** A suicide bomber struck a Baghdad restaurant popular with police, killing 35 people.

**November 18, 2005:** Near-simultaneous suicide bombings killed 74 worshippers at two Shi'ite mosques near the Iranian border.

**November 19, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his car in a crowd of Shi'ite Muslim mourners north of Baghdad, killing at least 36 people.

**November 24, 2005:** A suicide bomber blew up his car outside a hospital south of Baghdad, killing 30 people.

**December 4, 2005:** Supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr threw shoes and stones at former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi as he enters the Grand Imam Ali shrine in Najaf to pray. Later that day, gunmen fire an RPG at his party offices in Najaf. No one is injured.

**December 6, 2005:** Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives at Baghdad's police academy, killing at least 43 people.

**December 8, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his explosives on a bus in Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding 44 others.

According to statistics obtained by the Agence-France Presse from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, 5,713 Iraqis were killed in 2005, not including insurgents. This included 4,020 civilians, and 1,693 ISF. The MOD and MOI recorded 1,702 insurgents killed and 9264 detained.<sup>50</sup>

More generally, MNF-I intelligence estimated that the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and Iraqi civilians; and acts of sabotage; rose by 29% in 2005. The total had risen from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005.<sup>51</sup> (The Coalition reported that these attacks have had a relatively consistent average success rate of 24%; attacks that cause damage or casualties.)<sup>52</sup> Put differently, the average number of attacks per month in the Coalition count (which tended to undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians) had risen from an average of around 750 in late 2004 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in October 2005, and was 2,500 in December 2005. The average had been well over 2,000 per month from April 2004 onwards.<sup>53</sup>

The continuing shift to attacks on Iraqis, rather than Coalition troops, also again shifted the balance of casualties. A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%.<sup>54</sup> US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. Additionally, the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it had become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

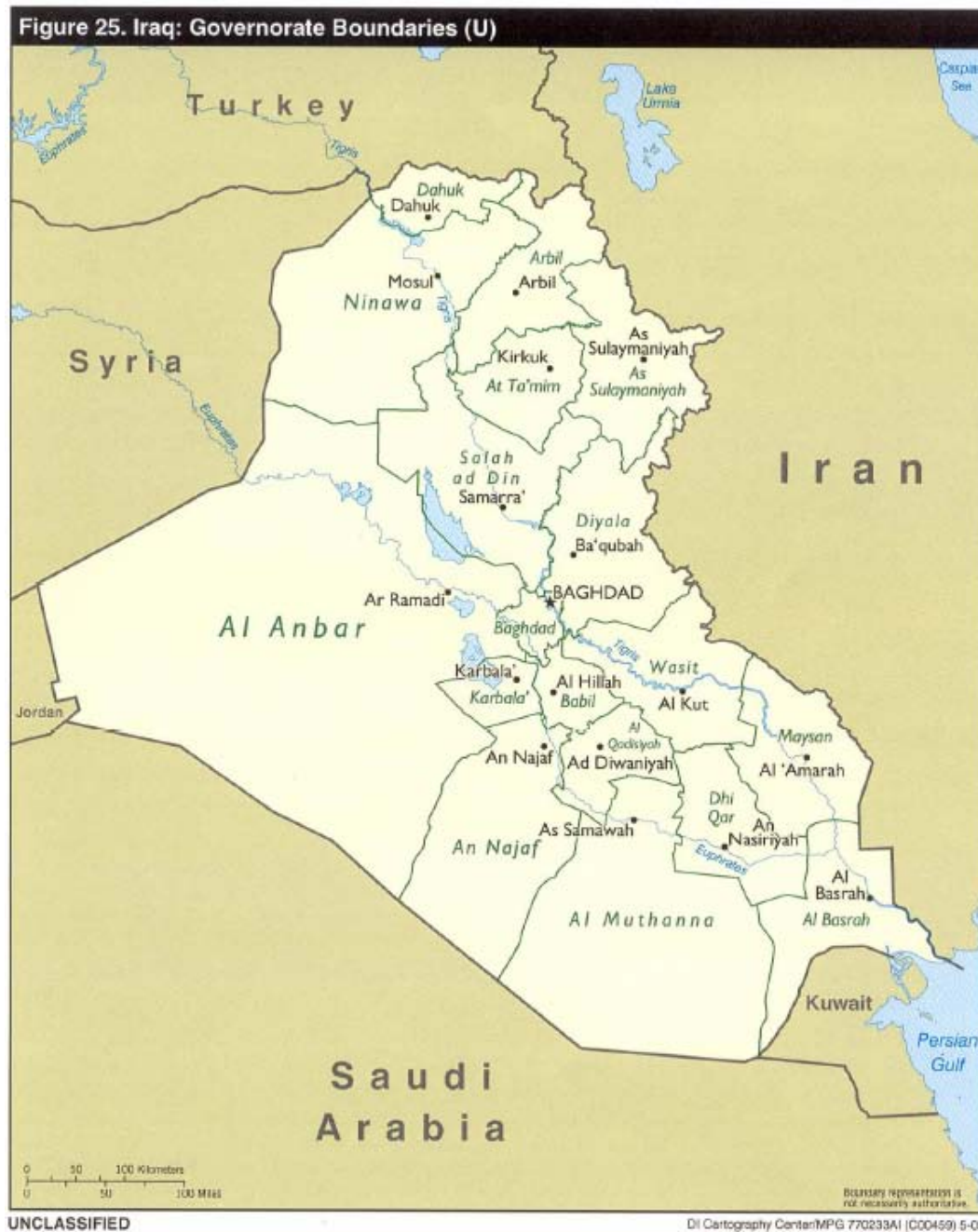
## ***The December 15 Election and Implications for the Insurgency***

Like the other major political events before it, the December 15, 2005 election did not have a stabilizing effect or clearly undercut support for the insurgency. While Many Sunnis did participate in the political process for the first time, Iraqis voted along sectarian and ethnic lines.

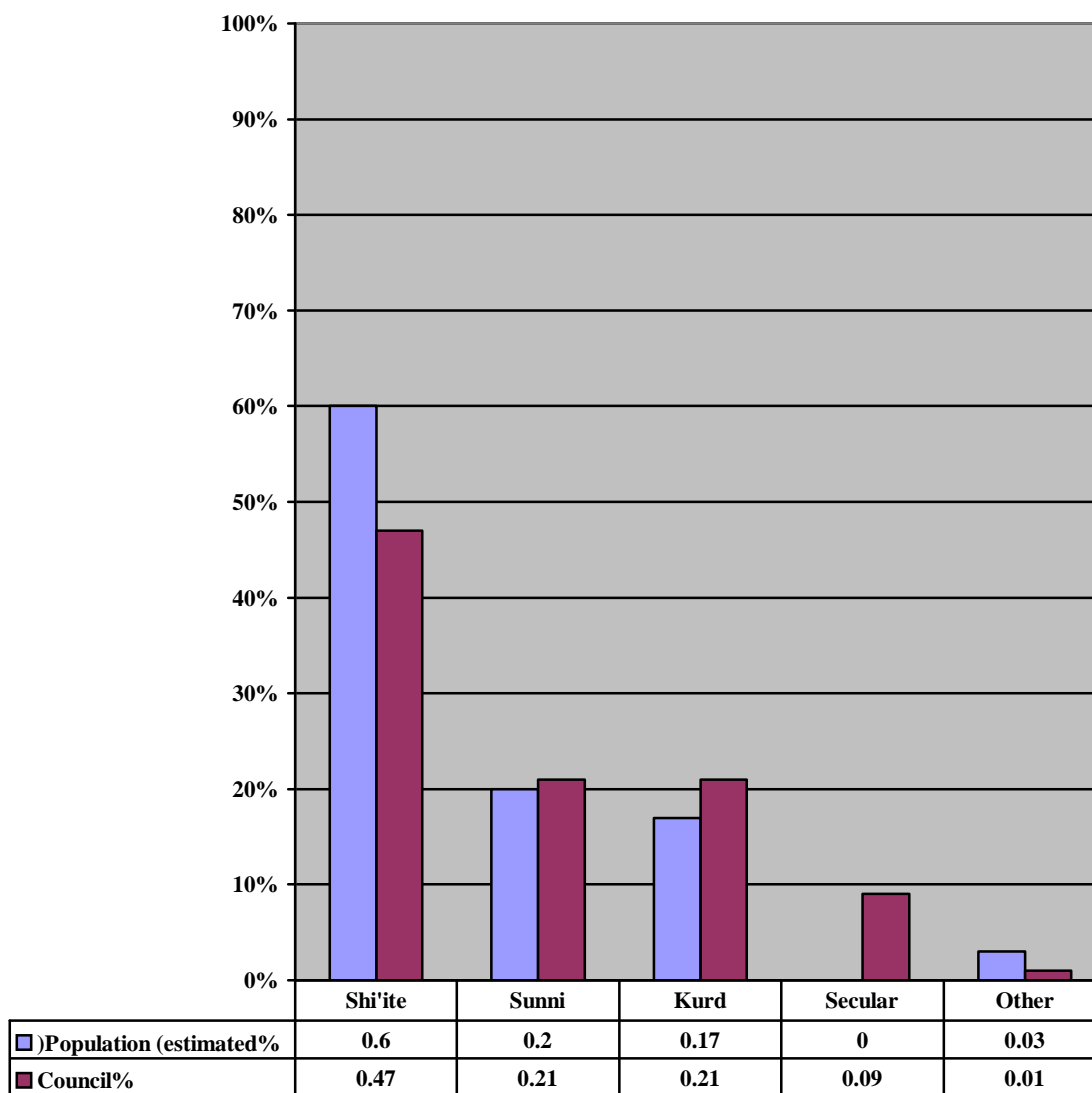
The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats. The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi'ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 seats in the parliament. The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. The Sunni dominated Iraqi Accordance Front won 1.8 million votes and 44 seats in parliament. The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a coalition of Sunni groups received nearly 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats and the secular Iraqi National List won 25 seats.<sup>55</sup>

Although charges of fraud delayed the final certification of the election results until February 9, 2006, such fraud was found to be minor and did not change the results. This result allocated seats to the main parties as follows: Shi'ites 47%; Kurds 21%, Sunnis 21%, Allawi's secular nationalists 9% and other groups 1%<sup>56</sup> Map II.1 shows Iraq's provinces. Figure III.4 breaks down the election results by ethnic and sectarian groups and compares those numbers to Iraqi population as a whole.<sup>57</sup> Figure III.5 shows the percentage of the vote won by the four major coalition parties in each of Iraq's 18 provinces.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad described the results as unsurprising, "given that Saddam for decades purposely fostered a lack of trust among communities." He also noted, however, that cooperation had to be forged across ethnic and sectarian divisions for a unified Iraq to remain possible and if the government was to address the issues at the root of the political conflict.<sup>58</sup>

**Map II.1: Governorate Boundaries**

**Figure III.4: December 2005 Election Results: Composition of the Council of Representatives**



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," February 2006 Report to Congress, p. 9

**Figure III.5: Percentage of Vote Won by Four Major Coalition Parties in Each of Iraq's 18 Provinces.**

	United Coalition/United Alliance	Iraqi Iraqi	Kurdistan Gathering/Kurdistan Alliance	Tawafiq Front/Iraqi Font	Iraqi Accordance	National Iraqi List
Basrah	77.5		N/A	4.65		11.01
Missan	86.91		N/A	N/A		4.31
Theqar	86.74		N/A	N/A		5.04
Muthana	86.45		N/A	N/A		4.33
Qadissiya	81.47		N/A	N/A		7.78
Najaf	81.99		N/A	N/A		7.78
Salahaddin	7.44		N/A	33.09		10.78
Wassit	80.74		N/A	N/A		8.06
Karbala	76.08		N/A	N/A		11.70
Babil	76.16		N/A	5.47		8.67
Baghdad	56.55		N/A	21.10		13.41
Anbar	N/A		N/A	73.75		3.08
Diyala	22.37		12.39	37.53		10.60
Kirkuk	N/A		53.40	5.92		N/A
Ninewa	7.60		19.42	36.71		10.99
Sulaymaniya	N/A		87.18	N/A		N/A
Erbil	N/A		94.69	N/A		N/A
Dohuk	N/A		90.31	N/A		N/A

Source: Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq: Unverified Election Results [www.ieciraq.org/English/Frameset\\_English.htm](http://www.ieciraq.org/English/Frameset_English.htm). N/A indicates that the party did not win enough percentage of the vote in that province to gain a seat in the Parliament.

Once again, some observers were optimistic. They claimed that the Sunni turn out, and the lack of violence on Election Day was a “turning point” in the Iraqi political process. Some aspects of the results were positive. The Sunni turnout in certain provinces increased compared with the January elections earlier in the year. For example, in the Anbar province 86 percent of voters turned out, an increase from 2 percent in the January elections of that year.<sup>59</sup> The Sunni provinces of Ninawa and Salahaddin saw voter turnout at levels of 70 and 98 percent respectively in

December. This was an increase from 17 and 29 percent in January, respectively. Nationally, voter turnout increased from 58 percent in the January elections, to 77 percent in December.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, Sunnis did not have to choose between political participation and aiding the insurgency. Many Sunnis voted more to assert Sunni power than because of any support for the Iraqi political process. Some Sunni insurgents hedged their bets by continuing to carry out attacks while engaging in political talks with the Iraqi government. In fact, one counterinsurgency expert at the Pentagon suggested that a number of Sunni's had adopted a model similar to the IRA's dual-track strategy of continuing violence while using the Sinn Féin to pursue political solutions.<sup>61</sup>

US officers also provided a more mixed assessment of the situation. Departing commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr. assessed the situation in the capital at the end of 2005 that mixed a list of successes with present and future challenges.

The insurgency has weakened since the election, and while overall attacks increased in 2005, successful attacks decreased 10 percent. Military operations cut the number of car bombs in Baghdad in half, and have uncovered double the amount of weapons caches.

Insurgents were resorting to drive-by shootings, mortar and rocket attacks that were less accurate and therefore less successful.

A need to focus Coalition efforts on training Iraqi forces to operate according to the rule of law and with respect to human rights, in addition to promoting a more even ethnic and sectarian balance in the forces.

The U.S. planned to increase the number of American advisors, then 10, working with each Iraqi police battalion in order to "plan, train, coach...and conduct operations with them."

The U.S. planned to replace the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division in Baghdad with a smaller force led by the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. As areas of Baghdad are ceded to Iraqi security forces, the U.S. Division would reduce its presence in the city.<sup>62</sup>

US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace was asked whether elections would sap the insurgency shortly in January 2006. He stated, "The opportunity in the future for folks who are against the government to hide, to store weapons and the like will go down. So I do believe that over the course of the coming year, that violence will subside."<sup>63</sup> Pace stressed, however, that the general Iraqi population would have to play a significant role. With regard to how long the insurgency could maintain its past level of violence, Pace stated:<sup>64</sup>

I think that depends on the Iraqi people. I think it depends on how comfortable these terrorists feel moving about the towns and cities in Iraq. I think if the Iraqi people demonstrate to the terrorists that they're not welcome in their cities, that they are not welcome in their towns, that murderers—which they are—murderers of fellow Muslims, indiscriminate murderers that they are—are not welcome, that will reduce the number of [insurgents].

Pace also stated that the possibility of U.S. troop withdrawals in early 2006 would depend on the decisions of U.S. commanders on the ground.

The GAO summarized the status of the insurgency in 2005 as follows,<sup>65</sup>

The insurgency intensified through October 2005 and has remained strong since then. As we reported in March 2005, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—grew in complexity, intensity, and lethality from June 2003 through early 2005.<sup>5</sup>

According to a February 2006 testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, insurgents are using increasingly lethal improvised explosive devices and continue to adapt to coalition countermeasures...enemy-initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure increased in number over time. The highest peak occurred during October 2005, around the time of



Ramadan and the October referendum on Iraq's constitution. This followed earlier peaks in August and November 2004 and January 2005. According to a senior U.S. military officer, attack levels ebb and flow as the various insurgent groups—almost all of which are an intrinsic part of Iraq's population—rearm and attack again.

As the administration has reported, insurgents share the goal of expelling the coalition from Iraq and destabilizing the Iraqi government to pursue their individual and, at times, conflicting goals.<sup>7</sup> Iraqi Sunnis make up the largest portion of the insurgency and present the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. In February 2006, the Director of National Intelligence reported that the Iraqi Sunnis' disaffection is likely to remain high in 2006, even if a broad, inclusive national government emerges. These insurgents continue to demonstrate the ability to recruit, supply, and attack coalition and Iraqi security forces. Their leaders continue to exploit Islamic themes, nationalism, and personal grievances to fuel opposition to the government and recruit more fighters.

According to the Director, the most extreme Sunni jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq, will remain unreconciled and continue to attack Iraqi and coalition forces. The remainder of the insurgency consists of radical Shia groups, some of whom are supported by Iran, violent extremists, criminals, and, to a lesser degree, foreign fighters. According to the Director of National Intelligence, Iran provides guidance and training to select Iraqi Shia political groups and weapons and training to Shia militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks. Iran also has contributed to the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by enabling Shia militants to build improvised explosive devices with explosively formed projectiles, similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hizballah.

### ***Post-Election: December 16, 2005-Onward***

In practice, it soon became all too apparent that the elections had not limited insurgent activity and violence, and sectarian violence continued to increase. Insurgent attacks continued in the form of suicide bombings against mainly Shi'ite Arabs, political assassinations and "body dumps." Car bombs and gunfire attacks also target Iraqi police forces. Revelations and accusations of "revenge killings" perpetrated by the Shi'ite dominated Interior Ministry forces against the Sunni population exacerbated sectarian and ethnic tensions throughout talks to form a new government. Some attacks during this time period included:

**December 16, 2005:** Gunmen killed two relatives of a senior Kurdish official in Mosul. The men, Dhiab Hamad al-Hamdani and his son—were relatives of PUK party official Khodr Hassan al-Hamdani.

**December 18, 2005:** Police discovered the body of former Iraqi Army officer Abbas Abdullah Fadhl and an unidentified man in Baghdad. In eastern Baghdad, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and injured two others.

**December 19, 2005:** Ziyad Ali al-Zawba'i, the Deputy Governor of Baghdad, and three of his bodyguards escape an assassination attempt in the western Baghdad district of Al-Amil. A car bomb in the Al-Iskan district of Baghdad killed two Iraqi civilians and wounded eight others, including five policemen. The brother of Sa'd Nayif al-Hardan, minister of state for governorate affairs, was kidnapped in Al-Khalidiyah City in western Iraq. A car bomb exploded outside a children's hospital in Baghdad, killing at least two people and wounding 11.

**December 22, 2005:** Gunmen killed six Iraqi policemen in Baghdad. In Samarra, gunmen killed three Iraqi policemen and wounded four others. Gunmen assassinated Sheik Saffah Nayif al-Fayyad, a tribal leader of the Al Bu-Amir tribe, north of Baghdad. In Balad Ruz, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing 10 Shi'ites.

**December 23, 2005:** In Balad, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing four people.

**December 26, 2005:** In Diyala province, gunmen abducted Sunni police colonel and killed a member of the local city council. Also in Diyala, a car bomb, part of a failed assassination attempt against the governor, killed a bodyguard.

**December 28, 2005:** 14 people from a single Shi'ite family were found shot dead in their home in Mamudiyah. In Baghdad, a former Ba'ath police office was gunned down in a separate incident.

**December 29, 2005:** Gunmen attacked a minibus carrying Shi'ites in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, killing 14.

**December 31, 2005:** Gunmen near Tikrit kidnapped three people, including a policeman. Iraqi security forces discover the remains of five bodies south of the capital; four were found in a river and one, half-tortured, was found in an orchard. A bomb targeting the local headquarters of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party in Khalis killed five people.

**January 1, 2006:** In Kirkuk and other northern cities, a wave of bombings killed at least 40 people. In Baghdad, gunmen killed two worshippers and wounded five as they left the Sunni Hodhaifa mosque. In Mahmudiyah, Sunni Arab insurgents shot and killed a Shi'ite cleric, a member of Moqtada al-Sadr's movement.

**January 2, 2006:** seven police recruits were killed from a roadside bomb outside Baquba, 13 others were wounded. In Rustimiyah, south of Baghdad, Iraqi security forces discovered eight unidentified bodies in a water purification plant.

**January 3, 2006:** Insurgents attempted to assassinate Ahmed al-Bakka, the head of the Shi'ite Dawa party in Muqdadiya. Instead, they killed his nephew and a bodyguard. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Kadhimiya, militants attacked an Iraqi police patrol with a car bomb, killing five and wounding 15 officers and civilians. In the al-Dora neighborhood, a car bomb detonated near an Iraqi police commando patrol, killing three, including a commando, and wounding 11. Insurgents blew up 20 fuel tankers traveling in a convoy from Baji to Baghdad. The attacks occurred in Tikrit and Mashada.

**January 4, 2006:** A suicide bomber attacked a funeral procession in Muqdadiya, killing 50 people and wounding 40 more. Militants kidnap the sister of Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, demanding that the ministry release all female prisoners. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Amariya, insurgents ambush and kill a prominent oil ministry official.

**January 5, 2006:** In Ramadi, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a police recruitment center where approximately 1,000 Iraqis were waiting to apply for new police jobs. 68 were killed and an unknown number wounded. 45 Iraqis were killed in Karbala in a separate blast. In Baquba, four policemen died and four were wounded in an insurgent ambush.

**January 9, 2006:** Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives outside of the Ministry of the Interior, killing seven people and wounding 35 more. The 84<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Iraqi police was being celebrated in the building next door. Each bomber had the appropriate security badge, though Iraqi guards were able to identify the first bomber as a threat. Their gunfire set off his explosives.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari denounced this new violence as an attempt to undermine efforts to construct a governing coalition. Other senior officials, like President Talibani also called for unity and an inclusive government. Despite such calls for continued cooperation, some individual members of both the Sunni and Shi'ite coalition parties made public statements that threatened efforts at creating an inclusive government. SCIRI issued a warning to Sunni elements of the insurgency that its "patience is wearing thin" and hinted that it may use militias such as the Badr Brigade to carry out revenge attacks against suspected insurgents.

In Sadr City, over 5,000 Shi'ite Muslims protested in the streets on January 7 to condemn the recent suicide attacks and moderate Sunni leaders, while voicing support for the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>66</sup> Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi'ite-dominated government was acting as an "accomplice" in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening Shi'ite controlled militias.<sup>67</sup>

There were also continued reports of Shi'ite militia men and MOI forces carrying out violence against Sunnis. For example, in the Sunni neighborhood of Toubji, armed men in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunni's and abducted more than 20 others.<sup>68</sup> One of the few released, Yasser Khalil, told his story to an AP reporter:

"They took us away and put us into a room in a building I didn't recognize, where they beat us and asked us questions about who we were. They then took a few of us in their cars and dumped us on the eastern outskirts of Baghdad, saying if we said anything or looked at them they would kill us."<sup>69</sup>

Sunni religious and political leaders condemned these, and similar attacks. Sunnis speculated over whether the attackers were agents of the Interior Ministry, or gunmen wearing ministry police uniforms, a tactic that had been used by insurgents in other instances. Sunni cleric Ahmed Abdul Gharfour al-Samarraei highlighted in a speech what he saw as a dilemma for Sunnis in the face of both a hostile Shi'ite dominated Interior Ministry police and U.S.-led coalition forces attempting to wage a counterinsurgency campaign: "Should an Iraqi man surrender? If he surrenders, he will be detained and tortured. If he resists, he will be considered a terrorist."<sup>70</sup>

### ***The Attack on the Askariya Shrine and the Increase of Low-Level Civil Conflict***

On February 22, insurgents brought sectarian violence to a new and dramatic height. They attacked the 1,200 year old Askariya shrine in Samarra, a Shi'ite holy landmark, destroying its golden dome but causing no deaths. The destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi'ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq.

Officials in Iraq reported that security forces had arrested as many as 10 individuals suspected of being involved in the bombing in the days following the attack.<sup>71</sup> According to initial investigations of the damage, it appeared that the mausoleum's four main pillars were packed with explosives. These explosive charges were then connected together and linked to a detonator, triggered from a distance. Jassem Mohammed Jaafar, Iraq's Construction Minister, stated that this was a sophisticated operation and rigging the explosives would have taken at least 12 hours.<sup>72</sup> Later studies showed that some 20 men had occupied the mosque at night and spent hours systematically planting some 400 pounds worth of explosives.

Almost inevitably, observers differed sharply over just how serious a step the attack was in pushing the country towards civil war. U.S. State Department Spokesman Adam Ereli asserted that the violence, and Iraqi's reaction to it, was an "affirmation" of a successful U.S. policy in Iraq. "You've got political leadership acting together on behalf of the common good, and you've got security forces demonstrating that capability and a responsibility as a national entity that we've been working to develop and that has now been put to the test and, I think, is proving successful," Ereli said.<sup>73</sup> Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch echoed these sentiments saying, "We're not seeing civil war ignited in Iraq... We're seeing a competent, capable Iraqi government using their security forces to calm the storm."<sup>74</sup> On the Sunday morning talk show "Face the Nation," National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said that Iraqi's had "stared into the abyss a bit, and I think they've all concluded that further violence... is not in their interest."<sup>75</sup>

These views contrasted sharply with the view of Tariq al-Hashimi, the leader of the Sunni dominated Iraqi Accordance Front who called the reaction of the governments security forces "miserable and ashamed" and said that "as usual [they were] either audience or participant."<sup>76</sup> Other reports similarly noted that ISF were either unable, or unwilling to stop attacks by militias.<sup>77</sup>

U.S. officials indicated on Saturday that Coalition troops had more than quadrupled its patrols from 65 on Wednesday to 268.<sup>78</sup> Whether this was because Iraqi forces were unable to handle the increased violence, or whether it was intended simply as a reassurance or force multiplier to aid Iraqi troops was unclear.

Other officials in the U.S. were less optimistic, or simply more realistic. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said that the violence was a pothole rather than a bump in the road and that the U.S. and Iraq will “find out if the shock absorbers in the Iraqi society will hold or whether this will crack the frame.”<sup>79</sup> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took a similar approach and played down the hot button issue of civil war saying, “I don’t think we do the Iraqi people any good, or really that we are fair to them, in continually raising the specter that they might fall into civil war.”<sup>80</sup>

Some Iraqis portrayed the violence in a similar light. Hassan al-Bazzaz, a political science professor at Baghdad University said, “We are on the brink of either solving our problems or falling into a hole from which it would be very difficult to climb out.” He added, “This might be a turning point for all of us. If not, everyone will pay a very high price...there will be no exceptions.”<sup>81</sup> However, almost one month after the attack, Iraq’s former prime minister Iyad Allawi told BBC news that, “It is unfortunate that we are in a civil war.”<sup>82</sup>

There were similar differences over responsibility for the attack. U.S. officials, and the majority of their Iraqi counterparts, indicated that the blame was probably the result of actions by a Neo-Salafi extremist group like al-Qa’ida. In an interview on CNN, Iraq’s National Security Advisor, Mowaffak al-Rubaie stated that the attack was the “blueprint” of al-Qa’ida.

However, no group immediately claimed the attack, and speculation varied depending on who was asked. One Iraqi man blamed the al-Sadr’s Mahdi Militia for the attack.<sup>83</sup> In fact, many Shi’ites condemned that attack, while also assigning blame to their own sect.<sup>84</sup> Mahmoud al-Mashhadany, an official with the Sunni political party the Iraqi Consensus Front, also accused the Shi’ites of planning the attack and the retaliatory violence that followed saying, “We think what happened yesterday was organized. It had all been organized the night before.”<sup>85</sup>

The mujaheddin shura, a council of Islamic extremist insurgent groups in Iraq, including al-Qa’ida, issued a statement blaming the attack on the Iraqi government’s cooperation and close relationship with Iran. The group also indicated that it was preparing a “shocking” response to the “conspiracy.”<sup>86</sup>

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blamed the attack on the U.S. and Israel saying during a TV broadcast, “These heinous acts are committed by a group of Zionists and occupiers that have failed.”<sup>87</sup>

Regardless of who was responsible, the response pushed the country towards large-scale civil war.<sup>88</sup> Hundreds of Iraqis were killed in the violence that followed the attack on the Mosque, and Shi’ites responded with more violence against Sunnis. Frequent targets during this period were mosques, schools, headquarters of political parties and hospitals along with Shi’ite or Sunni dominated neighborhoods and large public places in general. While U.S. soldiers were killed and many attacks were aimed at Iraqi police and military forces, the violence was largely perpetrated against Iraqi civilians and appeared to be sectarian in nature.

This cycle, which continued into March, included a mix of past methods of attack used to cause mass casualties against civilians and Iraqi security forces such as car bombs and suicide bombers, but also an increase in low-level civil conflict including mystery killings, body dumps, and assassinations carried out both by Sunnis and Shi’ites. But the low-level nature of many of

the attacks made it difficult to impossible to determine with certainty the perpetrators of much of the violence or why the victims were chosen.

Although it is difficult to accurately assess the level of violence triggered by the attack on the mosque, the numerous confirmed attacks that did occur during the first five days following the attack show just how serious its impact was:

February 22, 2006: In Al Amin, southeast of Baghdad, gunmen set fire to a house believed to be the residence of Sunni militants.

February 22, 2006: Gunmen identified as Mahdi fighters drove into Al Shabab and attacked Ibad Al Rahman, a Sunni mosque, kidnapped a man inside, and set the mosque on fire.

February 22, 2006: 7 U.S. soldiers were killed by roadside bombs.

February 23, 2006: An attack on a Sunni mosque in Barquba killed 8 Iraqi soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen people.

February 23, 2006: 47 people, both Sunnis and Shi'ites were forced from their vehicles by gunmen and shot, their bodies dumped in a ditch near Baqubah. Many were on their way to protest the shrine bombing. Included in these bodies were three Iraqi journalists.

February 23, 2006: In Basra, militiamen broke into a prison, hauled out 12 inmates (including 2 Egyptians, 2 Tunisians, a Libyan, a Saudi and a Turk) and shot them.

February 23, 2006: The Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars said 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted.

February 23, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on a Sunni mosque in Baquba, where police were guarding access to the mosque.

February 23, 2006: At a Shi'ite demonstration in Kirkuk, police found and defused a dozen explosive devices.

February 24, 2006: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad were attacked and mortar rounds landed near the Shi'ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi in the town of Salman Pak, 20 miles south of the capital.

February 24, 2006: Gunmen stormed a house south of Baghdad and shot dead five Shi'ite men.

February 24, 2006: Two more rockets exploded in the British Embassy compound in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, causing minor injuries to two British workers.

February 24, 2006: Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.

February 24, 2006: In Samarra, a roadside bomb killed two policemen.

February 25, 2006: Three police commandos died when the funeral of a prominent Iraqi television journalist killed in the violence was ambushed in western Baghdad.

February 25, 2006: Gun battles erupted around a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad after Interior Ministry forces dispatched to protect the mosque came under fire from gunmen inside.

February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad.

February 25, 2006: A car bomb killed four people in the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala

February 25, 2006: 13 members of a Shi'ite family were massacred in the town of Baqouba.

February 25, 2006: Two rockets slammed into Baghdad's Shi'ite slum, Sadr City, killing three people, including a child, and wounding seven.

February 25, 2006: 21 other people died in small-scale shootings and bombings in Baghdad and western areas of the city.

February 26, 2006: At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi'ite enclave of Dora a predominantly Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city police said. Fifteen people were reported killed at 45 injured.

February 26, 2006: Two more mortar rounds crashed into homes in the city's the eastern Shi'ite-dominated neighborhood of Hurriyah, killing three civilians and injuring six others.

February 26, 2006: A group of soccer players stumbled upon three bodies in Mahmoudiya, south of Baghdad. The victims had been cuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head and chest.

February 26, 2006: In Madain, southeast of the capital, a roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, killing one officer and injuring two others.

February 26, 2006: in Ramadi, gunmen shot dead an ex-general in Saddam Hussein's army as he drove his car through the Sunni-insurgent stronghold.

February 26, 2006: In Hillah, a Shi'ite-dominated city in Babil, a bomb exploded at a crowded bus station, injuring five people.

February 26, 2006: A bomb exploded in a Shi'ite mosque in Basra, causing minor injuries.

February 26, 2006: U.S. soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle in western Baghdad.

February 28, 2006: A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi'ite, Jadida district left 27 dead and 112 injured. In the first incident, a man wearing an explosives belt targeted a gas station. Five minutes later, the first of at least five car bombs in the capital exploded near a group of laborers. A car bomb struck near a small Shi'ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonated by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi'ite Karada district left six dead and 18 injured. In the upscale Sunni Arab district of Zayona, a car bomb targeting an army patrol killed five, while a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injured three. Elsewhere, a car bomb targeting a police patrol on the road between Kirkuk and the capital killed four civilians.

February 28, 2006: In the Hurriya district, gunmen blew up a Sunni mosque without causing casualties.

February 28, 2006: Attackers damaged a mosque in Tikrit that houses the remains of Hussein's father.

February 28, 2006: A mortar shell landed near the offices of Baghdad TV, a satellite channel operated by the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni faction. Two employees were injured.

February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baqubah discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head.

February 28, 2006: Two British soldiers were killed and another injured when their Land Rover was blown up by a roadside bomb while on patrol in the Iraqi town of Amara.

Similar types of attacks continued into March. On March 1, two car bombs killed 26 civilians and wounded 55. The following day a bomb in a vegetable market in Baghdad killed eight and wounded 14. On March 3 over 50 Sunni insurgents attacked a small town near Baghdad killing 25 mostly Shi'ite workers. The following day, two mosques were attacked, one Sunni and one Shi'ite. On March 5 two car bombings and various shootings throughout the day killed 25 Iraqis. 36 bodies were discovered on March 8: 18 in the back of a van and 18 that washed up at a water treatment plant. On March 12 a series of explosions killed over 50 people and wounded 200 throughout a Shi'ite slum near Baghdad. On the morning of March 15 authorities and newspapers reported that over 87 bodies had been discovered in the past 24 hours.<sup>89</sup>

Baghdad, a mixed city, became particularly violent. In the month after the Askariya attack, the murder rate in the city tripled from 11 per day to 33 per day. In the period from March 7 until March 21, over 191 bodies were found, many of them blindfolded, mutilated and shot in the head.

### ***Soft Sectarian Cleansing and Internal Displacement***

While the long term impact of this spate of sectarian violence on Iraq's future was not yet known. In some mixed Shi'ite-Sunni communities it had a unifying effect. In these instances Shi'ites and Sunnis organized armed patrols to protect their neighborhoods from sectarian violence.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time however, it seemed that sectarian displacement was the more dominant trend, as Sunni and Shi'ite families left their mixed neighborhoods for areas where their sect was the majority. The U.N-affiliated International Organization for Migration estimated that by the end of March as many as 25,000 Iraqi's had been displaced since the Askariya bombing. The Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration put the number even higher at 32,000.<sup>91</sup> Of these families, 220 were Shi'ites that had fled from the Sunni dominated al-Anbar province to Baghdad. In Fallujah, another city that is predominately Sunni, only 37 Shi'ite families remained according to the organization.<sup>92</sup> In the Shi'ite city of Najaf, an abandoned hotel was turned into a shelter for incoming families and in Nasiriyah, arriving families began setting up tents on the outskirts of the city.<sup>93</sup>

This internal displacement, while often the result of direct threats by either Sunni insurgents or Shi'ite militias, was also due to the general deterioration of security and increase in sectarian tensions following the attack on the shrine. Families, who often felt secure among their long-time neighbors of the opposite sect, were now facing abductions and killings perpetrated in broad daylight by masked gunmen. For example, when car loads of gunmen grabbed Mohannad al-Azawi, a Sunni, from his pet store in Baghdad and a Shi'ite friend attempted to intervene, witnesses said the men pointed a pistol to his head and asked, "You want us to blow your brains out too?"<sup>94</sup>

The stories told by individual Iraqis were often similar. One individual, Bassam Fariq Daash, a 34-year old Shi'ite fled from his predominately Sunni village of Awad to nearby Shoula after numerous death threats from insurgents. Reportedly, he was one of 147 Shi'ite families that had come to that town since the February 22 attack.<sup>95</sup> In a similar instance, a Sunni man who lived in Samarra was beaten by black-clad militia men, his mother was shot and he was told by the gunmen that they would kill him and "everybody [he knows]" if he did not leave the city immediately.<sup>96</sup> Hussein Alawan, a Shi'ite, was driven out of the mixed city of Latifiyah: "They told me that I should leave within 24 hours or we will all get killed. So we left everything there and took only the bare things we need to live."<sup>97</sup>

In the mixed al-Amel district, some Sunni families received envelopes containing a single bullet and a letter telling them to leave the neighborhood immediately.<sup>98</sup> A Sunni shop owner, Dhafir Sadoun, left his long time residence in Sadr City saying "We did not fear the Mahdi Army because we've lived in Sadr City for 20 years, and everyone knows us and knows how we love the Shi'ites. But the Interior Ministry commandos arrest any Sunni. They don't just arrest them; they kill them."<sup>99</sup> The displacement caused by this sectarian violence was also being exploited for financial gain in some instances. There were reports that an estate agent in Adamiyah, a Sunni suburb in Baghdad, had paid teenagers to distribute fliers to Shi'ite households warning them to leave with the intention of buying up the property at low prices.<sup>100</sup>

### ***US-Iraqi Campaigns in Early 2006***

The Coalition launched several operations in March 2006 aimed at insurgents attempting to foster sectarian violence. Many of these were conducted with Iraqi's taking the lead where possible.

In "Operation Scales of Justice," 26,000 Iraqi army and police together with 10,000 Coalition forces conducted 300 patrols on the streets of Baghdad per day in an effort to increase general security. This operation included more than 100 checkpoints established throughout the city and was scheduled to continue until a new Iraqi government was formed.<sup>101</sup>

"Operation Northern Lights" was an Iraqi-led operation that consisted of a series of offensive raids to capture or kill insurgents, seize weapons and explosive material and halt sectarian attacks. In the initial stages of the operation, 18 insurgents were captured and 8 weapons caches were discovered.<sup>102</sup>

On March 17, the U.S. launched "Operation Swarmer" near Samarra. This joint U.S.-Iraqi operation, led by the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne division, was described as the largest air assault since the 2003 invasion. According to U.S. military officials, 1,500 Coalition and Iraqi troops participated and more than 50 aircraft and 200 tactical vehicles were used.<sup>103</sup> Four battalions were used from the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne were used and about 60 percent of the troops involved were Iraqi according to Lt. Col. Edward Loomis.<sup>104</sup>

The operation focused on a 10 square mile area northeast of the city that had been a concentration of sectarian attacks in the weeks prior and also reportedly harbored al-Qaeda insurgents.<sup>105</sup> At least 40 suspected insurgents were apprehended on the first day and several weapons caches were discovered that contained artillery shells, explosives, roadside bomb making materials and military uniforms.<sup>106</sup> There were no reports of casualties or resistance by insurgents.<sup>107</sup>

The second day of the assault only netted 10 more detainees and 17 from the day prior were released. In addition, no new weapons caches were found. American command even began to send some troops back to their bases.<sup>108</sup>

By the third day of the operation, Lt. Col. Loomis stated that about 80 suspected insurgents had been detained since Thursday, the first day of the assault. Six of those individuals were allegedly involved in the killing of an Iraqi television station director and his driver several days earlier.<sup>109</sup>

The operation concluded March 22 with no casualties and resulted in the detention of 104 suspected insurgents and the discovery of 24 weapons caches.<sup>110</sup>

On the evening of March 26, U.S. and Iraqi forces conducted a joint operation to disrupt a terrorist cell in northeast Baghdad. The events that followed however were sharply disputed by US and Iraqi officials.<sup>111</sup>

According to military spokesman for the U.S., the raid resulted in 16 insurgents killed, 15 captured, one hostage freed and the discovery of weapons and bomb-making equipment. While some reports indicated that the operation was aimed at Shi'ite militiamen loyal to al-Sadr who were using the center for interrogation and torture, others claimed that it was against a Sunni-led element.<sup>112</sup>

Iraqi officials however told a very different account. According to them, U.S. and Iraqi forces descended on the mosque surrounding it with armed humvees and sealed off all exits. When



soldiers attempted to enter the mosque, they took fire resulting in an hour-long gun battle. The Interior Ministry said that 17 people were killed, including the mosque's 80 year old imam. Those that were killed supposedly worked for al-Sadr and were engaged in evening prayer at the mosque when the raid began.<sup>113</sup>

Aides to al-Sadr alleged that 25 people were killed and that U.S. troops shot the guards outside the mosques before storming the facility and killing all those inside.<sup>114</sup> One witness, a policeman, said that the mosque appeared to have been hit by a rocket.<sup>115</sup>

U.S. officials continued to deny that they had entered a mosque.<sup>116</sup> Yet footage aired on Iraqi news channels showed at least a dozen unarmed corpses, including one elderly man, in what appeared to be a prayer room.<sup>117</sup> In a Pentagon briefing, Gen. Peter Pace stated that there was a minaret and prayer room inside the compound but could not verify whether people were killed in the prayer room.<sup>118</sup>

U.S. Army photos showed dead men with weapons in a room that lacked prayer rugs.<sup>119</sup> It was possible that militia members staged the scene after U.S. and Iraqi forces departed. In the past, insurgents have demonstrated a capability to manipulate public opinion by forcing Coalition forces to attack holy sites, or make it appear that they did, as part of informational warfare.

The issue may simply be one of definition. The "mosque" was marked on the outside by a sign that read "Al-Moustafa Husayniyah." "Husayniyah" is a Shi'ite term for a religious center or a community center that may also house offices for political purposes. Thus, although the complex did not have many of the traditional characteristics of a "mosque," it was considered to be on by the Shi'ites nonetheless.<sup>120</sup>

Regardless of whether the facility was a mosque, a prayer room, or neither, the operation had damaging political effects. The governor of Baghdad subsequently broke off all cooperation with U.S. military forces.<sup>121</sup> Prime Minister al-Jaafari secured a promise from Gen. George Casey that he would conduct an investigation into the allegations.<sup>122</sup> Shi'ite political leaders condemned the raid and al-Sadr used the event as another opportunity to condemn the American presence in Iraq and call for Shi'ite solidarity.

### ***Efforts at a National Unity Government***

Progress also continued in forming a government. In late January the two dominant Shi'ite and Sunni political blocs, United Iraqi Alliance and the Iraqi Accordance Front had entered into talks and publicly announced a list of potential nominees for Prime Minister in the next government. These included current Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari; Adil Abdul-Mahdi of SCIRI; nuclear physicist Hussein al-Shahrastani; and Fadhila party representative Nadim al-Jabiri.<sup>123</sup> In February, Ibrahim al-Jaafari was re-elected to the position by one vote over Adil Abdul-Mahdi. Al-Jaafari's victory was in part due to the support he received from the legislators associated with al-Sadr.

The post-election violence did, however, complicate many aspects of the effort to create an inclusive government. For example, the control of the Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry posts at the cabinet level became an even more contentious issue between the Shi'ite dominated United Iraqi Alliance and the mostly Sunni Iraqi Accordance Front. Adnan al-Dulaimi, the leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front, stated that he believed the appointment to the positions should be "kept away from any sectarian and political considerations" and accused the MOI forces of engaging in "sectarian cleansing" in Baghdad. Hadi al-Amri, the head of the Badr Brigade, the

militia associated with SCIRI, responded that faced with “daily slaughter” the Shi’ites “will not relinquish security portfolios.”<sup>124</sup>

In March however, the ministers of both the Defense and Interior Ministries attempted to stem abuses by announcing that they would only carry out joint raids in the future.<sup>125</sup>

As for the Sunni insurgency, the Iraqi government continued to hold direct talks with willing Sunni militant groups. Although the government had emphasized that no steadfast commitments have been made between parties, Talabani’s advisor for security affairs, Wafiq al Samarie, said that, “many groups are communicating with us.”<sup>126</sup> This ongoing dialogue began in the months leading up to the December election in an effort to draw Sunni Arabs, the core of the insurgency, into the political process and isolate the Neo-Salafi elements

The bombing of the Askariya shrine and the sectarian violence that followed threatened the progress in forming an inclusive government. However, Iraqi political figures called on the country to recognize that the attack was an attempt to create a civil war and urged Iraqi’s to be calm.

President Jalal Talabani said the day of the attacks, “We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq’s unity...we should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war.” President Bush echoed these sentiments saying, “The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity...the world must stand united against them, and steadfast behind the people of Iraq.” The President also pledged U.S. assistance to rebuild the damaged shrine. Unlike the “activist” al-Sadr, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani told his followers that attacks on Sunni mosques were forbidden.<sup>127</sup>

President Bush spoke with the leaders of the seven major political factions by phone and urged them to reinstitute talks. Afterwards, Sunni leaders agreed to meet with their Shi’ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of “terrific political symbolism.”<sup>128</sup>

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, warned that future U.S. support of the Iraqi government and aid would be dependent upon the success of the government’s efforts at creating an inclusive arrangement. Al-Jaafari responded that the new government will not be sectarian, “Not because the U.S. ambassador says this and warns us, but because this is our policy.”<sup>129</sup>

A leading Sunni coalition party suspended talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands that had to be met in order for negotiations to continue. These demands, which were met shortly, included the imposition of a curfew, a denunciation of violence by the Iraqi government, and a return of the Sunni mosques occupied by Shi’ite militias.<sup>130</sup>

The first meeting of Iraq’s 275-member Council of Representatives took place on March 16 amid ongoing sectarian violence. The meeting itself was largely ceremonial, and lasted just over 30 minutes. According to Iraq’s constitution, the country then had 60 days to form a government, yet many issues critical to the formation of a unity government had yet to be resolved between the various political factions.<sup>131</sup>

One of the most contentious decisions by the dominant Shi’ite bloc was the nomination of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister. Sunnis, Kurds and some secular members called for a new nomination by the United Iraqi Alliance.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps more debilitating to the functionality of the body is that it

could not elect its own officials or take up new business until it reached an agreement on the makeup of its new leadership.<sup>133</sup>

Al-Jaafari stated after the meeting that he would step down as Prime Minister “if the people ask me [to].” It seemed likely however that the UIA would stay united behind al-Jaafari.<sup>134</sup>

In fact, some characterized the ceremony as more of an interruption to the ongoing negotiations between the various political groups to create a coalition government that is satisfactory to Iraq’s majority Shi’ites, yet gives proportional roles to the Sunnis and Kurds as well.

One of the initiatives aimed to achieve this end, was the formation of a 19-member national security council to set policies pertaining to the army and police forces, the counter-insurgency campaign and the disarmament and dissolution of Shi’ite militias. Two of the positions in the council would go to the President and Prime Minister with the remaining seats being distributed to parties in proportion to their representation in parliament.<sup>135</sup> This council’s relationship with the cabinet, chosen by the Prime Minister, was unclear because nowhere in the constitution does it provide for the formation of such a council. In fact, Kurdish leaders first suggested the council in January as a check on Shi’ite power. Although the UIA initially resisted it as unconstitutional, pressure from the other political parties and Ambassador Khalilzad caused it to reluctantly acquiesce. Still, it did so only on the grounds that decisions will require the approval by 13 members, which for the foreseeable future gives the Shi’ites “veto” power as long as they remain unified within the council.<sup>136</sup>

U.S. frustration with al-Jaafari’s reluctance to rein in Shi’ite militias became increasingly vocal and in return, so did Shi’ite accusations of political bullying on the part of the U.S. This tension was worsened by allegations that U.S. and Iraqi military forces raided a mosque, killing worshippers loyal to al-Sadr. In late March, Ambassador Khalilzad stated that President Bush “doesn’t want, doesn’t support, doesn’t accept” al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Although U.S. officials in Baghdad did not elaborate on the statement, they did not dispute its authenticity.<sup>137</sup>

Representatives from al-Jaafari’s office immediately condemned the remark. “How can they do this?” Hadier al-Ubady, a spokesman for al-Jaafari asked. “An ambassador telling a sovereign country what to do is unacceptable.”<sup>138</sup>

## ***The Course of the Insurgency to Date***

The insurgents have suffered a series of significant and continuing tactical defeats since early 2004, notably in cities like Najaf, Baghdad, Samarra, Fallujah, and Mosul, but also increasingly in the “triangle of death,” Sunni triangle, and Iraqi-Syrian border areas. Iraqi forces have come to play a much more important role, and many insurgent leaders have been killed or captured.

Nevertheless, the history of the fighting shows that Iraqi government and US attempts to root out the insurgency have so far had limited impact. US and Iraqi efforts to thwart individual insurgent attacks have also sometimes been hollow victories. As one US Marine specializing in counterinsurgency in Iraq recently noted, “Seizing the components of suicide bombs (or IED making material) is like making drug seizures, comforting, but ultimately pointless. There will always be more. Both sides are still escalating to nowhere.” The fact also remains that securing Coalition areas and forces often simply drives insurgents and terrorists to attack Iraqis.

History reveals no tipping points and provides no guarantees against the prospect of either a long war at something approaching the current level of violence or a more intense civil conflict. While

some US officers began to talk as early as the battle of Fallujah in November 2004 as a “tipping point,” many US experts were cautious even at the time. They felt the insurgents did lose a key sanctuary, suffered more than 1,000 killed, and lost significant numbers of prisoners and detainees. They also lost some significant leaders and cadres. Many insurgents and insurgent leaders seem to have left Fallujah before the fighting, however, and many others escaped.

No province is yet fully safe from occasional attack, and the frequency and intensity of attacks have been only part of the story. Various insurgent groups are still able to attack in other areas like Mosul, Ramadi, Samarra, Baquba, Balad, Bejj, Tal Afar, and Hawija during the fighting in Fallujah, and seem to have planned to disperse and to shift their operations before the fighting in Fallujah began.<sup>139</sup> The fighting in Mosul was particularly severe after the battle of Fallujah, and the US military reported a total of 130-140 attacks and incidents a day.<sup>140</sup> While the Coalition and Iraqi forces did capture large numbers of weapons and supplies, few experts – if any – felt that the insurgents faced any near term supply problems given the numbers of weapons looted from Iraq's vast arms depots during and after the fighting that brought down Saddam.

The battles that have followed during the course of 2005 have been less concentrated and less intensive, but almost continuous – mixed with raids, captures, and the sudden “swarming” of known and suspected insurgent headquarters and operational areas. Even cities that were supposedly liberated before the battle of Fallujah, like Samarra, have been the source of enough continuing attacks to force the redeployment of large numbers of Iraqi security and police forces and elements of key US counterinsurgency units like Task Force 1-26.<sup>141</sup>

There have been continuing kidnappings and assassinations, and a constant campaign of intimidation, disappearances, and “mystery killings.” These have been mixed exceptionally bloody suicide bombings of Shi'ites and Kurds designed to provoke a civil war. While neither MNSTC-I nor the Iraqi government have provided counts of insurgent killed and wounded, the figures almost certainly exceed 10,000 between May 2003 and May 2005, and could be substantially higher.

. Sunni insurgents have repeatedly shown since the battle of Fallujah that they can strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite-dominated cities like Baghdad, Tal Afar, Mosul and Basra, and occasionally in Kurdish areas.<sup>142</sup> As a result, four of Iraq's provinces – which include Baghdad and Mosul and some 43% of Iraq's population -- continue to have a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence

While the previous chronologies have not addressed the history of attacks on infrastructure in any detail, there has been continuing sabotage of key targets like Iraq's oil facilities. In early January 2006, for example, the mere threat of insurgent attacks forced the shut down of the oil refinery in Baiji. Insurgents attacked and destroyed a convoy of 20 oil tanker trucks that were traveling between Baiji and Baghdad. The attackers launched two separate ambushes, one outside of Tikrit and the other outside of Mashahda, utilizing RPGs to destroy the convoy.<sup>143</sup> These attacks, coupled with a temporary strike imposed by fearful tanker drivers and sabotage at a Baghdad refinery, led to a rise in the price of gasoline. Protests and hoarding were sporadically reported around the country.

As is discussed later in this report, Iran and Syria continue to play a role in the insurgency. There have also been indications that some elements of the insurgency may be moving into other areas. In August 2005, for example, Saudi authorities announced that they had seized 682 Iraqis who tried to infiltrate Saudi territory in the first six months of the 2005. Interior ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Mansour Turki stated that new security measures were being taken along the border

with Iraq, including the erection of sand barricades, the deployment of heat sensors and cameras, and round-the-clock patrols. Still, according to Turki, the problem remaining is a lack of security measures on the Iraqi side.<sup>144</sup> Aside from an 800-kilometer border with Saudi Arabia, porous borders with Jordan and Syria remain liabilities in combating foreign assistance to Iraq's Sunni insurgency.

In mid 2005 reports began surfacing that al Qaeda was preparing to send insurgents back to their own countries in order to carry out attacks there. In October, Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr announced that documents seized from Abu Azzam (a lieutenant of Zarqawi's killed in September 2005) contained details about a plan to widen the insurgency beyond Iraq. Jabr told Reuters that prior to his death, Abu Azzam had written Zarqawi and asked him to "begin to move a number of Arab fighters to the countries they came from to transfer their experience in car bombings in Iraq" and that hundreds of fighters had already left Iraq for their homes.<sup>145</sup>

In July 2005, the private Israeli research service Debkafile reported that al Qaeda in Iraq was "diluting its Iraq force" and moving more than 1,000 of its operatives to Europe and countries in the Middle East in order to launch terror offensives there. The targeted countries were: Britain, Italy, France, Denmark, and Russia in Europe; and, in the Middle East, Egypt Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel.<sup>146</sup> According to Debkafile the summer 2005 attacks in London and Sharm al Sheikh were the first of many attacks part of the new Al Qaeda offensive.<sup>147</sup>

### III. Pattern of Attacks

Another way to analyze the insurgency is to look at the pattern of attacks and casualties. This is not always easy. There has been a reasonable amount of summary reporting, and a flood of reporting on daily incidents. However, US and British official reporting on the insurgency has been erratic, and has left many gaps that make it difficult to analyze the insurgency's intensity and cycles, and characterize trends.

For example, the counts of attacks issued by senior US officials have generally focused on attacks directed at US and Iraqi government targets rather than all attacks, and did not include all attempts and minor incidents. They generally have not included Iraqi criminal activity or sabotage, although some is clearly insurgent driven. DIA figures and Coalition data also tend to be skewed in favor of counts of attacks on Coalition forces and undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians, and some aspects of Iraqi officials, military, and police.

One of the tragedies of Iraq is that as part of its effort to “spin” reporting on the war in favorable directions, the Department of Defense has been slow to count Iraqi casualties of any kind, or treat Iraqi military and police casualties as partners whose sacrifice deserves recognition. Coalition counts also undercount acts of sabotage. Like most partial counts, this disguises another important shift in the patterns in insurgency.

These problems have been compounded by the fact there are few meaningful Iraqi government data. Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior had stopped issuing meaningful reporting on the number and intensity of attacks in the summer of 2004.

The US has, however, improved some of its reporting under pressure from Congress. Some data have emerged from Iraqi sources, and some organizations like Iraq Body Count provide useful additional material. As a result, it is possible to provide at least some insights based on the trends in the war.

#### *Summary Attack Patterns*

Figure III.1 shows the patterns in attack by province from August 29, 2005 to January 20, 2006. It shows that only four provinces accounted for 83% of the attacks – a consistent pattern since the early days of the insurgency, although some 43% of the total population lived in these provinces. It also shows that twelve provinces, with some 50% of the population received only 6% of the attacks.

Unclassified work by DIA and MNF-I showing the approximate number of total attacks per month from June 2003 to February 2004 is summarized in Figure III.2 and average weekly attacks by time period between January 2004 and January 2006 is shown in Figure III.3. These data reflect patterns typical of the cyclical variations in modern insurgencies.<sup>148</sup> The same is true of the trend data on US, allied, and Iraqi casualties discussed later in this chapter, and it is clear from a comparison of such data that there is only an uncertain correlation between incident counts and casualty counts, and even accurate incident counts would be only the crudest possible indication of the patterns in insurgency without a much wider range of comparative metrics.

These attack counts confirm the fact that insurgent activity surged before the January 30, 2005 elections temporarily eased back, and then surged again -- rather than diminishing in any lasting way. An internal US Army analysis in April 2005 calculated that the apparent shift was more a shift in focus to more vulnerable non-US targets than an actual drop in incidents.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, a

study by the National Intelligence Council in the CIA, that was leaked to Newsweek, concluded that US government reporting had so many conflicting sources and methods of analysis that the resulting metrics could not be trusted, and that there was inadequate evidence to support any conclusions about whether the insurgents were being defeated.<sup>150</sup>

Figure III.4 shows the trend measured by a different standard: total attacks and effective attacks. It provides a much clearer picture of the intensity of the war and how sharp the cycles are in attempted attacks over time. At the same time, there is often surprisingly little correlation between attempted and effective attacks. The cycles in attempted attacks are much smaller and the trends are largely meaningless. The level of effective attacks is nearly constant from April 2005 through the end of 2005.

The Department of Defense identified the following trends in attack patterns in its February 2006 report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:"

Over the last quarter of 2005, the overall number of IED attacks trended downward.

Three-quarters of insurgent attacks resulted in no casualties or serious damage.

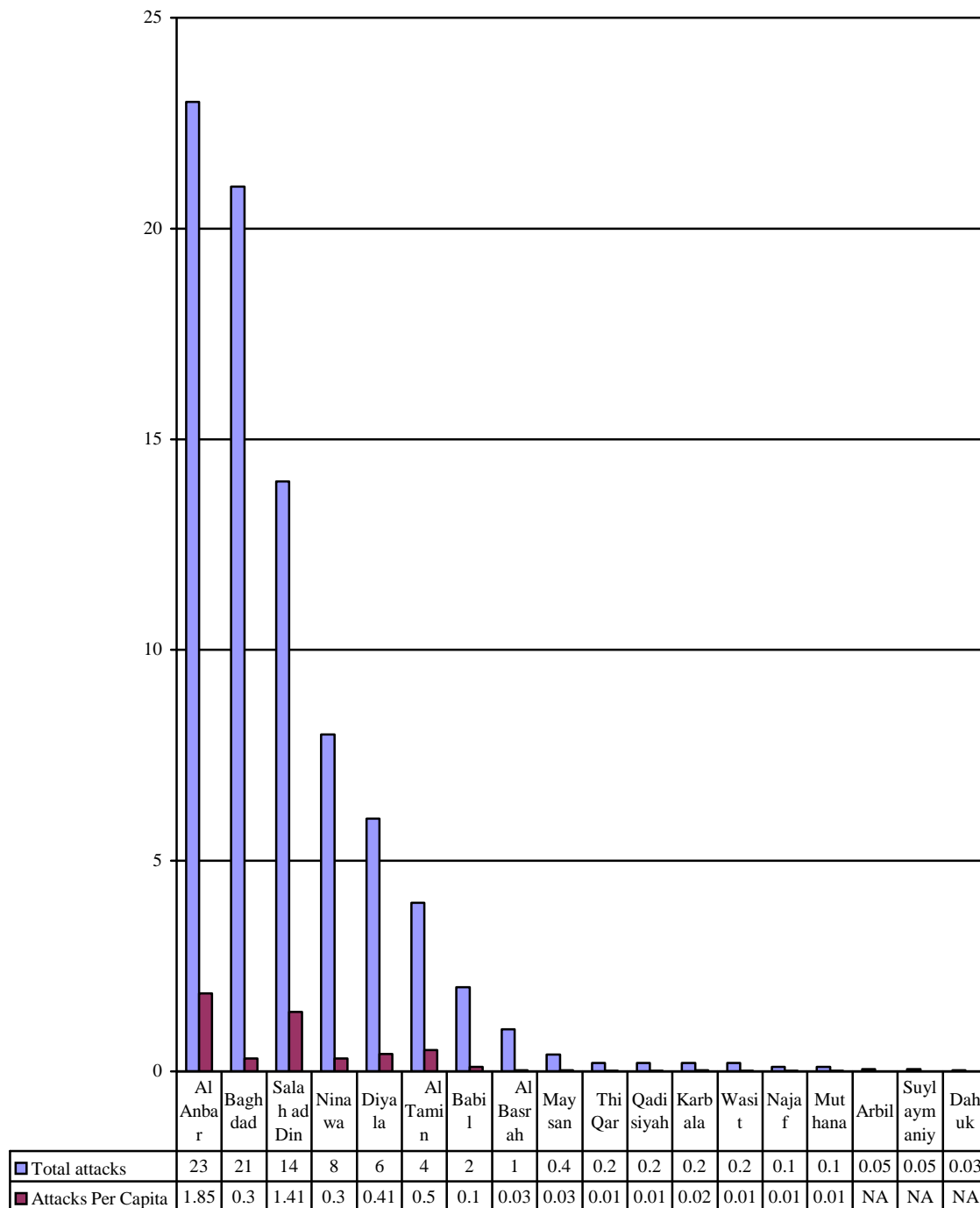
80% of attacks were directed at Coalition forces, but Iraqi's suffered three-quarters of all casualties.

Insurgent attacks range from a single insurgent executing one attack to a highly coordinated attack using different weapons systems. However, there were only four of the more sophisticated attacks in the six months prior.

In the period between September 17, 2005 and January 20, 2006, 23% of car bombs were intercepted and defused. This was an increase from 17% in the three months prior.

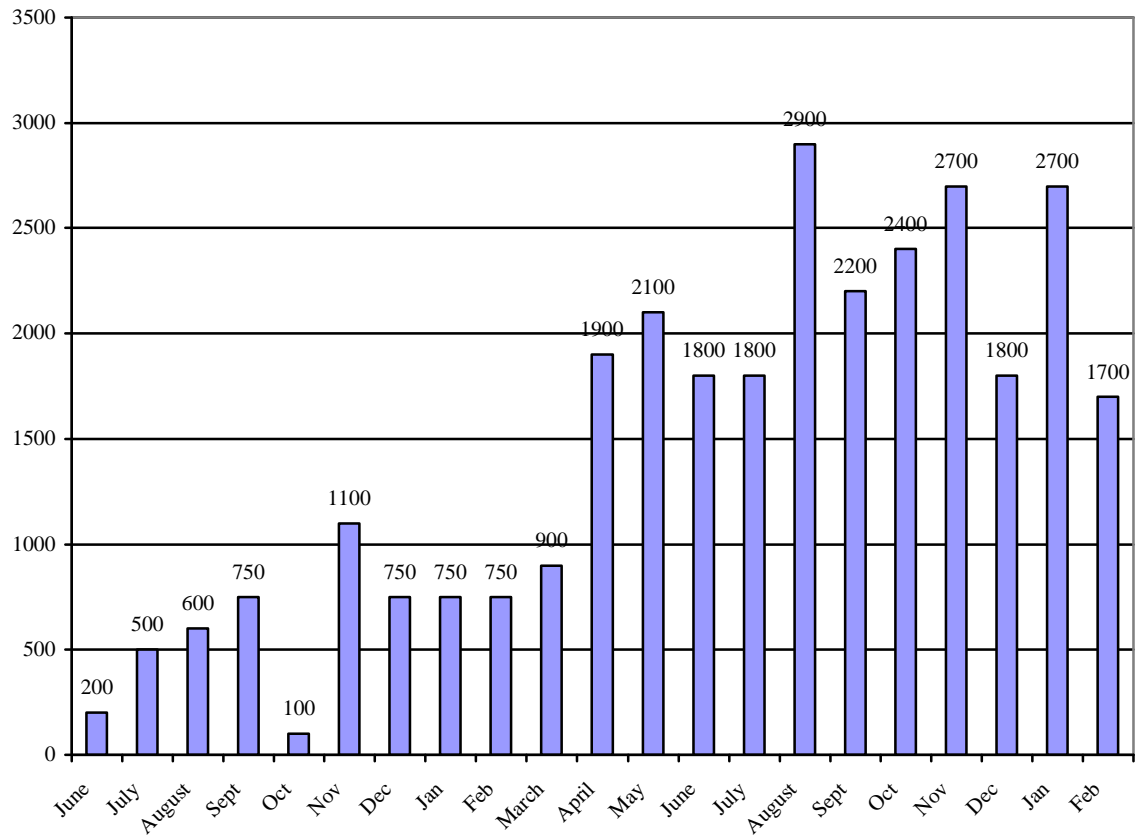
In March, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch reiterated that 75% of all attacks take place in three provinces. He added that the other 15 provinces averaged less than six attacks per day and that 12 of those averaged less than two per day. Nationwide however, attacks were averaging 75 per day, a level that had been consistent since August 2005.<sup>151</sup>

**Figure III.1: Attacks by Iraqi Governorate or Province: August 29, 2005 to January 20, 2006**



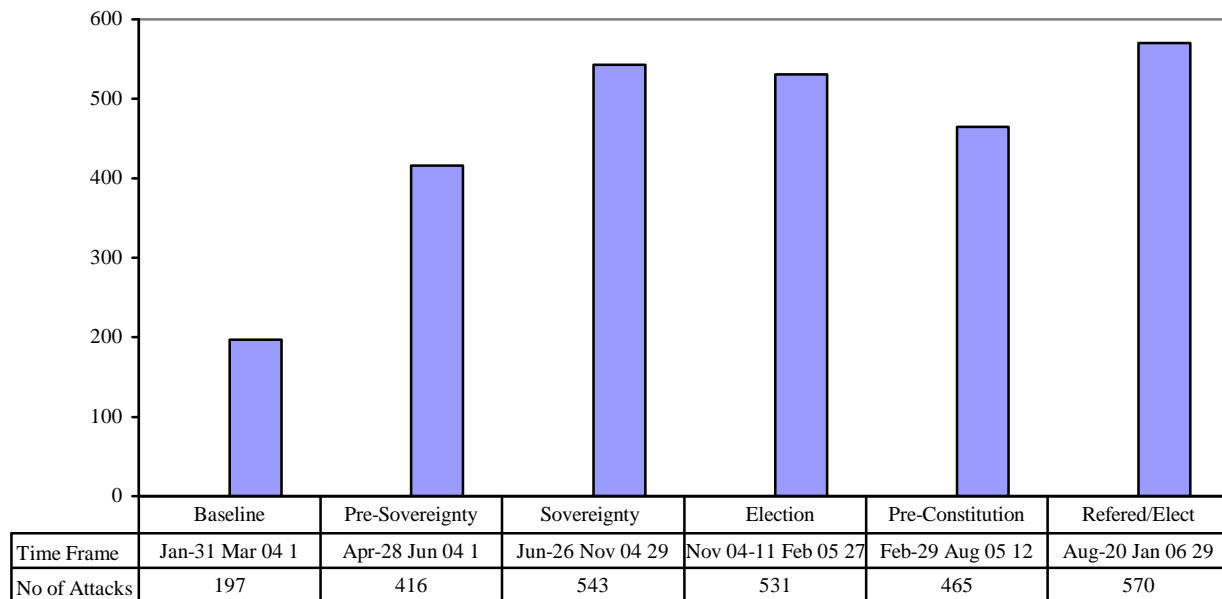
Source: Adapted from "Measuring Stability in Iraq, February 2006," Report to Congress in Accordance with the Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), February 2006, p. 26



**Figure III.2: Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003-February 2005**

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

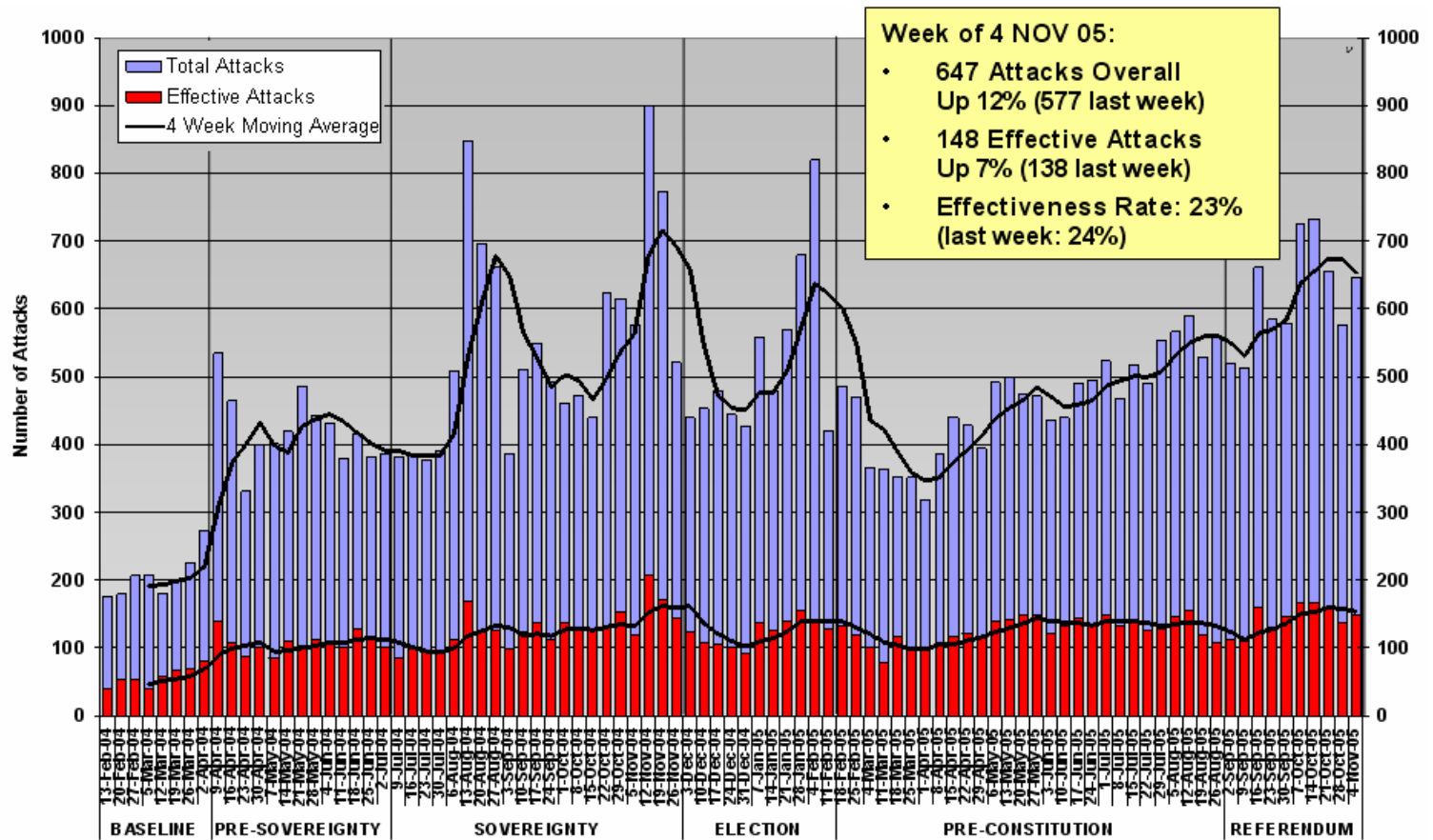
Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, *Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police*, Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-43IT, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

**Figure III.3: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – January 2006**

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," DOD Report to Congress, October 13, 2005 and the updated report issued in February, 2006, p. 27.

Note: Referendum period only has three weeks of data; average may be skewed by spikes in attacks. Actual numbers are estimates based on graphs provided in the report.

**Figure III.4: Total Average Weekly Attacks versus Effective Attacks by Time Period:  
February 2004 – November 2005**



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

## ***Total Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Bombings, Vehicle Borne Bombings (VBIEDs), and Suicide Bombings***

The broad patterns in improvised explosive device (IED) bombings, vehicle borne bombings (VBIEDs), and suicide bombings have been discussed in the previous chapter, but the trend data again provide useful insights. The trends in the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are shown in Figure III.5, and the patterns in casualties are shown in Figure III.6. As has been discussed earlier, these patterns fluctuate over time, but show a steady increase, and a significant rise in successful detonations towards the end of 2005. Figure III.6 also shows an increase in US deaths from such IEDs, although the number did drop in early 2006. By mid March, President Bush stated that nearly half of all IEDs were found and disabled before they could detonate, and in the 18 months prior, the casualty rate of IEDs had been cut in half.<sup>152</sup>

The patterns in suicide attacks, car bombings, the resulting casualties, the numbers of bomb makers captured and killed, and the number of car bombs defused and intercepted are more complex and shown in Figures III.7, III.8 and III.9. These figures only cover 2005, but do show interesting trends. The number of attacks dropped from a high in early 2005, but the number of casualties did not. As is often the case with trends in an insurgency, there is no clear correlation between the two trends. The trend for bombers captured or killed is of interest largely because, while the number is rising, the overall total has been and remains so low.

If one looks at data from other sources, the number of car bombings rose from 65 in February 2005 to 170 in April, and the total number of major attacks per day rose from 30-40 in February and March to 70 in April and May. The intensity of the attacks also increased as more suicide bombings took place by Islamist extremists – many conducted by young men from countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan who infiltrated in from across the Syria border.

The number of major attacks involving suicide bombers rose from 25% in February to a little over 50% in April. There were 69 suicide bombings in April 2005, more than in the entire period from the fall of Saddam Hussein to the transfer of power in June 2004. In May, some 90-suicide bombings were the primary cause of some 750 casualties that month.<sup>153</sup> The annual pattern was equally serious. If one only counts car bombings, there had been more than 482 successful bombings in the year since the handover of power on June 26, 2004, killing at least 2,176 people and wounding at least 5,536.<sup>154</sup>

While the insurgents focused more on Iraqi targets, and increasingly on Shi'ite and Kurdish targets that might help provoke a major civil war, the attacks on MNF-I forces climbed from 40 a day in March to 55 in April, far below the peak of 130 a day before the January 30, 2005 elections – but scarcely reassuring.<sup>155</sup> The good news for the US was that only 146 Americans died during the three-month period from February 1 to April 30, 2005, versus 315 in the previous three-month period.<sup>156</sup>

The difficulty in analyzing the patterns in a constantly changing situation is illustrated by another surge in activity that took place as the new government was appointed. The Iraqi government announced most of its appointments on April 28, 2005 -- some three months after the election and months after the supposed deadline for doing so.

In the week that followed (April 28-May 6), there were 10 major suicide bombings, and 35 major attacks. Insurgents killed more than 270 Iraqi civilians, and at least 14 bodies were found in a Baghdad garbage dump that may have been from previous attacks. Many of the attacks were

against Iraqi forces and recruits, and the intensity of the attacks is indicated by the fact that a suicide bomber from the "Army of Ansar al-Sunna" killed more than 60 people in the Kurdish city of Irbil in Northern Iraq in a single attack.<sup>157</sup> For the first time, in April, more than 50% of the car bombings were suicide attacks.<sup>158</sup>

These developments led some US officers and officials to claim that the insurgents were lashing out because they had taken so many casualties that they were desperate, and/or to say that the successful car bombings by Islamic extremists had little strategic meaning since they alienated the Iraqi people and could easily be carried out by a small number of largely foreign volunteers that were not representative of Iraqi Sunnis.

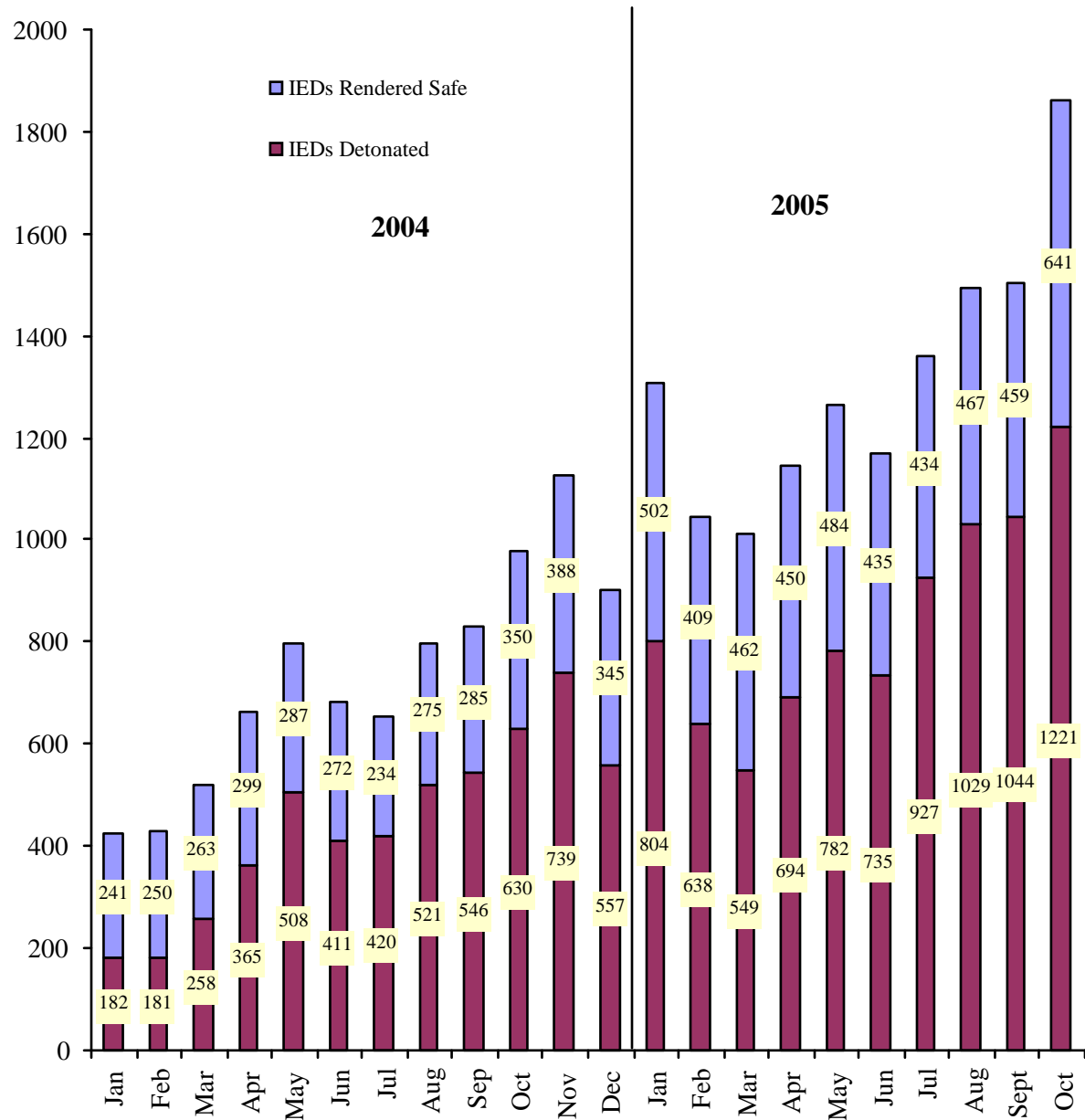
Such arguments could not be disproved or proved, but they were made at a time the US Marines found it necessary to conduct a major offensive along the Euphrates from Haditha to the Syrian border, the largest offensive since the attack on Fallujah. US forces also had to launch another major operation to secure the area south and west of Baghdad, and follow them up with a series of major campaigns around Mosul and in western Iraq during the summer and fall.<sup>159</sup>

These operations had to be followed up again and again; largely because many of the insurgents could disperse the moment they came under pressure. Also, the Coalition and Iraqi forces both lacked the manpower to occupy high threat areas and the requisite Coalition or Iraqi government teams to back up tactical victories with civic action programs and efforts to establish effective governance.

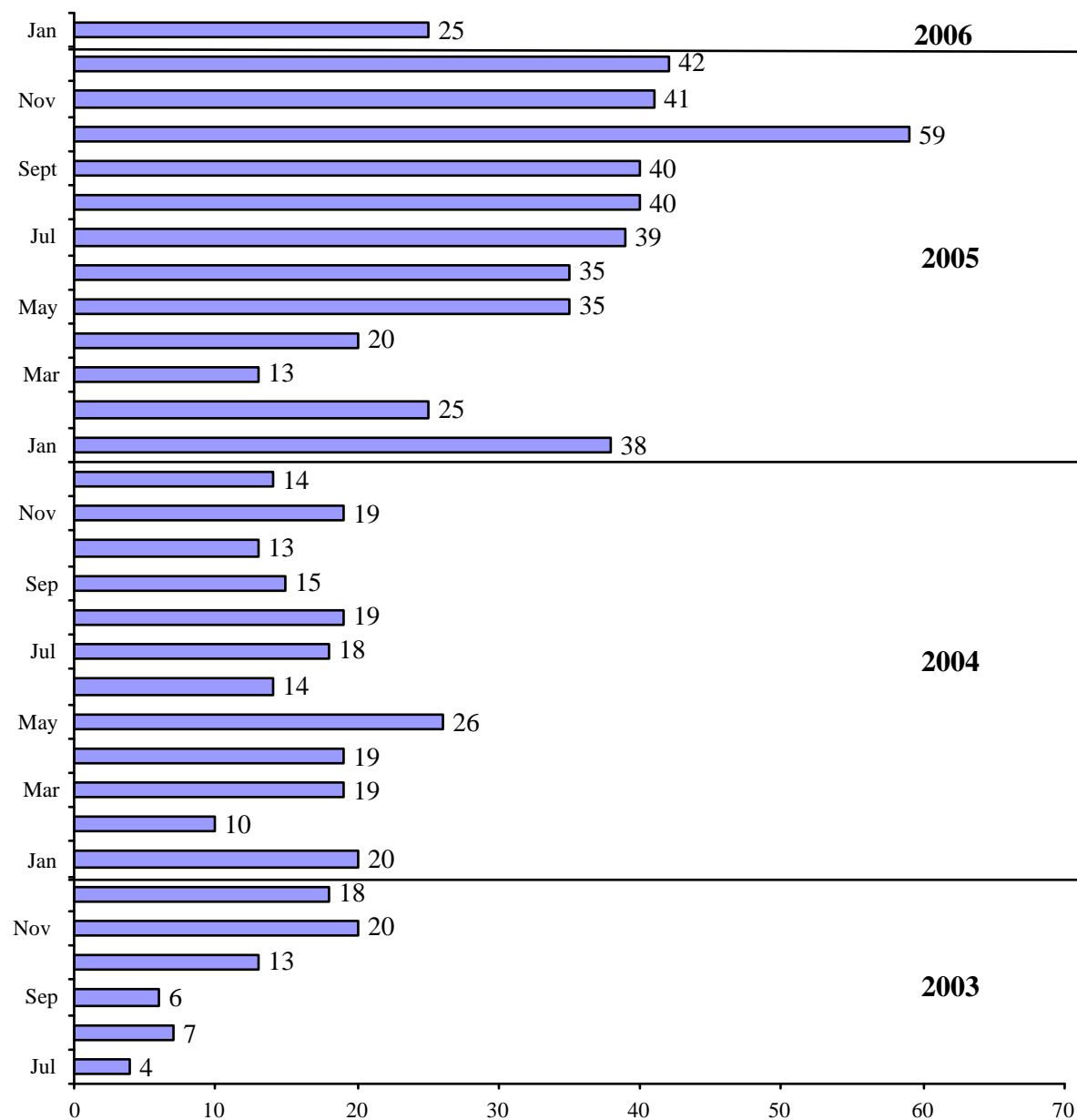
The insurgents and terrorists continued to try to strip the new government of its perceived legitimacy. In spite of MNF-I estimates that some 1,000-3,000 insurgents were being killed and captured each month, attacks on Iraqi security forces and government officials continued, and the number of suicide bombings continued to mount.

This is clear from the summary data provided in the previous chapter and from the patterns in bombings revealed similar cycles for the rest of 2005 --although considerable uncertainty sometimes emerged over such counts because the Iraqi government and Coalition did not report consistently. There were 21 car bombings in Baghdad alone during the first two weeks of May, and 126 in the 80 days before May 18<sup>th</sup>. This compared with 25 during all of 2004. Daily attacks had averaged 30-40 a day in February, but were at least 70 a day in June.<sup>160</sup> Although the number of car bombings decreased from April to July 2005, (from April's high of 170 car bombings, the number fell to 151 in May; 133 in June; and less than 100 in July) at the time, experts believed this was merely al Qa'ida "storing up" for the late summer and fall offensive.<sup>161</sup>

The cycles were equally uncertain for the rest of year. Coalition reporting in December 2005 showed a drop in the number of suicide bombings from 70 in May to 40 in August, a rise to 50 in October, and then a drop to 23 in November. The number of bombs exploded or cleared rose from 1,170 in June to 1,869 in October, and then dropped to 1,330 roadside bombings and 68 car bombings in November. There had been 130 car bombings in February.<sup>162</sup> The US death toll rose from 49 in September to 96 in October, and then dropped to 85 in November. By the end November, the US had lost 80 or more dead in 10 of the 33 months of the war. Iraqi deaths went from 69 in August to 356 in September and 290 in November.

**Figure III.5: Patterns of IED Attacks: January 2004 to October 2005**

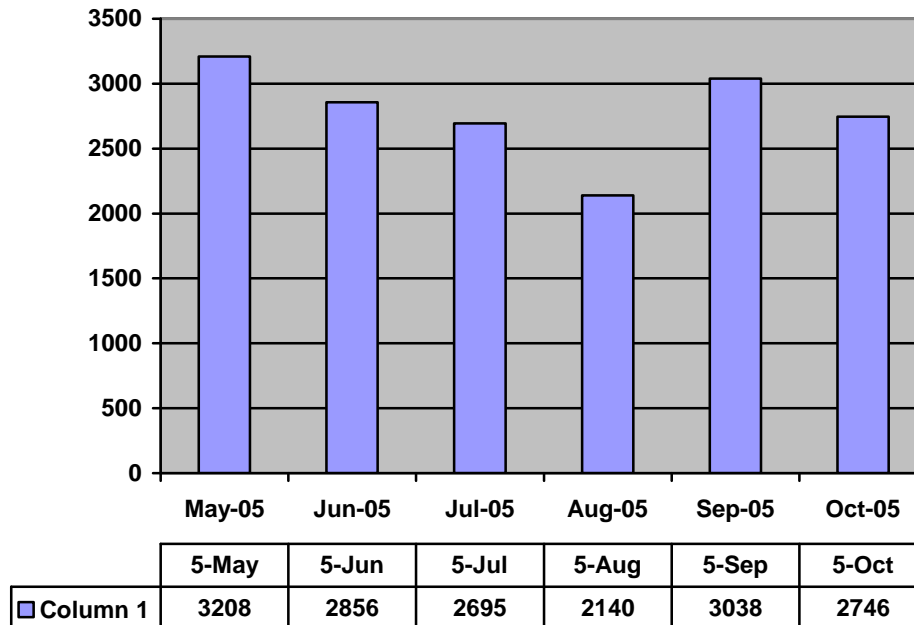
Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

**Figure III.6: US IED Deaths: July 2003 to January 2006**

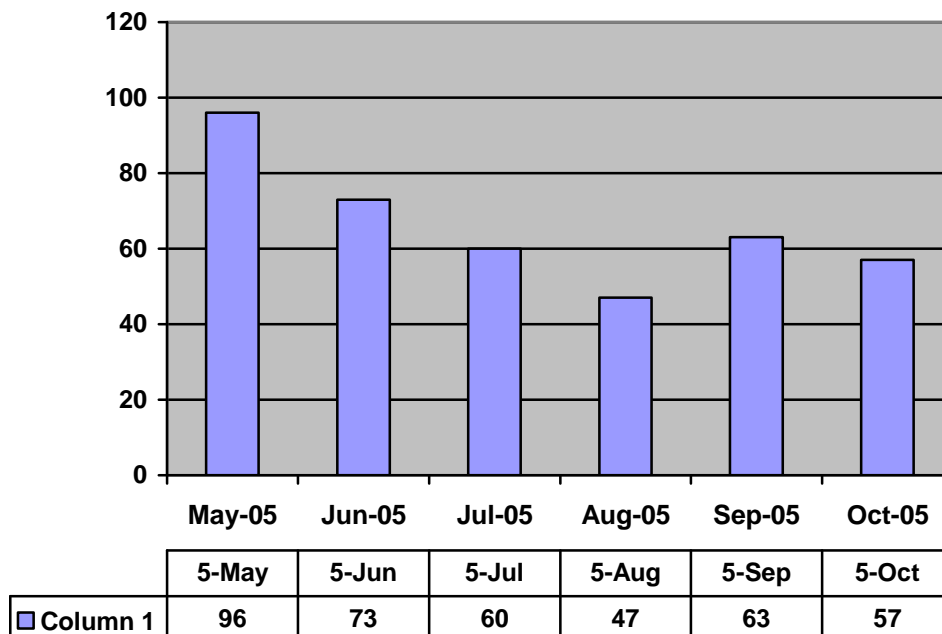
Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Body Count as of February 6, 2006. Available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IED.aspx>.

**Figure III.7: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May-October 2005 – Part One**

**Casualties**



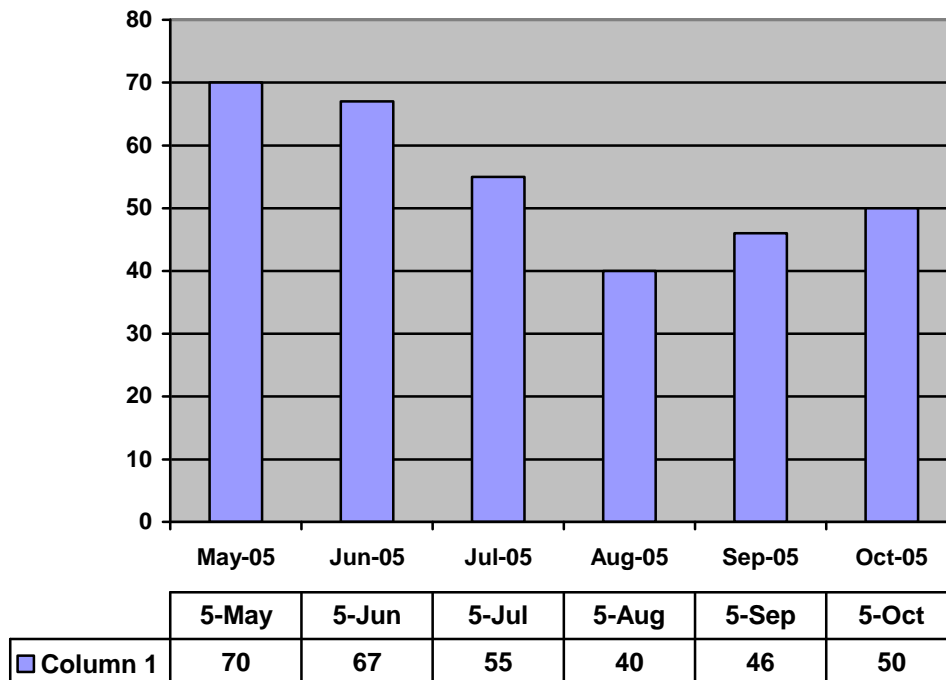
**Vehicle Borne IEDs**



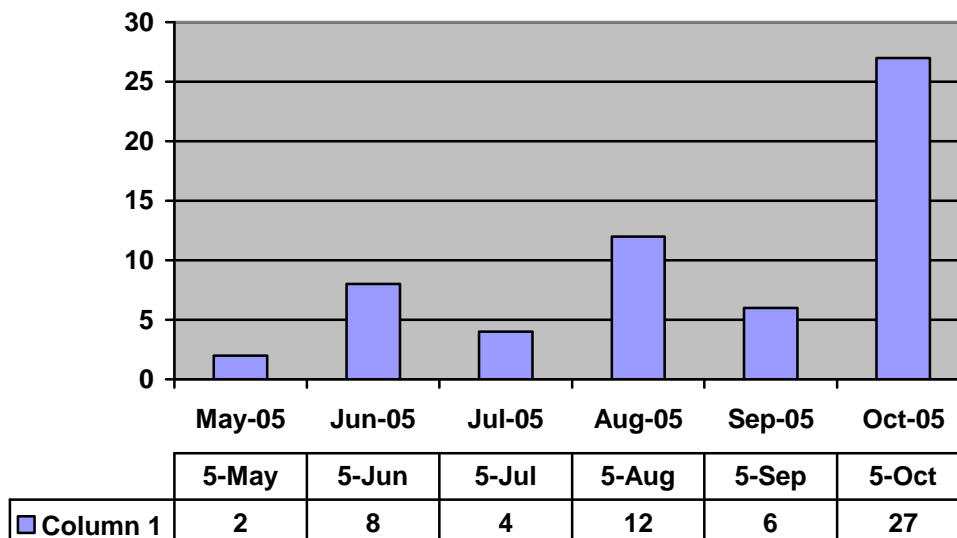


**Figure III.8: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May – October 2005 – Part Two**

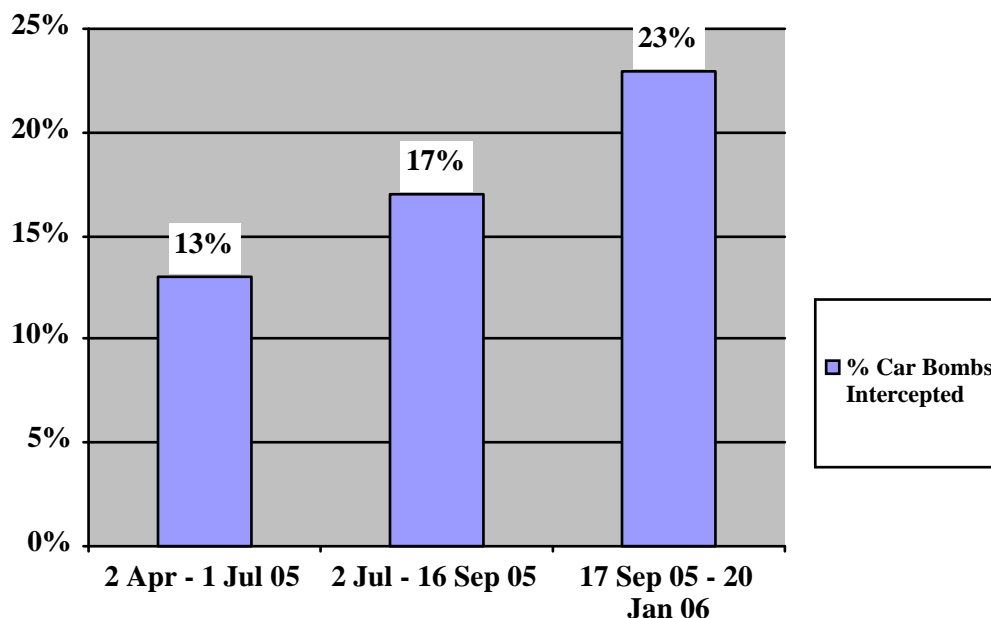
**Suicide Attacks in 2005**



**Car Bombings in 2005**



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

**Figure III.9: Percent of Car Bombs Intercepted/Defused: April 2005 – January 2006**

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," February, 2006, Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), p. 28.

### ***Sabotage and Infrastructure Attacks***

The impact of insurgent attacks on infrastructure has also been discussed in the previous chapter, but Figures III.10 and III.11 provide trend lines that show how insurgents continued attacks designed to disrupt supplies of water, electricity, crude oil, gasoline and heating oil, particularly in the greater Baghdad area. The shift in attack patterns do show significant cycles, but cannot be related to the effectiveness of such attacks, and seems to reflect a massive undercount of large numbers of minor sabotage attempts and success that are not included in these figures. Map III.1 shows the location of Iraqi oilfields and pipelines.

In a report to Congress in February 2006, the Department of Defense indicated that while attacks on Iraq's infrastructure "account for an extremely small portion" of overall attacks and continued to go down, "the severity of the attacks has gone up" and the "enemy has become more proficient at targeting critical infrastructure vulnerabilities and at intimidating workers, such as truck drivers, who are essential to distribution of oil and essential services."<sup>163</sup>

If one looks at the history of such attacks in more detail, one finds the following patterns:

- Attacks on power and water facilities both offset the impact of US aid and cause Iraqi anger against the government. Al Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets because they deny the government revenue (in the first quarter of FY 2005 Iraq lost an estimated \$887 million in export revenues due to insurgent attacks on infrastructure)<sup>164</sup>, affect both power and Iraqi ability to obtain fuel, get extensive media and foreign business attention, and prevent investment in one of Iraq's most attractive assets.<sup>165</sup>

The impact of this activity is regularly reflected in the histograms in the Department of Defense, Iraq Weekly Status Report. For example, the April 27, 2005 edition shows that electric power generation remained far below the US goal, and usually below the prewar level, from January 1, 2004 to April 21,

2005. Crude oil production averaged around 2.1 MMBD from February through April 2005, versus a goal of 2.5 MMBD, and a prewar peak of 2.5 MMBD in March 2003. For September-October 2005, the crude oil production average fell to 2.02 MMBD, still below the target goal of 2.5MMBD.<sup>166</sup> Exports averaged only about 1.3-1.4 MMBD from January to April 2005, largely because of pipeline and facility sabotage -- although record oil prices raised Iraqi export revenues from \$5.1 billion in 2003 to \$17.0 billion in 2004, and \$6.2 billion in the first four months of 2005. From May to September 2005, Iraqi oil exports averaged 1.42 MMBD. The increase was driven largely by strong exports (over 1.5 MMBD) for the months of July-September. Early estimates for October 2005, however, showed oil exports falling to 1.305 MMBD.<sup>167</sup>

The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power. It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend \$1.0 billion of \$4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and \$261 million out of \$1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.<sup>168</sup>

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005, and some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates. The Iraqi Municipalities and Public Works Ministry calculated in April 2005 that it provided water to some 17 million Iraqis (70% of the population), and supplies were so bad that some 30% of the 17 million did not have access to drinkable water.<sup>169</sup>

In June, Baghdad's mayor, Alaa Mahmoud al-Timimi threatened to resign over crumbling infrastructure in the city. On September 7, a Congressional mandated report stated that the ongoing insurgency had severely hampered efforts to rebuild Iraq's water and sanitation systems. Of the more than \$24 billion the US Congress has authorized for reconstruction efforts since 2003, roughly \$2.6 billion was allotted for rebuilding water and sanitation services. Congress had initially planned on spending almost \$4 billion on water and sanitation projects, but more than \$1 billion was eventually redirected towards other priorities, including security needs.<sup>170</sup>

Despite this, some progress appears to have been made in Baghdad. In October 2005, USAID announced that more than 15,650 houses had recently been connected to the Baghdad Water Distribution System. But the distribution system experiences 60 percent loss, a result of leaks, illegal connections and sabotage.<sup>171</sup> And, as late as September 2005, several water and sewage stations in Fallujah were still operating below 20% capacity.<sup>172</sup>

The patterns of such attacks also continued to come in cycles. For example, Figure III.10 shows that insurgent attacks on infrastructure targets increased dramatically in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attack. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August 2005, following the deadline for writing Iraq's Constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than 10 attacks on pipelines.<sup>173</sup>

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005:<sup>174</sup>

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bombed the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Cheyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire broke out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire broke out on an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire was unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damaged an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs were expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shut down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.

- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bombed the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad's electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.<sup>175</sup> Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.<sup>176</sup>

The insurgents scarcely paralyzed the country, but had notable successes in many areas. These included significant attacks on oil export facilities, water plants, and power. For example, the national average amount of electricity generated reached a post-war high in August 2004 with 4,707 megawatts, but steadily declined throughout the rest of 2004 and most of 2005 as a result of successful insurgent attacks on electricity and oil infrastructure.<sup>177</sup> Because of the technological expertise involved in these attacks, some experts believed that former, Hussein-era officials were still aiding the sabotage efforts – although others felt that by this time, there was a large pool of such expertise in the various insurgent forces.<sup>178</sup>

Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. The end result was that oil production dropped by 8% in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some \$11 billion. They had kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and a level of only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.<sup>179</sup> In a report to Congress, the Department of Defense stated that oil production and exports fell from an average of 2.1 and 1.4 million barrels-per-day in October 2005, to 1.9 and 1.2 million barrels-per-day in January 2006, respectively. The same report cited sabotage as one of several factors contributing to the continuing difficulty in delivering adequate electrical power to Iraqis.<sup>180</sup>

The impact of such attacks was compounded the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. The *New York Times* has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security...The insurgents are involved at all levels." The *Times* also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state...Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that, "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."<sup>181</sup>

As a tangible example of such problems, Radhi Hamza al-Radhi, the chairman of Iraq's Commission on Public Integrity, announced in early February 2006 that Meshaan al-Juburi, a member of the new Iraqi National Assembly had been indicted earlier in December for stealing millions of dollars from the funds that were supposed to pay Sunni tribes to protect a critical oil pipeline against attacks and was suspected of giving some of the funds to insurgents.<sup>182</sup>

Juburi was a Sunni who had broken with Saddam Hussein in 1989, and fled the country. He had been active in the opposition to Saddam before the invasion, and had tried to take control of

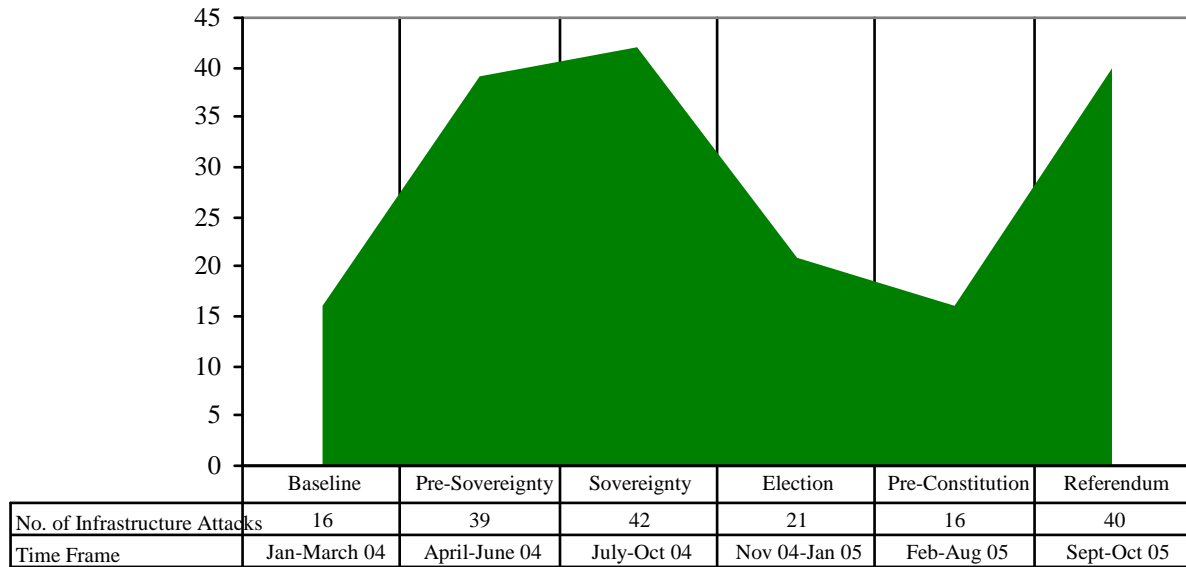
Mosul after Saddam's fall. He was a member of the Juburi tribe, which had members in this insurgency, and had been asked to organize 17 battalions of soldiers to protect the pipeline in 2004.

He was accused of both taking much of the money that was supposed to go to these pipeline protection units, and allowing insurgents to play a role in the oil protection battalions. He may have created some 200-300 phantom members of each 1,000-man battalion to take the money allotted for the pay and food for non-existent security personnel. He also may have set up ambushes so the insurgents could seize weapons being delivered to the units.

Ali Ahmed al-Wazir, the commander of the second battalion of the first brigade of the Special Infrastructure Brigades, based in the Wadi Zareitoun district, was identified as the battalion commander hired by Mr. Juburi, and who organized insurgent attacks on the pipeline. It was reported that both Juburi and his son had fled the country just after they were indicted.

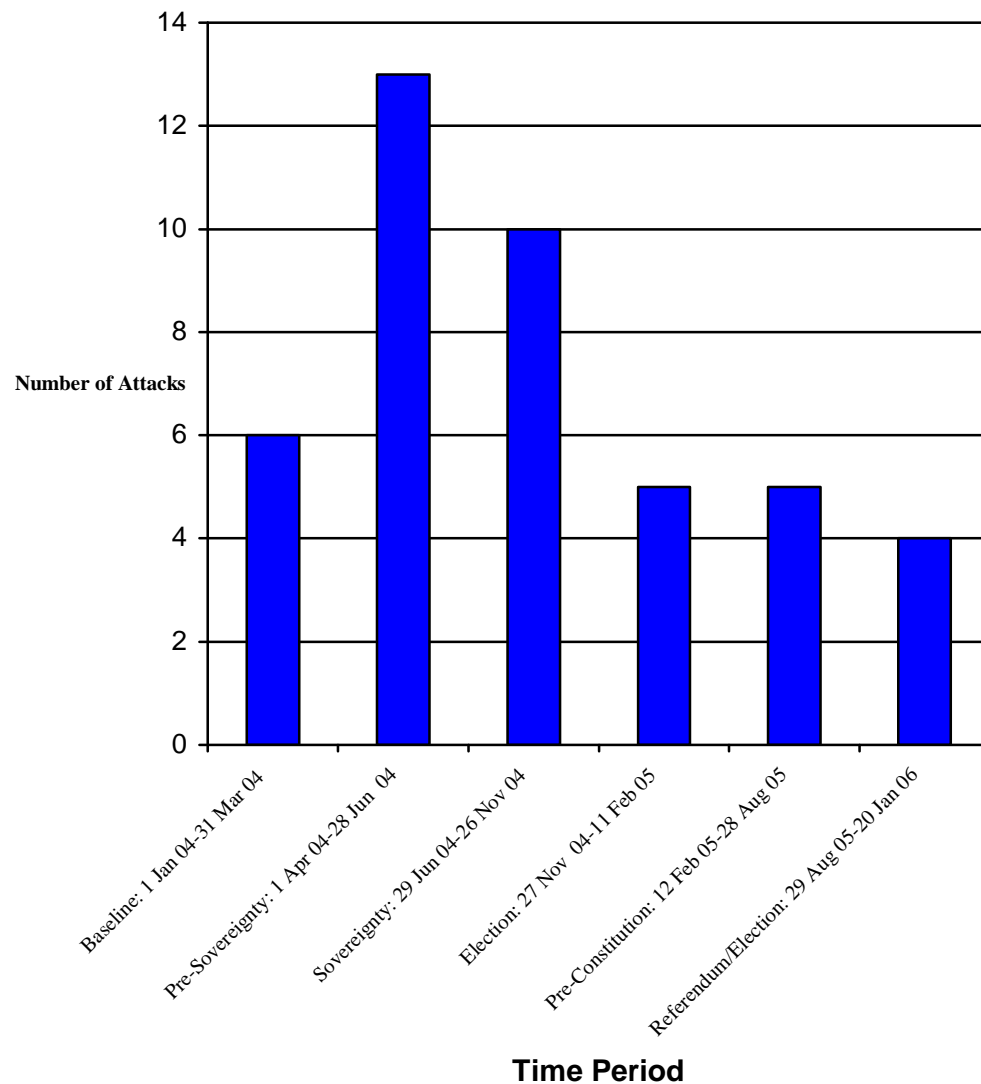
At nearly the same time, the director of a major oil storage plant near Kirkuk was arrested with other employees and several local police officials, charged with helping to orchestrate a mortar attack on the plant on February 2, 2006.<sup>183</sup>

**Map III.1: Iraqi Oil Fields and Pipelines**

**Figure III.10: Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period**

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, July 21, 2005. Available at: [www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050721secstab.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050721secstab.pdf)

**Figure III.11: Average Weekly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period: January 1, 2004  
– January 20, 2006**



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," February 2006, Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), p. 28

Note: Average rounded to the nearest whole number



## ***Measuring the Evolution of the Insurgency by Its Cost in Blood***

The human cost of the insurgency is only one measure of how it has evolved, but it makes the seriousness of the conflict all too clear. As of February 6, 2006, US casualties had risen to a total of nearly 2,300 US killed and well over 16,000 wounded. Britain lost 101 killed and other Coalition partners had lost 103, for a total of 204. Iraqi casualties, however, had risen to 28,293-31,900.<sup>184</sup> Iraqi casualties were rising much more quickly than Coalition casualties. Unfortunately, there are no meaningful estimates of Insurgent casualties.

These numbers tended to rise as the insurgency became more intense, but casualty rates did not alter in predictable ways. In broad terms casualties tended to rise over time, but shifted from Coalition-dominated casualty lists to a steadily higher number of Iraqi casualties as Iraqi forces came on line and as the insurgents shifted their target base to other Iraqis in an effort to prevent the Iraqi government from becoming effective and to cause a civil war.

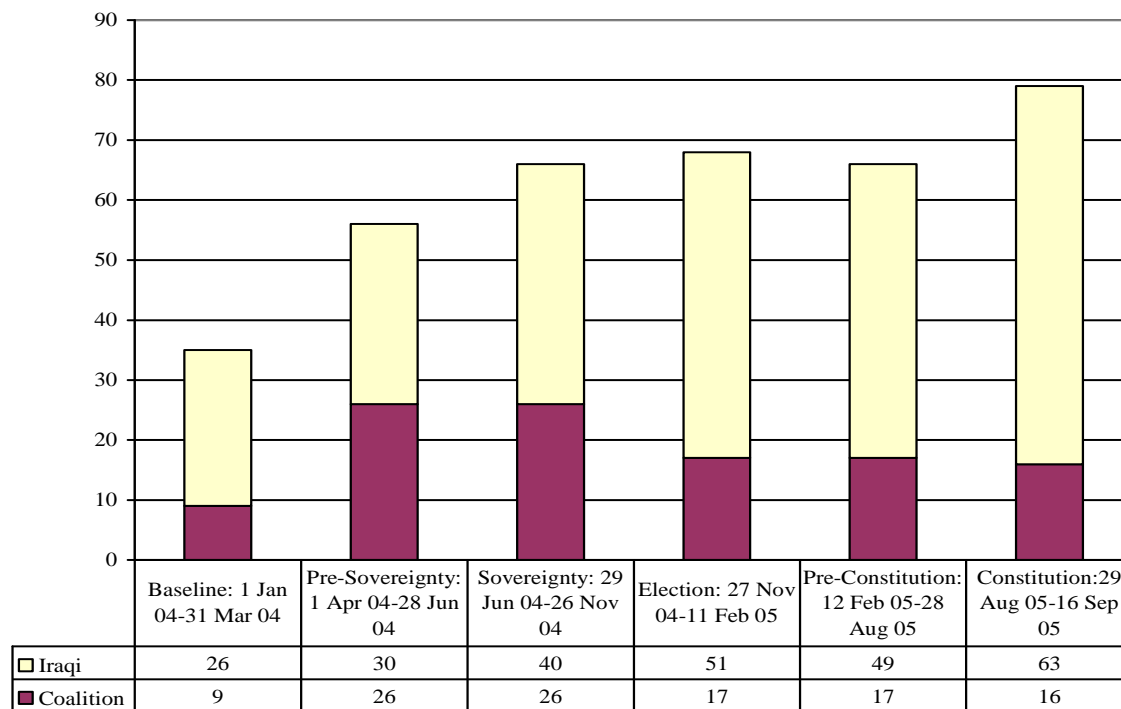
These trends are much clearer in the broad cycles in both Coalition and Iraqi military casualties shown in Figure III.12. In spite of minor variations in the estimates by source and date, Figure III.12 shows that a steady rise in total Coalition and Iraqi casualties took place from the start of the insurrection through the constitutional referendum, with the rise in Iraqi casualties more than compensating for the drop in Coalition casualties.

### ***Coalition Casualties***

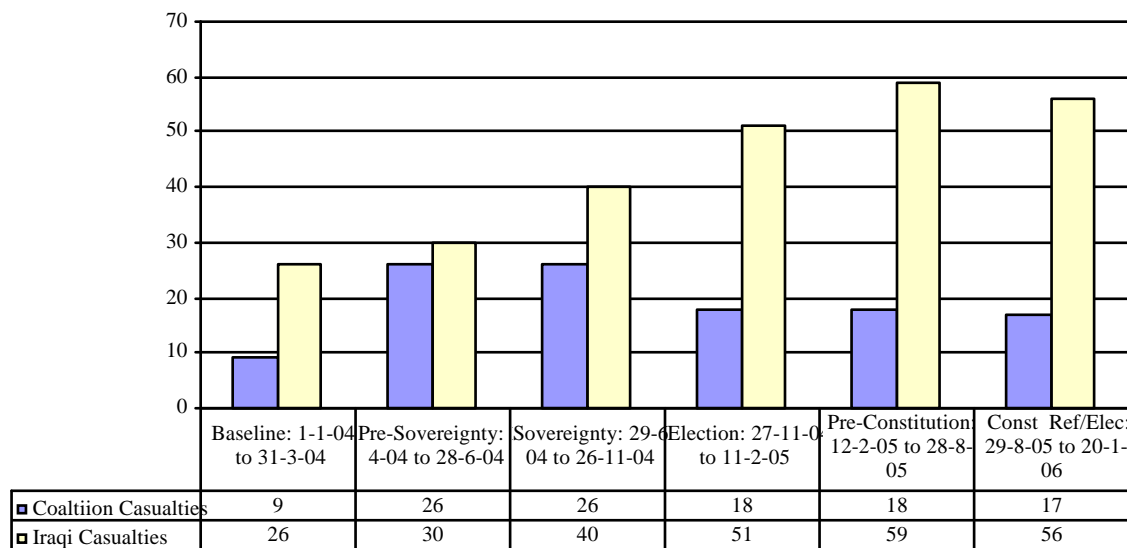
Coalition casualties are only available in terms of deaths, and do not distinguish total killed from killed in action, or show allied wounded. Figure III.13 shows the pattern in all Coalition deaths by month from the invasion to early 2006. There is a slow upward trend through mid-2005, but the patterns vary sharply from month to month. They also become more consistent after mid-2005, in part because the US stopped fighting large urban battles.

Figure III.14 shows casualties by Iraqi governorate. The data in this figure clearly show that the insurgency has been concentrated in the Sunni provinces in the West – Anbar, Salahideen, and Ninawah (Mosul) -- and Baghdad. The Kurdish areas have been far more secure, and so have most provinces in the south. Basra has been a partial exception. Such data highlight the fact that the insurgency has been largely Sunni Arab, and concentrated in only four of Iraq's 18 governorates, rather than national.

**Figure III.12: Casualty Patterns in Iraqi and Coalition Forces Over Time**  
**MNSTC-I Estimate of Daily Killed and Wounded**

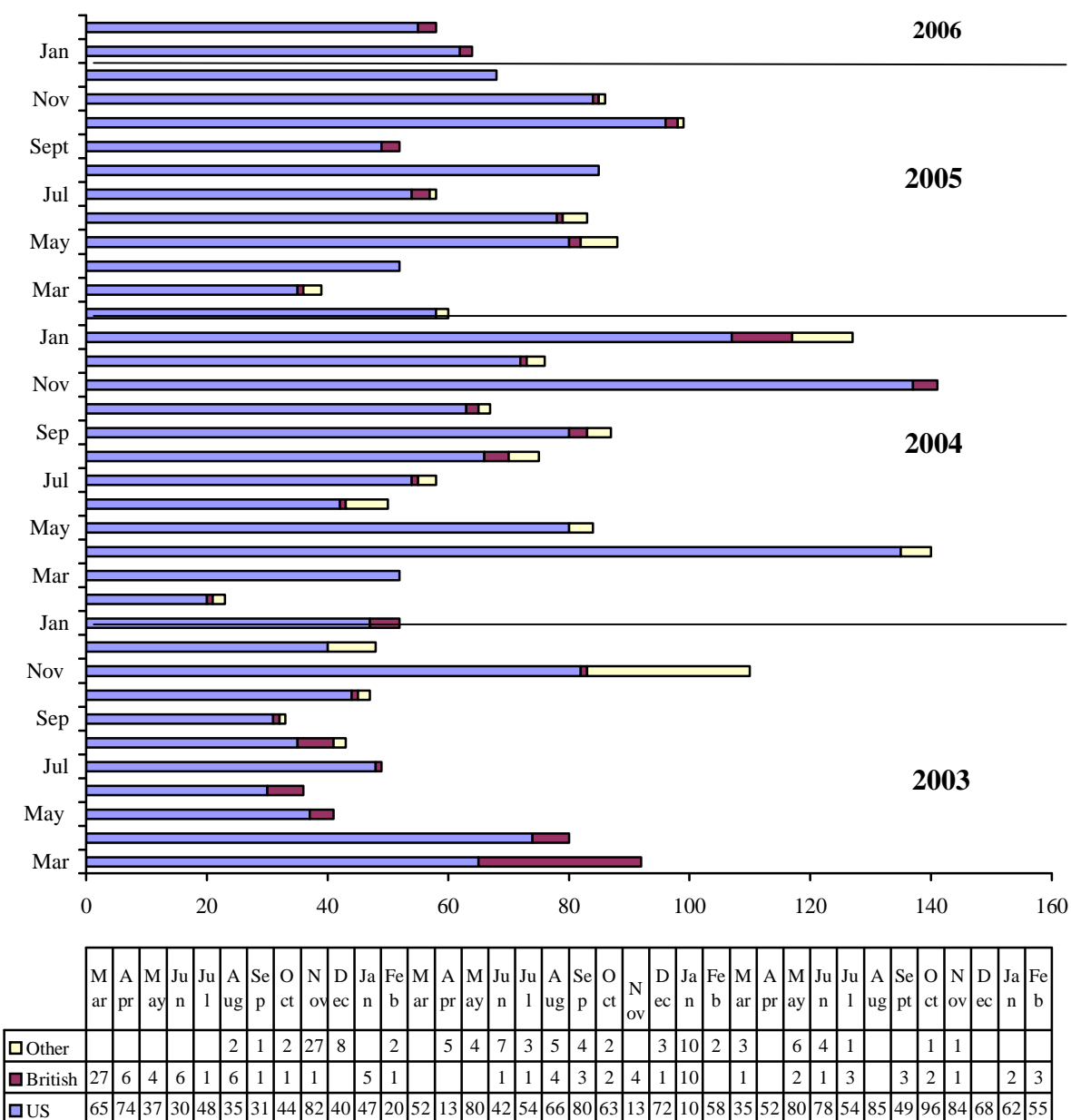


**Average Daily Casualties-Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004-January 2006 in MNF-I Report to Congress**

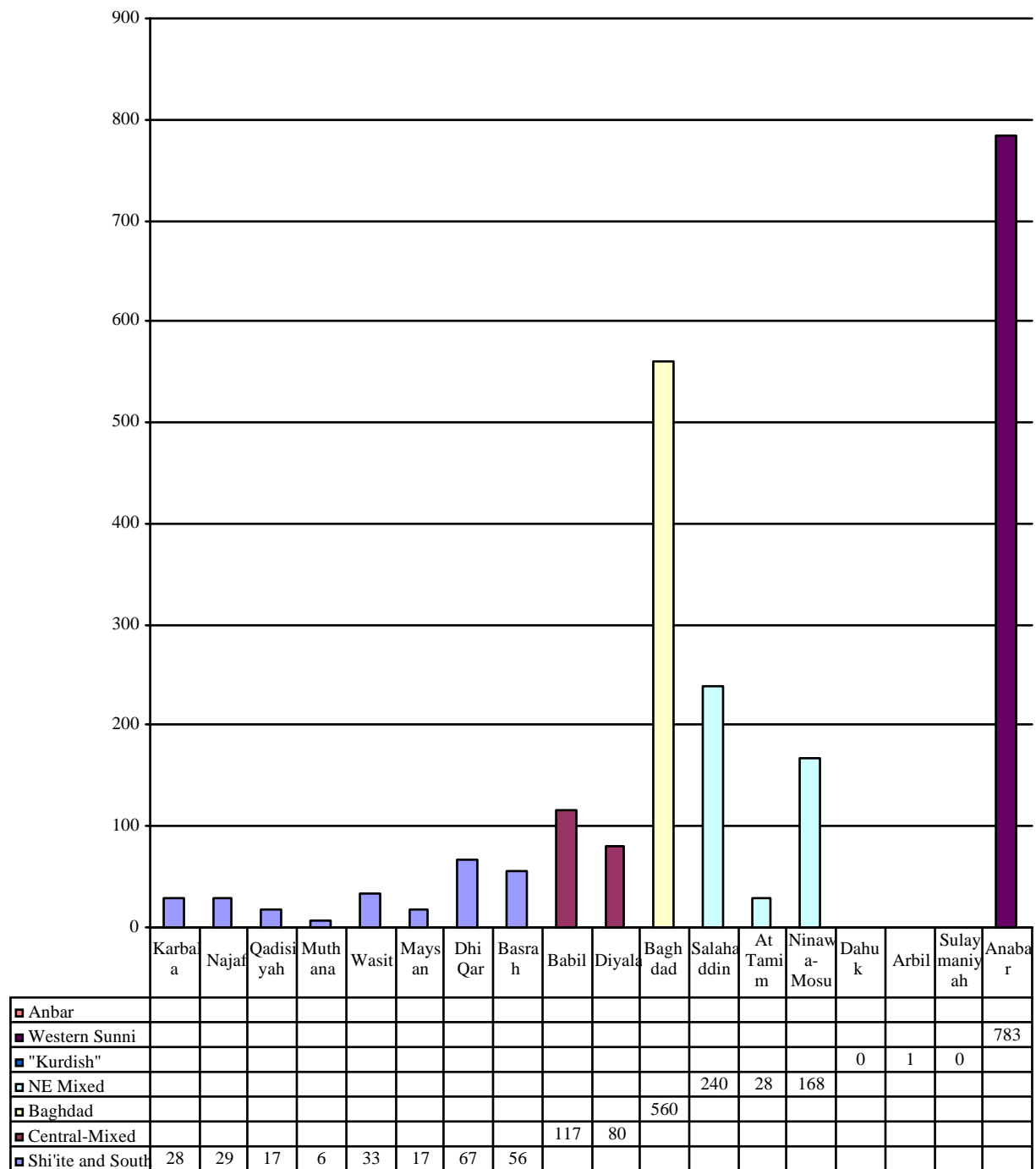


Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, Page.24 and "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," February 2006 Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), p. 27.

Note: Actual numbers are estimated from data included in the above report. The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only.

**Figure III.13: Coalition Deaths By Country and Month: March 2003 to January 2006**

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count as of March 14, 2006. Available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

**Figure III.14: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province**

Source: Adapted from Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>.

## *US Casualties*

The trends in US casualties are shown in Figures III.15 to III.17. Figure III.15 shows just how important it is to include the number of wounded and to distinguish how serious the wound is. These data make it clear that there are nearly seven times as many US wounded as killed, but that military medicine and protection gear has advanced to the point where less than half of the wounded cannot be returned to combat. This is a major advance over previous wars.<sup>185</sup>

Figure III.16 again shows that there are major cycles in the trend. For example, there were 12 months from March 2003 to November 2005, where US fatalities per month were greater than 75. During that same period, there were three months (April 2004; November 2004; and, January 2005) where US fatalities were greater than 100.<sup>186</sup>

There are many other examples of such cyclical variations that occur when one looks beyond monthly patterns.

Rather than experience a decline, the average number of casualties per day had grown from 1.7 in 2003 to 2.3 in 2004, and then remained relatively constant in 2005. January 26, 2005 – just before the election -- was the worst day of the war to date with 37 American dead. Seventeen American's died on a single day on August 3, 2005, and 29 on March 23, 2005.<sup>187</sup>

In mid-November 2005 the US military reported that the survival rate for wounded soldiers was 90 percent, the highest yet. The army credited the high survival rate to better body armor, forward deployed surgical teams, swift medical evacuations, and improved trauma care.<sup>188</sup>

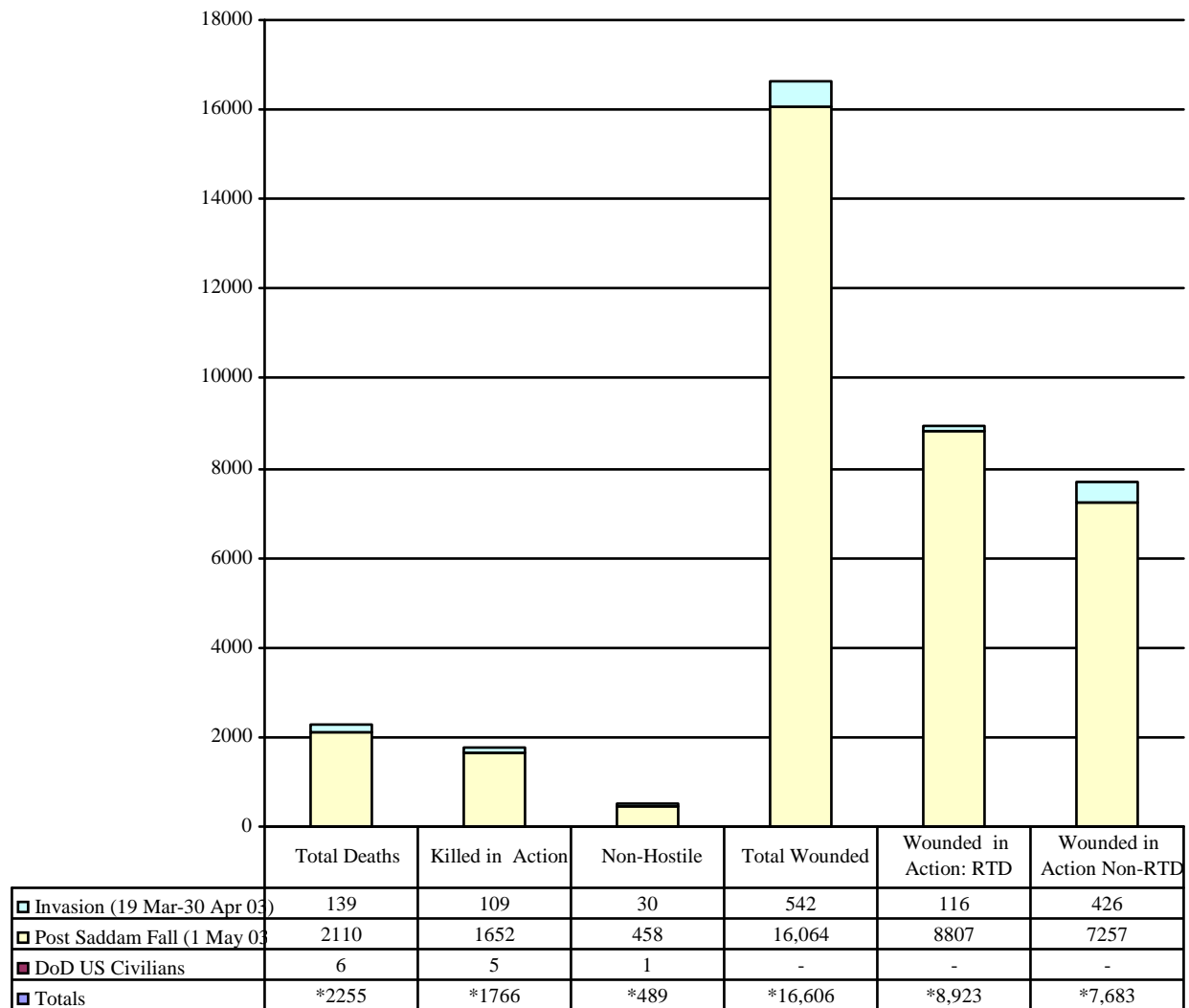
Also in November, the US military reported that more than 200 of the US troops killed to date in Iraq were officers. The figure accounted for 10.4% of deaths in Iraq, a number similar to the casualty rate of previous wars. Of the 58,178 US soldiers killed in Vietnam, 7,878 or roughly 14%, were officers.

The casualty rate for officers in Iraq appeared to be increasing in late 2005. Between October 25 and November 15, 58 US troops were killed, of which 13, roughly 22%, were officers. But military officials do not believe the recent increase in officer deaths marks a change in insurgent tactics.<sup>189</sup>

We have no evidence pointing to the insurgents or terrorists targeting officers as opposed to other members of the military. [Suicide bombs and IEDs] are pretty indiscriminate in what they hit.

There is a more important message in Figure III.16, however, that is often ignored in both military analysis and the media. Figure III.16 shows 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. The failure to report on wounded is incompetent analysis and incompetent reporting.

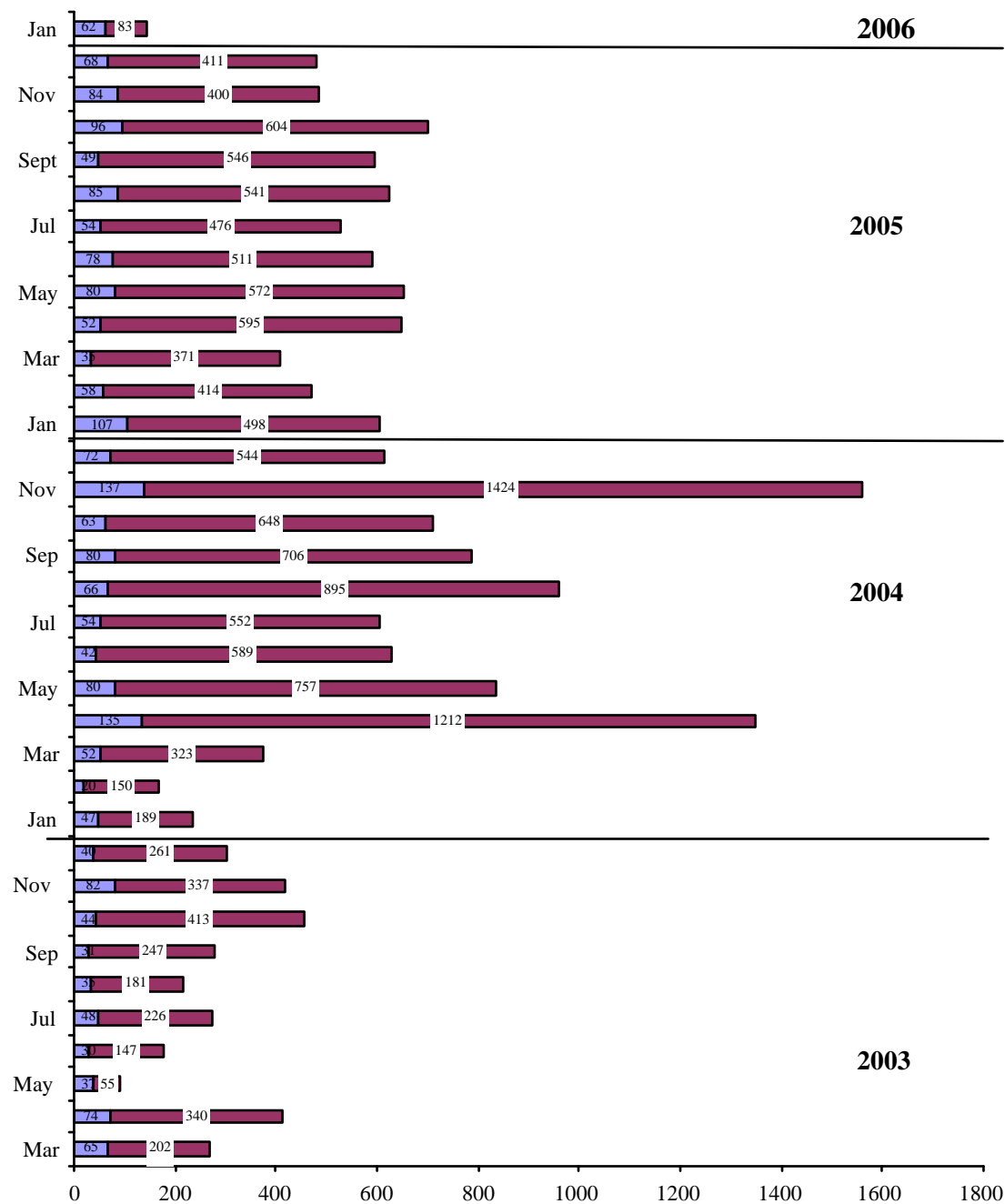
**Figure III.15: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-February 6, 2006**



Source: Department of Defense, defenselink, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/>, February 6, 2006.

Note: Does 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 III.16: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-February 6, 2006**



Source: DefenseLink and Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

## ***Patterns in Iraqi Forces and Government Casualties***

MNF-I does keep track of Iraqi military and official casualties, but only recently has begun to disclose such numbers in detail. One MNSTC-I expert stated, "Data on Iraqi casualties are collected by the Coalition, but public distribution of information about this topic should remain the purview of the Iraqi government. They have more visibility over the issue, could be more accurate in reporting and are the appropriate authority to discuss the meaning."<sup>190</sup>

### ***MNF-I/US Estimates***

Figure III.17 summarizes recent Coalition efforts to show the cycles in Iraqi military and official casualties, and the numbers show a cyclical tendency towards steady escalation. These figures would be far higher if wounded, and men attempting to join the forces at recruiting stations were included. Nevertheless, these data do provide some useful insights.

According to the Pentagon's October 2005 "Measuring Stability and Security In Iraq" report to Congress, "Approximately 80 percent of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, but 80% of all casualties are suffered by Iraqis."

The Pentagon data showed the average number of daily attacks against Iraqis had more than doubled since early 2004, from around 25 attacks per day to an average of 64 per day in the summer and fall of 2005. In early 2006, military officials said that an average of 70 Iraqi officers were killed each month.<sup>191</sup> A clear trend was visible in the data, with the number of daily attacks against Iraqis climbing from 40 in the pre-election period (June-November 2004) to more than fifty during the election (December 2004-February 2005), and then increasingly dramatically to more than 60 in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.<sup>192</sup>

The Pentagon numbers did not, however, distinguish between Iraqi security forces and civilian deaths.<sup>193</sup> Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Command Greg Hicks played down the significance of the report, telling reporters: "It's kind of a snapshot...The Defense Department doesn't maintain a comprehensive or authoritative count of Iraqi casualties."<sup>194</sup>

A follow-on analysis of the Pentagon data carried out by several news organizations however showed 26,000 Iraqis had been killed or injured since the end of the war. Further analysis of the Pentagon data showed that for every US soldier killed in Iraq, at least 13 Iraqi civilians were also killed.

Iraq Body Count estimated that a total of 4,079 Iraqi soldiers and police had been killed by early February 6, 2006. A total of 1,300 were estimated to have been killed before 2005. The number of dead from 2005 to February 2006 was estimated at 2,779.

### ***Iraqi Government Estimates***

The Iraqi government has been reluctant to release similar casualty data, perhaps because it fears this could show its weaknesses and discourage recruiting. The Ministry of Defense did report, however, that 85 Iraqi soldiers were killed in May 2005, compared with 40 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 79 soldiers were wounded in May, compared with 63 in April.

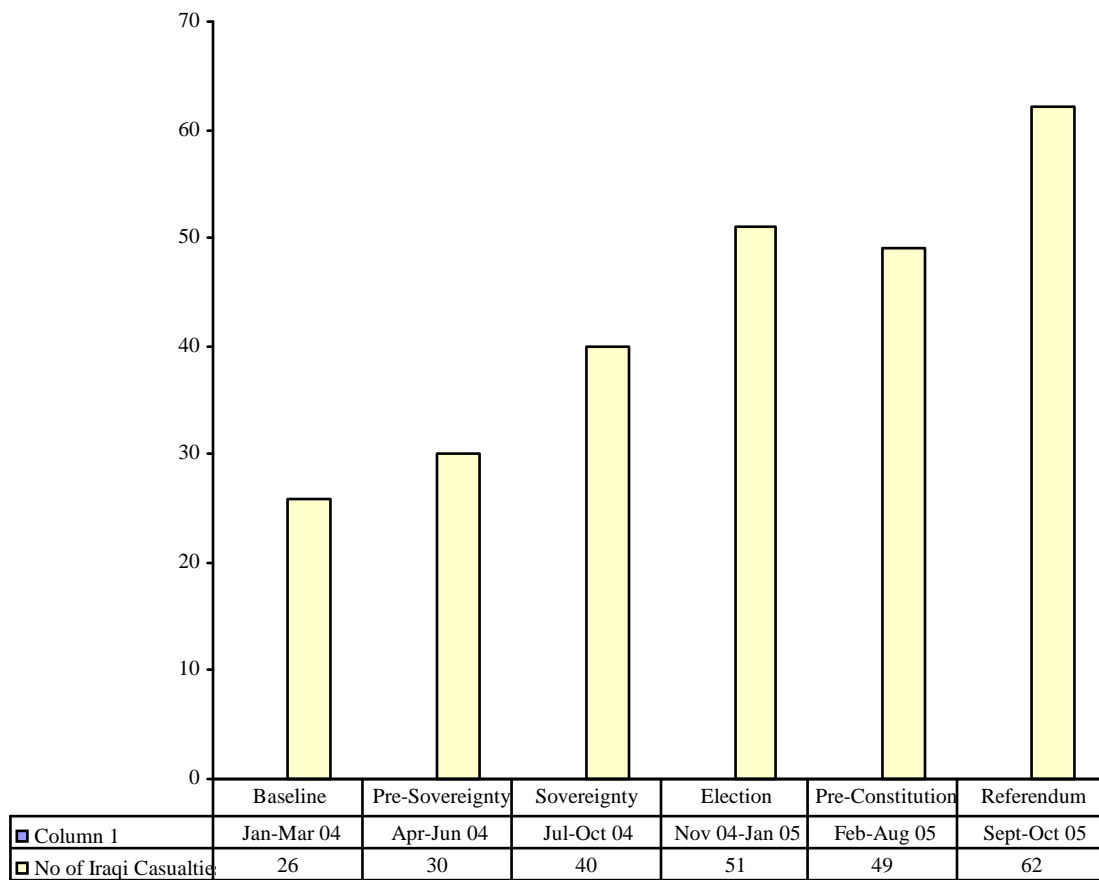
The Ministry of Interior reported that 151 Iraqi police were killed in May 2005, compared with 86 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 325 policemen were wounded in May, compared with 131 in April. The Ministry of Health reported that 434 civilians were killed in May, compared with 299 in April, and that 775 civilians were wounded, versus 598 the previous month.<sup>195</sup>



The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior released new figures on Iraqi civilian and security force casualties in June 2005. The ministry found that Iraqi civilians and police officers died at a rate of about 800 a month from August 2004 until May 2005. Reportedly, insurgents killed 8,175 Iraqis during that time.<sup>196</sup> Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr stated that same month that insurgents had killed approximately 12,000 Iraqis since the Coalition invasion, an average of 500 a month as reported by the New York Times.<sup>197</sup>

An independent count of Iraqi military and police casualties showed that some 1,300 had been killed between the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 and the end of 2004, but that an increase in insurgent activity and a new focus on Iraq forces killed 109 in January 2005, 103 in February, 200 in March, 200 in April and 110 in the first week of May. This was a total of roughly 1,200 killed in the first six months of 2005, raising the total to over 2,400 killed – scarcely a decline in insurgent activity.<sup>198</sup> In contrast, the MNF-I reported that "more than 2,000" Iraqi security forces personnel had been killed by the end of July 2005.<sup>199</sup>

**Figure III.17: Average Daily Iraqi Military and Official Casualties by Month: January 2004-September 2005**



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, Page.24.

## ***Patterns in Iraqi Civilian Casualties***

There are no reliable estimates of killed and wounded for Iraqi civilians. The MNF-I has never made any estimates public, and the Iraqi government has not provided any consistent data.

### ***NGO Estimates: Iraqi Body Count***

The best data, or "guesstimates," seems to be those provided by Iraq Body Count and Iraq Coalition Casualties (<http://icasualties.org/oif/>). However, this count is still extremely uncertain.<sup>200</sup> Iraq Body Count released a study of Iraqi casualties since the Coalition invasion in conjunction with the Oxford Research Group in mid-2005. The study concluded that approximately 25,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in 2003 and 2004 with about a third having been killed by Coalition troops.

Although men over 18 accounted for the bulk of civilian deaths, the study found that women and children accounted for almost 20% of all deaths. Almost 80% of civilian deaths occurred in 12 cities. Baghdad accounted for almost half of the civilian deaths during this period. Figure III.18 shows the breakdown, although it may undercount deaths in towns and cities in Western Iraq, and does not cover the time period for several important Coalition campaigns from March 2005 onwards.

The study relied on casualty reports made available on 152 selected websites and did not try to verify the sites' sources. Some of the sites are relatively unknown and are of uncertain reliability. It also is not clear how strenuously the IBC has tried to sift military casualties from civilian casualties. Impinging the credibility of the IBC's figures further is the fact that it is an avowed antiwar group.<sup>201</sup>

In late 2005, Iraq Coalition Casualties estimated that the number of Iraqis killed was 26,982-30,380. This figure had risen to a range of 33,638-37,764 by March 2006.<sup>202</sup> Iraq Coalition Casualties also began to provide the monthly breakouts of both Iraqi military and Iraqi civilian casualties shown in Figure III.19. Although such figures are uncertain, the much higher estimates made by some other organizations however, use methodologies and databases that are so weak that they simply lack credibility.

### ***Iraqi Government Estimates***

The Iraqi Ministry of Health has periodically reported casualty figures since mid-2003. In late 2003, the ministry announced that 1,764 Iraqis had been killed during the summer months.<sup>203</sup> Data for the period between April 2004 and October 2004 show 3,853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured.<sup>204</sup>

In January of 2005, the Ministry provided the BBC with the following statistics for the six-month period from July 2004 to January 2005:<sup>205</sup>

- 3,724 people in Iraq were killed and 12,657 injured in conflict related violence
- 2,041 of these deaths were the result of military action, in which 8,542 people were injured
- 1,233 deaths were the result of "terrorist" incidents

These figures, based on records from Iraqi public hospitals, do not distinguish between the deaths of civilians or Iraqi security forces, and may include insurgent casualties as well. UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw described the Iraqi method of calculating casualties in October 2004:<sup>206</sup>

Every hospital reports daily the number of civilians (which may include insurgents) who have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents or as a result of military action. All casualties are likely to be taken to hospital in these circumstances except for some insurgents (who may fear arrest) and those with minor injuries.

The Iraqi Health Ministry has provided a breakdown of Iraqi deaths from early November 2004 until early April 2005, although this count relies on uncertain data from morgues and hospitals.

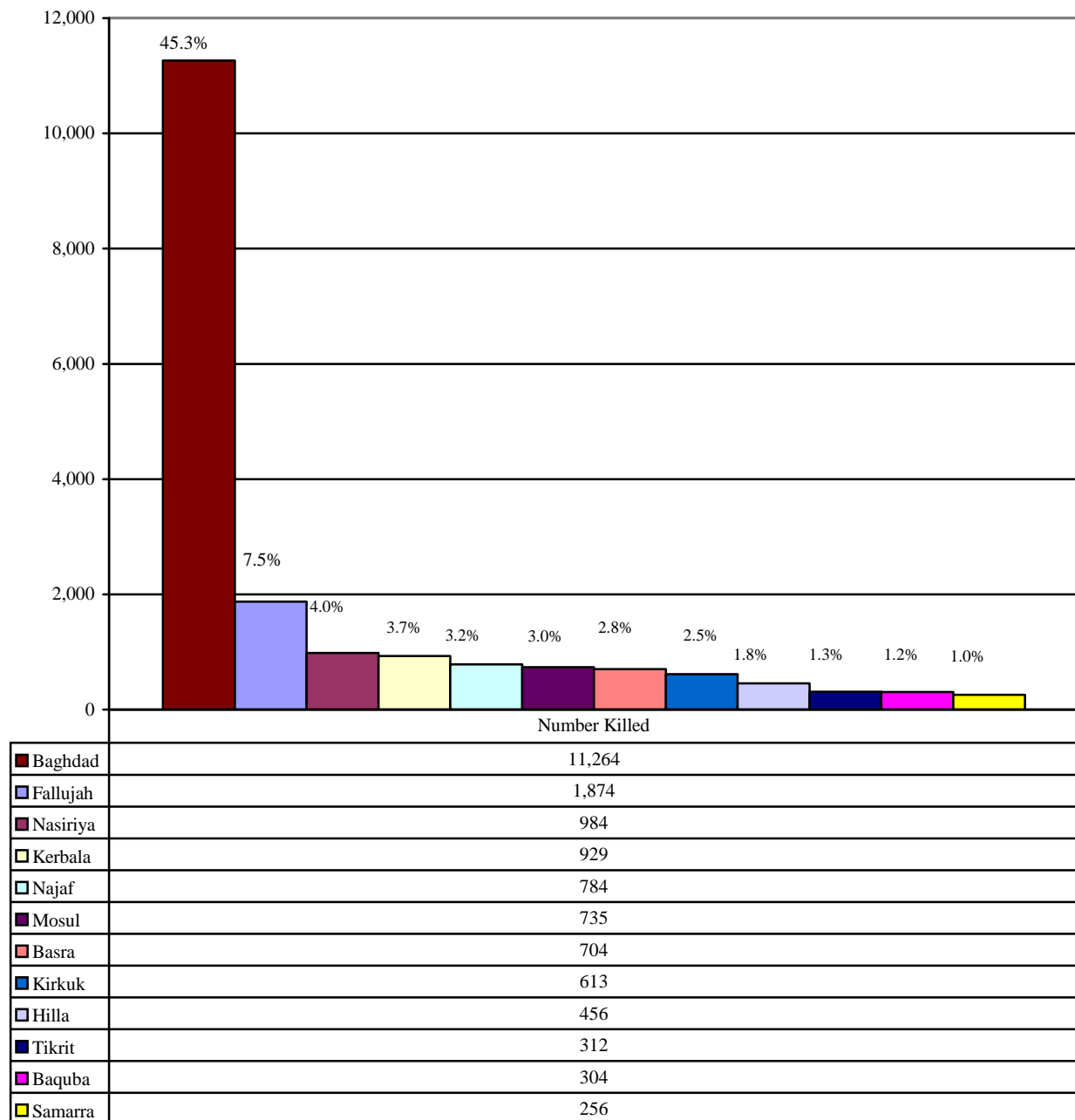
The Health Ministry noted that during this period:<sup>207</sup>

- 32% of the 3,853 deaths accounted for by the ministry occurred in Baghdad.
- Al Anbar witnessed the second highest number of deaths.
- Najaf had the third highest number of deaths.
- Children represented 211 out of the 3,853 deaths.
- The highest death rates per capita were Al Anbar, followed by Najaf and Diyala.
- The ministry recorded 15,517 wounded, of which men made up 91%.

Figures were not available for the months prior to August 2004 and no breakdowns of the data were made available. This gap in the data may be partly explained by the fact that until summer 2004, casualty information was gathered by the Ministry of Health and relied on information provided by hospitals and morgues.<sup>208</sup> Yet, reliance on hospitals and morgues alone to count deaths provides a low figure for approximate deaths. Certainly, not every dead body is taken to the hospital or morgue and certain groups of Iraqis probably avoid the hospitals altogether.

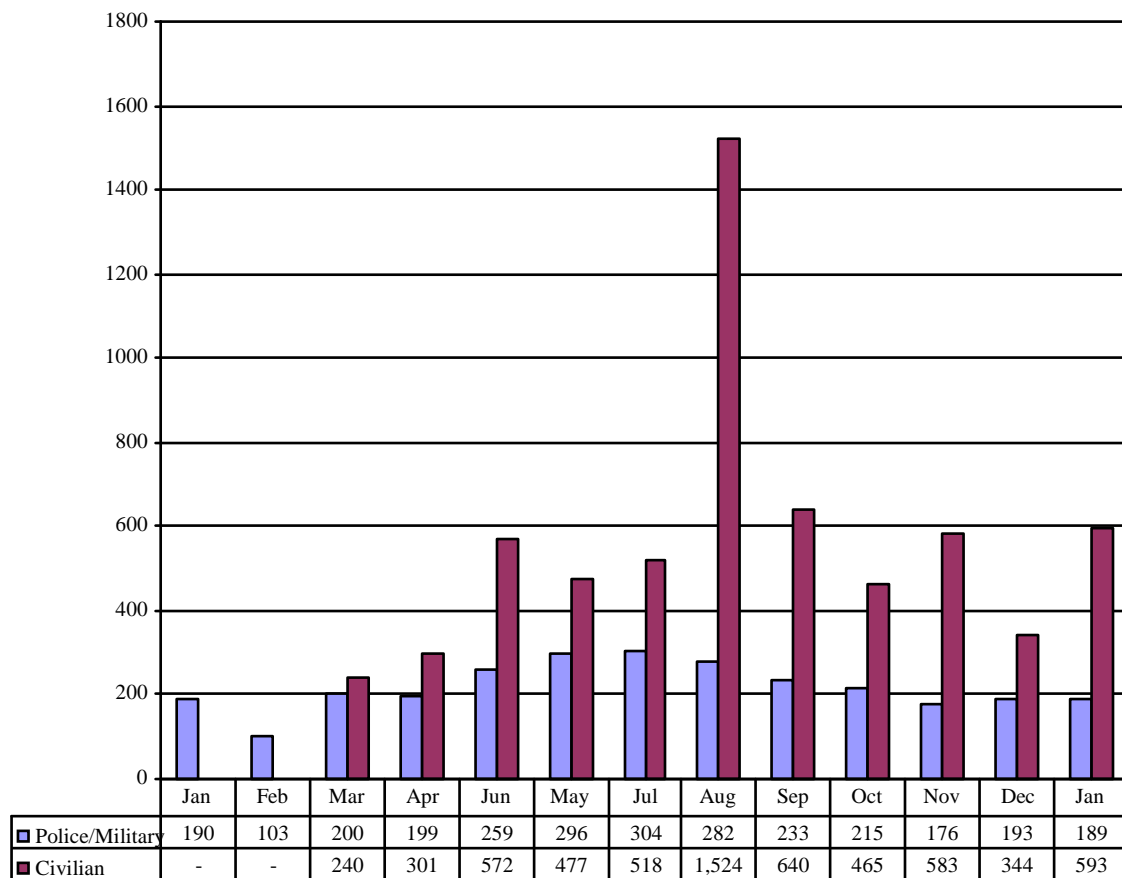
Iraqi government figures released by the defense, interior and health ministries in late October 2005 reported more than 4,000 Iraqi deaths (of whom at least 3,000 were civilian) to date for the year 2005.<sup>209</sup> The breakdown was as follows: 3,314 civilian, 1,053 police, and, 413 soldiers. Also killed were 1,389 suspected insurgents.<sup>210</sup>

Iraqi officials reported 702 Iraqi deaths for the month of September 2005 alone. The figure fell by 42 percent to 407 the following month. October's figure included 83 police and at least 25 soldiers. Although it was the fourth deadliest month for US forces, the death toll for Iraqi civilians and security forces was relatively low in October.<sup>211</sup>

**Figure III.18: Iraqi Fatalities by City: March 2003-February 2005**

Source: Iraq Body Count Data, [www.iraqbodycount.org](http://www.iraqbodycount.org)

**Figure III.19: Total Iraqi Military and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-January 2006**



Source: Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, February 6, 2006, <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.

## IV. Evolving Tactics

The insurgency also steadily evolved its tactics and approaches to warfare. These changes can be divided into two broad groups. The first were changes in the way the insurgents pursued their goal of blocking the Iraqi political process and creating the kind of political conditions that might drive the Coalition out of Iraq. The second were changes in the way the insurgency dealt with the more military aspects of asymmetric warfare.

### *Political, Psychological, and Information Warfare*

The goals that shaped the strategy and tactics used by the various insurgent groups evolved steadily after the summer and fall of 2003. The most serious shift in goals was broadening the focus of the attacks to include the new Iraqi government, the Iraqi forces, and the supporters of the new government. As has been discussed earlier, the insurgents came to make more and more use of political, psychological, and information warfare to try to drive the Coalition out of Iraq, disrupt the new political process, and encourage sectarian and ethnic violence.

These trends accelerated as Islamist extremist groups came to play a larger role in the insurgency and use more extreme tactics. Almost from the beginning, Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, and extremists also exploited the fact that the media tends to focus on dramatic incidents with high casualties, gives them high publicity, and spends little time analyzing the patterns in the insurgency.

The changes in insurgent goals also had a major impact on insurgent tactics. While various insurgent elements did have different priorities and evolved different approaches to warfare, they came to exploit the following methods and tactics relating to political, psychological, and information warfare:

- **Attack the structures of governance and security by ideological, political, and violent means:** Use ideological and political means to attack the legitimacy of the government and nation building process. Intimidate and subvert the military and security forces. Intimidate and attack government officials and institutions at the national, regional, and local levels. Strike at infrastructure, utilities, and services in ways that appear to show the government cannot provide essential economic services or personal security. A July 2005 letter to Zarqawi from Ayman al-Zawahiri admonished the Al Qaeda in Iraq leader for focusing too much on military attacks and not enough on political actions. In the letter, Zawahiri said freeing the country from Americans “does not depend on force alone” and urged Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action.”<sup>212</sup>
- **Create alliances of convenience and informal networks with other groups to attack the US, various elements of the Iraqi Interim Government and elected government, and efforts at nation building:** The informal common fronts operate on the principal that the “enemy of my enemy” is my temporary friend. At the same time, movements “franchise” to create individual cells and independent units, creating diverse mixes of enemies that are difficult to attack.
- **Attack Iraqi elites and ethnic and sectarian fault lines; use them to prevent nation building and governance by provoking civil war:** As the US and Coalition phased down its role, and a sovereign Iraqi government increased its influence and power, insurgents increasingly shifted their focus of their attacks to Iraqi government targets, as well as Iraqi military, police, and security forces. At the same time, they stepped up attacks designed to prevent Sunnis from participating in the new government, and to cause growing tension and conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite, and Arab and Kurd.

There are no clear lines of division between insurgents, but the Iraqi Sunni insurgents focused heavily on attacking the emerging Iraqi process of governance, while Islamist extremist movements used suicide bombing attacks and other bombings to cause large casualties among the Shi’ite and Kurdish populations – sometimes linking them to religious festivals or holidays and sometimes to attacks on Iraqi forces or their

recruiting efforts. They also focused their attacks to strike at leading Shi'ite and Kurdish political officials, commanders, and clergy.

Targeting other groups like Shi'ites and Kurds, using car bombings for mass killings, and hitting shrines and festivals forces the dispersal of security forces, makes the areas involved seem insecure, undermines efforts at governance, and offers the possibility of using civil war as a way to defeat the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government's efforts at nation building.

For example, a step up in Sunni attacks on Shi'ite targets after the January 30, 2005 election led some Shi'ites to talk about "Sunni ethnic cleansing." This effect was compounded by bloody suicide bombings, many of which had some form of government target, but killed large numbers of Shi'ite civilians.<sup>213</sup> These attacks included the discovery of 58 corpses dumped in the Tigris, and 19 largely Shi'ite National Guardsmen bodies in a soccer stadium in Haditha. They also included a bombing in Hilla on March 1, 2005 that killed 136 – mostly Shi'ite police and army recruits.<sup>214</sup>

Similar attacks were carried against the Kurds. While the Kurds maintained notably better security over their areas in the north than existed in the rest of the country, two suicide bombers still penetrated a political gathering in Irbil on February 1, 2004, killing at least 105. On March 10, 2005, a suicide bomber killed 53 Kurds in Kirkuk. On May 3, 2005, another suicide bomber – this time openly identified with the Sunni extremist group Ansar al-Sunna blew himself up outside a recruiting station in Irbil, killing 60 and wounding more than 150 others.<sup>215</sup> At the same time, other attacks systematically targeted Kurdish leaders and Kurdish elements in Iraqi forces.

By May 2005, Shi'ites had begun to retaliate, in spite of efforts to avoid this by Shi'ite leaders, contributing further to the problems in establishing a legitimate government and national forces. Sunni and Shi'ite bodies were discovered in unmarked graves and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.<sup>216</sup>

In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. There appeared to be an up-turn in these assassinations in late summer and early fall 2005:

- July 19, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Sheikh Ahmad al-Juburi, the imam at Al-Taqla Mosque in Al-Dawrah in southern Baghdad.
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- September 1, 2005: Gunmen kill Sheikh Salim Nusayyif Jasim al-Tamimi, the imam of Al-Mustafa Mosque in Baghdad and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars.
- September 15, 2005: A bomb exploded at Rawdat al-Wadi mosque in Mosul killing Sheikh Hikmat Husayn Ali, the imam of the mosque.
- September 16, 2005: Insurgents kill Fadhil Amshani, a Shi'ite cleric and follower of Muqtada al Sadr.
- October 2, 2005: Gunmen in southeast Baghdad killed Salah Hassan Ayash, a Sunni imam.
- November 14, 2005: Insurgents kill the administrator of Al-Hamid Mosque in the Al-Saydiyah neighborhood of Baghdad.
- November 23, 2005: Gunmen wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiem, a Sunni and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In Basra, Iraqi police discover the body of Sheikh Nadir Karim, the imam of a Sunni Mosque. Karim had been abducted from his home the previous night.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen kidnapped Shihab Abdul-Hussein, a member of the Badr Organization, in Baghdad.
- November 29, 2005: In Fallujah, armed men kill Sheikh Hamza Abbas Issawi, a Sunni cleric who had called for Sunni participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections.
- December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen killed Sheikh Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi'ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Muqtada al-Sadr.



- January 1, 2006: In Mahmudiyah, Sunni Arab insurgents shot and killed a Shi'ite cleric, a member of Moqtada Sadr's movement.
- January 25, 2006: A prominent Sunni Arab cleric, Karim Jassim Mohammed, 39, was shot dead Wednesday by police at a checkpoint heading into the northern city of Samarra.

According to some reports, more than 60 Sunni imams have been killed since the start of the insurgency.<sup>217</sup> Insurgent attacks on mosques and religious gatherings also intensified in the run up to the December 15 elections:

- October 29, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a small marketplace near a Shi'ite mosque in Huweder, six miles north of Baquba, killing at least 25 and wounding 45.
- November 3, 2005: A suicide bomber driving a minibus detonated his explosives outside a Shi'ite mosque in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, killing 20 and wounding 64. The mosque was the site of a previous explosion in July, when a suicide bomber blew up a fuel tanker nearby, killing 54 people.
- November 9, 2005: Two car bombs exploded near a Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, killing six people.
- November 18, 2005: Suicide bombers struck two mosques in the largely Kurdish town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border. The attacks, against the Sheik Murad and Khanaqin Grand mosques killed at least 80 Shi'ite worshippers and wounding more than 100. A third would-be suicide bomber was arrested shortly after the attacks.
- November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a crowd of Shi'ite mourners in the village of Abu Saida, near Baquba, killing at least 36 people.
- November 28, 2005: In Dora, a neighborhood in southwest Baghdad, insurgents ambushed a bus carrying British Muslims to Shi'ite shrines, killing two and wounding four.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen kill nine Shi'ite laborers near Baquba.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent Shi'ite politician.

Although the upsurge in violence in late November was a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections, the largely sectarian nature of the violence was also partly due to the US discovery on November 13th of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry prison in Baghdad. The discovery of the secret torture center run by Shi'ite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.

After the bombing of the "Golden Shrine" on February 22, 2006, hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed in only a few days in what was the worst sectarian violence since the fall of Saddam. Attacks were mixed and consisted of large-scale bombings and mortar attacks as well as mystery killings, assassinations and gunfights. Although a precise count of incidents is impossible, some included:

February 23: The bombing of a Sunni mosque in Baqouba, killed eight Iraqi soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen. At least 47 bodies were found scattered across Iraq late Wednesday and early Thursday, many of them shot execution-style and dumped in Shi'ite-dominated parts of the capital. The individuals, both Shi'ites and Sunnis, were forced from their vehicles on the way to a protest and shot.

February 24: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad were attacked and mortar rounds landed near the Shi'ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi. Gunmen stormed a house south of Baghdad and shot dead five Shi'ite men. Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.

February 25: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad. A car bomb killed at least four people in the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala and 13 members of a Shi'ite family were massacred in the town of Baqouba. At least 21 other people died in small-scale shootings and bombing across Baghdad.

February 26, 2006: Mortars slammed into crowded Baghdad neighborhoods killing 18 people and injuring dozens. At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi'ite enclave of Dora a predominantly

Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city police said. Fifteen people were reported killed at 45 injured.

February 28, 2006: A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi'ite Jadida district left 27 dead and 112 injured. In the first incident, a man wearing an explosives belt targeted a gas station. Five minutes later, the first of at least five car bombs in the capital exploded near a group of laborers. A car bomb struck near a small Shi'ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonated by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi'ite Karada district left six dead and 18 injured. In the upscale Sunni Arab district of Zayona, a car bomb targeting an army patrol killed five, while a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injured three. Elsewhere, a car bomb targeting a police patrol on the road between Kirkuk and the capital killed four civilians.

- **Link asymmetric warfare to crime and looting; exploit poverty and economic desperation:** Use criminals to support attacks on infrastructure and nation building activity, raise funds, and undermine security. Exploit unemployment to strengthen dedicated insurgent and terrorist cells. Blur the lines between threat forces, criminal elements, and part-time forces.
- **Attack petroleum and oil facilities, electric power, water, and other critical infrastructure:** Attacks on petroleum, power and water facilities have been used to both offset the impact of US aid and direct Iraqi anger against the government. Al Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups have found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets.

Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicates that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600-700. His breakdown of the number of attacks was: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and 1 tank farm. In addition, there were at least sixty-four incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq's petroleum sector, ranging from high ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100.<sup>218</sup>

The end result was that oil production dropped by 8% in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some \$11 billion. Attacks kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 goal that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.<sup>219</sup> These successes have major impact in a country where 94% of the government's direct income now comes from oil exports. Attacks on pipelines also took place, costing billions of dollars in lost exports and slowing the rehabilitation of Iraq's dilapidated oil infrastructure.<sup>220</sup>

Between the March 2003 invasion and the end of 2005, the continuing threat to electric facilities, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power. It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend \$1.0 billion of \$4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and \$261 million out of \$1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.<sup>221</sup>

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005. Some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country came under repeated attacks in late 2005. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August, following the deadline for writing Iraq's Constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than 10 attacks on pipelines.<sup>222</sup>

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005.<sup>223</sup>

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bombed the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Cheyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire broke out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire broke out in an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire was unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damaged an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs were expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shut down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bomb the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad's electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.<sup>224</sup> Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.<sup>225</sup>

Insurgents also proved adept at exploiting the country's fuel crisis in late December 2005 and early January 2006. Oil exports fell from their post-war average of about 1.6 million bpd (barrels per day) to 1.2 million bpd in November 2005 and 1.1 million bpd in December, the lowest since the country resumed exports after the US-led invasion.<sup>226</sup> A total of 508 million barrels were exported in 2005, down from the 533 million barrels sold the previous year. As a whole, Iraqi oil production fell 8 percent in 2005.<sup>227</sup> Exports from oil fields in the south, which produce the majority of Iraqi oil, fell from 514 million barrels in 2004 to 496 million in 2005. Northern production dropped from 19 million to 12 million. The drop in production for the southern oil fields was attributed to bad weather in the Gulf and a lack of electricity to run the refineries. Sabotage and persistent attacks by insurgents were blamed for the decline in the north.<sup>228</sup> In late December, Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum announced that Iraq hoped to produce at least 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by the end of 2006. Only weeks before, however, he had said the country hoped to turn out 3.0 million barrels per day by the end of the next year, reaching 3.5 million bpd by December 2007.<sup>229</sup>

On December 18, 2005, only three days after parliamentary elections, the Iraqi government raised the price of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and cooking gas. The Iraqi government had continued Saddam Hussein's policy of subsidizing fuel prices, but faced growing pressure from the IMF and others to increase the price of fuel.<sup>230</sup> The price of imported gasoline was raised fivefold, while the price of locally produced gasoline rose sevenfold. Kerosene prices increased fivefold and cooking gas increased threefold.<sup>231</sup> The price hike sparked violent demonstrations in several cities, including Tikrit and Amarah. Iraq's oil minister spoke out against the price hikes and threatened to resign in protest.

The fuel crisis was compounded a few days later on December 21, when the oil ministry was forced to close the country's largest oil refinery after tanker-truck drivers went on strike. Although insurgents have repeatedly attacked oil installations in the north, they stepped up their threats to attack drivers in late December as part of an effort to take advantage of the fuel price hike and the public's anger.<sup>232</sup> The closure of the Beiji refinery, which normally produces 8.5 million liters of petrol per day along with 7.5 million liters of diesel, cost the Iraqi government some 18 million dollars a day.<sup>233</sup> On December 30, the government relieved Bahr al-Ulum of his duties for 30 days as oil minister, putting Ahmed Chalabi, the deputy premier, in charge.<sup>234</sup> As mentioned above, al-Ulum had been critical of the government's decision to reduce fuel subsidies.

Protests, many of which turned violent, continued throughout the country into early January. In Kirkuk, the governor was forced to impose an overnight curfew after fuel riots on January 1 killed at least one person and wounded four others. In Basra, 1,000 people burned tires to protest the price increases.<sup>235</sup> Insurgents responded by stepping up the number of attacks against the oil infrastructure, blowing up an oil pipeline near a Baghdad refinery and setting two petrol stations, along with offices belonging to the national oil

company, on fire in Kirkuk in early January. Threats by insurgents led to the shutdown of Iraq's most productive oil facility in Baiji.<sup>236</sup> Although the truck drivers returned to work on January 3, the insurgents continued their attacks, ambushing three separate convoys and killing at least two tanker-drivers the following day.<sup>237</sup> A sixty-tanker convoy on its way to Baghdad hit an IED on January 4. Upon stopping another tanker was hit by a rocket. Police and oil officials reported that 20 tankers were destroyed, but an Oil Ministry spokesman, Asim Jihad, disputed that claim stating that convoys usually are no bigger than ten tankers and suggested that only one tanker was hit.<sup>238</sup>

The impact of such attacks has been further compounded the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. The *New York Times* has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security...The insurgents are involved at all levels." The *Times* also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state...Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."<sup>239</sup>

- **Strike at US and other aid projects to undermine Iraqi acceptance of the MNSTC-I and the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government.** It is unclear just how systematic such attacks have been, but a report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction indicates that at least 276 civilians working on US aid projects had been killed by March 31, 2005, and at least 2,582 had been wounded. The number of contractors killed also rose by 19% (to 44) in the first quarter of 2005. The cost impact is also high. The report indicates that the security costs of USAID funded aid projects were only 4.2% of the total cost from March 2003 to February 2004, but rose to 22% during the final nine months of 2004.<sup>240</sup> Other reports indicated that contractors had filed 2,919 death and injury claims for US and foreign workers between the beginning of the war on March 19, 2003 and May 10, 2003.<sup>241</sup>
- **Focus on Large US Installations:** As the insurgents became better organized, they moved from hit and run firings at US installations to much larger and better organized raids that could capture major media attention even when these largely failed. The major Zarqawi organization assault on Abu Ghraib prison in early April 2005 was an example of such a raid.<sup>242</sup> Other examples are the suicide bombing and infiltration attacks on the "Green Zone" in Baghdad and other major US military facilities in areas like Mosul. In addition, the U.S. military reported insurgent attacks on military bases in the western city of Ramadi with mortars and small arms almost immediately after the results of the December election were announced.

Despite a general shift in attacks away from Coalition forces and toward Iraqi military, police and civilians as the insurgency continued, a plot was uncovered in March 2006 in which 421 al-Qa'ida members were "one bureaucrat's signature" away from being admitted into the Iraqi Army battalions in charge of guarding entrances to the Green Zone. These fighters then planned on storming U.S. and British embassies, taking those inside hostage.<sup>243</sup>

- **Obtain and use uniforms and ID of Iraqi security forces to gain access to restricted areas and confuse the identity of the attacker:** The use of Iraqi uniforms, security and army vehicles, false IDs, and intelligence gained from infiltrators became more sophisticated. For example, in the mainly Sunni Arab neighborhood of Toubji, dozens of armed men dressed in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunnis and abducted more than 20 in January 2006. Also in January, two suicide bombers using police identity cards and dressed in military uniforms attempted to enter an MOI building and detonate the explosives outside killing 29 Iraqis. Next door, a ceremony honoring the 84<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Iraqi police force was being conducted.

Earlier the same year, insurgents wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.

Insurgents and Islamists learned that a mix of silence, multiple claims to be the attacker, new names for attacking organizations, and uncertain levels of affiliation made it harder for the US to respond. They also produced more media coverage and speculation.

In Iraq and elsewhere, attacks have often been accompanied by what seem to be deliberate efforts to advance conspiracy theories to confuse the identity of the attacker or to find ways to blame defenders of the US for being attacked. In addition, conspiracy theories charging the US with deliberately or carelessly failing to provide an adequate defense have been particularly effective.

As sectarian conflict and low-level civil war increased, many of the abductions and killings were conducted by individuals wearing MOI commando uniforms. Although the MOI continued to deny its role in any of the violence, the strong militia presence in the security forces became a source of tension between the U.S. and the Shi'ite dominated Iraqi government.

- **Use low-level killings, kidnappings, threats, disappearances, and intimidation to create added sectarian and ethnic conflict and strife:** While major attacks and the use of weapons like mortars and IEDs get the most attention, insurgent groups also seem to play a role in a constant pattern of low-level violence against individuals designed to increase sectarian and ethnic tension. It is unclear that Sunni groups have ever used Iraqi forces uniforms or deliberately acted as if they were Shi'ites in attacking Sunnis, but they have been repeatedly accused of such tactics. It is clear that they have killed, intimidated, and blackmailed Shi'ites, Kurds, and pro-government individuals at a wide range of levels in an effort to drive them out of Sunni areas and create a constant climate of low-level violence designed to provoke a violent Shi'ite and Kurdish reaction.
- **Exploit Arab satellite television as well as traditional media:** Islamist movements and other insurgents learned how to capture maximum exposure in regional media, use the Internet, and above all, exploit the new Arab satellite news channels. Insurgents and terrorist also pay close attention to media reactions, and tailor their attacks to high profile targets that make such attacks "weapons of mass media." Al Qa'ida has repeatedly demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the role the media plays in advancing or weakening their organization. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qa'ida's No.2, has described the conflict as taking place "in the battlefield of the media" and has admitted that the organization is engaged "in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of [Muslims]" with the West.<sup>244</sup>

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Iraq group took their attempted manipulation of the news media to new heights in June 2005. In an Internet statement, the organization severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had "sided" with the US over Iraq.

There has been some evidence to suggest that the jihadists might be losing the media battle. Zarqawi has issued "retractions" or "clarifications" after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of "total war" on Shi'ites in the summer of 2005 received a very cool response from the larger jihadi community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman. The backlash from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may be on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.

In what may prove to be a harbinger of future tactics, insurgents have begun to attack the media directly. On July 14, 2005, gunmen attacked a television crew in Baghdad, wounding three men. In October 2005, unknown gunmen attacked a broadcasting and television compound in Mosul in October.<sup>245</sup>

- **Exploit the internet as well as traditional media; a tool for propaganda as well as communication and exchange of tactical methods and techniques:** More and more web sites appear from extremist movements and terrorist groups that publicize the actions of such groups or make false or exaggerated claims. Dissemination of video, pictures, and accounts of insurgent attacks are part of an effort by the various groups to promote the image of a "chaotic" environment in Iraq in which the Iraqi government cannot maintain order and stability and Coalition forces are suffering tactical loses. According to a report by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, "the insurgent videos have grown complex and sophisticated, with detailed graphics, English subtitles, English narrators [and] Jihadist humor."<sup>246</sup> Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned the media and analysts regularly monitor such sites and they furnish a low-cost source of publicity. According to one report, the number of Iraqi insurgent websites increased from 145 to 825 between January and December 2005.<sup>247</sup> At the same time, the flood of web site activity makes it difficult to know when sites are being used for communications. Terrorist and insurgent

organizations from all over the world have established the equivalent of an informal tactical net in which they exchanges techniques for carrying out attacks, technical data on weapons, etc.

Insurgent videos of attacks can be useful for the Coalition as well. The intelligence division of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command has been incorporating them as an instructive tool and analyzing them for a way to avoid casualties.<sup>248</sup> However, there was no indication of whether this addition to the training has had any measurable effect on reducing coalition vulnerability to attack, or making soldiers more adept at avoiding roadside bombs.

- **Use the media to target and develop the equivalent of swarming techniques:** Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned that media reporting on the results of their attacks provides a powerful indicator of their success and what kind of attack to strike at in the future. While many attacks are planned long in advance or use "targeting" based on infiltration and simple observation, others are linked to media reporting on events, movements, etc. The end result is that insurgents can "swarm" around given types of targets, striking at vulnerable points where the target and method of attack is known to have success.
- **Maintain a strategy of constant attrition, but strike hard according to a calendar of turning points and/or at targets with high political, social, and economic impact:** Insurgents and Islamists learned the importance of a constant low-level body count and the creation of a steady climate of violence. This forces the US into a constant, large-scale security effort; makes it difficult for Iraqi forces to take hold; puts constant pressure on US and Iraqi forces to disperse; and ensures constant media coverage.

At the same time, insurgents and Islamists showed a steadily more sophisticated capability to exploit holidays, elections and other political events, and sensitive targets both inside the countries that are the scene of their primary operations and in the US and the West. Attacks on Kurdish and Shi'ite religious festivals are cases in point.

So was an attack on Abu Ghraib prison, the site of many media reports on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners on April 2, 2005. The prison still held some 3,446 detainees and the insurgent attack was conducted by 40-60 insurgents, lasted nearly 40 minutes, and was large and well organized enough to wound 20 US troops.<sup>249</sup>

- **Push "hot buttons:" Try to find forms of attack that provoke disproportionate fear and "terror" to force the US Iraqi forces into costly, drastic, and sometimes provocative responses:** Terrorists and insurgents have found that attacks planned for maximum political and psychological effects often have the additional benefit of provoking over-reaction. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad exploited such tactics throughout the peace process.

One example of such attacks that put constant pressure on Americans, demonstrated insurgent "strength," and got high profile media attention was the long series of attacks on the secure areas in the "Green Zone" in Baghdad and along the road from that zone to the Baghdad airport.

Attacking the airport road was an almost perfect way of keeping up constant psychological and political pressure. It passed through a hostile Sunni area, was almost impossible to secure from IEDs, VBIEDs, rocket and mortar attacks, and sniping without pinning down large numbers of troops. This helps explain why there were well over 100 attacks on targets moving along the road during January 30 through May 4, 2005.<sup>250</sup>

- **Game Regional, Western, and other outside media:** Use interview access, tapes, journalist hostage takings and killings, politically-led and motivated crowds, drivers and assistants to journalists, and timed and targeted attacks to attempt to manipulate Western and outside media. Manipulate US official briefings with planted questions.
- **Use Americans and other foreigners as proxies:** There is nothing new about using Americans and other foreigners as proxies for local regimes, or attacking them to win support for ideological positions and causes. There has, however, been steadily growing sophistication in the timing and nature of such attacks, and in exploiting softer targets such as American businessmen in the country of operations, in striking at US and allied targets in other countries, or in striking at targets in the US. It is also clear that such attacks receive maximum political and media attention in the US.
- **Attack UN, NGO, embassies, aid personnel, and foreign contractor business operations:** Attacking such targets greatly reduces the ability to carry out nation building and stability operations to win hearts

and minds. Attacking the “innocent,” and curtailing their operations or driving organizations out of the country has become an important focus of insurgents and Islamist extremist attacks. Iraqi insurgents have pursued this tactic since the first days of the insurgency.

In November of 2005, Al Qaeda divulged new details about the April 19, 2003 bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, one of the first major attacks of the Iraqi insurgency and the first to intentionally target foreigners. The 2003 bombing killed 23 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers, and injured more than 150. In a statement posted on an Islamic radical website, Al Qaeda said the attack had been planned by Thamir Mubarak Atrouz, a Sunni Arab from the town of Khaldiya in Anbar province. Atrouz, a former officer in Saddam Hussein's army had fled to Saudi Arabia but returned to Iraq before the US-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 in order to fight Americans. He was killed by US forces in Fallujah in April 2004.<sup>251</sup> The 2003 bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, although the most famous attack on diplomatic offices in Baghdad, is hardly the only such incident since the insurgency began, however. Insurgents have also periodically fired mortars against US facilities inside the Green Zone.

Insurgents stepped up their attacks against foreign diplomats in the summer and fall of 2005. In July, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia killed two Algerian diplomats and one Egyptian. The group also attempted to kidnap Bahraini and Pakistani embassy staff, though the former escaped with light wounds and the latter was unharmed. Insurgent attacks against diplomats in the fall and winter of 2005 included:

- October 10, 2005: Gunmen ambushed a convoy of Arab League diplomats in Baghdad, wounding two Iraqi policemen.
- October 10, 2005: Mortars strike a US embassy building in Hilla.
- October 20, 2005: Two Moroccan embassy employees were kidnapped on the highway from Amman to Baghdad. On November 3, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia posted a statement on a website saying Abdelkrim el-Mohsfi, a Moroccan diplomat, and Abderrahim Boualem, his driver, would be executed. The group said the executions were meant as "an example for others who are still thinking to challenge the mujahedeen and dare to come to the land of the two rivers."
- November 7, 2005: A Sudanese diplomat, Taha Mohammed Ahmed, is hit by a stray bullet while walking in the garden of the Sudanese Embassy in Baghdad.
- November 9, 2005: Hammouda Ahmed Adam, a Sudanese Embassy employee was killed by unknown gunmen while driving in the Mansour district of Baghdad.
- November 12, 2005: Insurgents attacked the Omani Embassy in Baghdad, killing an Iraqi police officer and an embassy employee.
- November 20, 2005: The US military announced it had arrested five terrorists suspected of plotting to attack the Italian Embassy in Baghdad.
- December 23, 2005: Gunmen kidnapped a Sudanese diplomat and five other men as they left a mosque in Baghdad.

As is evident from the examples listed above, insurgents have repeatedly singled out envoys from Arab and Muslim countries in their attacks. Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia's strategy appears to be aimed at driving representatives of these countries from Iraq in order to weaken the new Iraqi government and to divide US allies.

In a statement released on November 3, the organization called on diplomats in Baghdad to “pack their bags and leave” or face certain death.<sup>252</sup> The statement, signed by the military wing of Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, read: “We are renewing our threat to those so-called diplomatic missions who have insisted on staying in Baghdad and have not yet realized the repercussions of such a challenge to the will of the mujahedeen.”<sup>253</sup>

Al Qaeda's strategy has, however, had some success. The Philippine Embassy in Baghdad relocated its staff to Jordan after the July 2005 attacks on Algerian and Egyptian diplomats. The previous summer, the Philippine government granted insurgent's demands and withdrew its peacekeeping contingent from Iraq in order to secure the safe release of a Filipino hostage. The kidnapping of Angelo de la Cruz in July 2004 led

Manila to issue a ban on its citizens working in Iraq. The government re-issued the ban in November 2005, after two Filipino contract workers were killed in Iraq.<sup>254</sup>

On December 23, gunmen kidnapped six Sudanese nationals, including five embassy employees. The men were captured while leaving a mosque in Baghdad. Abdel Monem al-Huri, the embassy's second secretary, was among the hostages. Al Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility in an Internet statement on December 29 and demanded that Khartoum break off all diplomatic relations with Iraq immediately. The Sudanese government closed its embassy in Baghdad and withdrew its diplomats the following day. On December 31, insurgents released the five Sudanese diplomats.<sup>255</sup>

These attacks limit the ability of the elected government to establish international legitimacy and credibility. Governments whose personnel suffer an attack may not have the will to continue to pursue relations in the face of domestic discontent over any casualties and the Iraq war in general, as was the case with the Philippines. Such attacks can make the Iraqi government look powerless.

While there were as many as 40 diplomatic missions in Iraq as of late 2005, several countries have been hesitant to send ambassadors to Baghdad. At least two of Iraq's neighbors, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have postponed doing so until the security situation in the country improves.<sup>256</sup>

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate women and cadres of foreign workers:** Killing and kidnapping women, particularly those working in NGOs and aid projects gets great media attention and leads some organizations to leave the country. Kidnapping or killing groups of foreign workers puts political pressure on their governments, gets high local and regional media attention, and sometimes leads governments to stop their workers from going to Iraq.

Counts of kidnappings in Iraq, and analyses of responsibility, are necessarily uncertain and sharply undercount the number of kidnappings of Iraqis – many of which are never reported. An analysis of kidnappings from April 1, 2004 to January 31, 2005 showed, however, that there were 264 foreign civilian kidnappings. Some 47 were killed, 56 remained missing, 150 were released, five escaped, and a total of six were rescued. Given the fact there were some 100,000 expatriates in Iraq at the time, this meant a roughly 1 in 380 chance of being kidnapped, and roughly 20% of the foreigners kidnapped were killed or beheaded.<sup>257</sup>

In November of 2005, the New York Times reported that of the more than 200 foreigners who had been abducted since the start of the war, several dozen had been killed and at least twenty were still missing. When US troops entered Fallujah in November of 2004 they discovered bunkers where captives had been held and tortured. After Fallujah, however, the number of foreign kidnappings dropped significantly.<sup>258</sup> Another estimate of foreigners kidnapped in Iraq placed the total at 268 at the end of January 2006. Of those, 44 were killed, 135 were released, 3 escaped, 3 were rescued and the status of 81 were unknown.<sup>259</sup>

The kidnapping of foreigners by insurgents returned in the fall of 2005. In late October, two Moroccans were kidnapped by insurgents and held hostage. The following month, four aid workers, two Canadians, a Briton and an American, were also kidnapped. A group calling itself "Swords of Truth" issued a claim of responsibility, saying the four were "spies of the occupying forces."<sup>260</sup> Also in November, two Filipino contract workers were killed in a bombing of their convoy and a German archaeologist was kidnapped.

On December 5, gunmen abducted a French engineer in Baghdad. Less than a week later, on December 9, insurgents kidnapped and killed an Egyptian engineer in Tikrit.<sup>261</sup> Camille Nassif Tannus, a Lebanese engineer was kidnapped on December 29 but was released three days later.<sup>262</sup> According to the Lebanese government, some 50 Lebanese working for private firms have been kidnapped since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. While most were released after the payment of ransoms, at least five were killed by their captors.<sup>263</sup>

In January, Jill Carroll, a reporter for the Christian Science Monitor, was kidnapped on her way to an interview with a Sunni politician. Several days later a tape by her captors aired on al-Jazeera demanding the release of Iraqi women prisoners and threatened to kill Ms. Carroll if their demands were not met in 72 hours. Although the U.S. indicated that it was planning to release these prisoners, it denied that the action had any relation to the insurgents' demands. Despite this, subsequent tapes were aired by Carroll's captors, again, calling for the release of all Iraqi women in custody. Two German engineers were also kidnapped from their homes during the same month.



- **Expand the fighting outside Iraq:** In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks--one in Yemen and the other in Egypt--against foreigners and Americans. Jabr also claimed that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. A few days later, US Army Maj. Gen. William Webster, whose 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division is responsible for security in Baghdad, said he believed it "a distinct possibility" that insurgents were training in Iraq for attacks in other countries.<sup>264</sup>

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq, or when actual attempts began. Zarqawi, a Jordanian, began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. In late 1999, he organized attacks on the Radisson SAS hotel in Amman and Jewish and Christian religious targets. In October 2002, his followers killed Laurence Foley, as US diplomat assigned to the US Embassy in Amman. He seems to have played a role in the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad in August 2003.

There are some indications that Zarqawi's group began planning and attempting such attacks in late 2003. Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004.

Some sources say Jordan disrupted further attack attempts after that time, including a rocket attack on a US warship in Aqaba earlier in 2005. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005.<sup>265</sup>

Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Some experts believe the July 23, 2005 Sharm el-Sheik bombings signaled the expansion of Zarqawi's network beyond Iraq. But the bombings at the Red Sea resort, which killed at least 88 and wounded more than 150, appear to have been the work of Egyptian radical Islamists. Three groups--the "Abdullah Azzam Brigades"; "Tawhid and Jihad Group in Egypt" and the "Holy Warriors of Egypt"-- claimed responsibility for the bombings. Although all three are believed to have ties to Al Qaeda, there is no evidence to suggest Zarqawi was directly involved in the attack.

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi's operation in Iraq carried out three suicide bombings of US owned hotels in Amman. The attackers specifically targeted Jordanians -- including a large wedding party -- and killed at least 60 people from some six different countries and wounded more than 100. Only a few Americans were killed or hurt in the attacks on the Radisson, Grand Hyatt and Days Inn. The casualties also included four Palestinian officials, one of who was Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security.

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate professionals, Iraqi media and intelligentsia, and conduct "mystery killings:"** Steady killing and intimidation of individual professionals, media figures, and intelligentsia in threatened areas offers a series of soft targets that cannot be defended, but where a cumulative pattern of killing and intimidation makes governance difficult, creates major problems for security and police forces, weakens the economy, and exacerbates the general feeling of insecurity to the point where people lose faith in the Iraqi government, Coalition, and political process. According to the head of Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Shihab al-Tamimi, kidnappings and assassinations targeting Iraqi journalists surged in the weeks leading up to the January 30 election.<sup>266</sup>

The US State Department report on Human Rights for 2004 states that the Ministry of Human Rights claimed that at least 80 professors and 50 physicians were assassinated during 2004. Reporters Without Borders noted that 31 journalists and media assistants were killed during the year. Universities also suffered from a wave of kidnappings. Researchers, professors, administrators, and students were all victims, including some who disappeared without a trace.<sup>267</sup> According to the Iraqi newspaper Al-Mashriq, more than 3000 Iraqi doctors have left the country in order to save their lives since the start of the insurgency.<sup>268</sup>

In September 2005, a local Iraqi newspaper reported that after doctors and university professors, bakers had become the most popular target among insurgents in Iraq. In one 48-hour period, insurgents killed ten bakers in Baghdad alone. A number of bakeries were forced to close after receiving threats from insurgents.<sup>269</sup>

Beginning in the fall of 2005, there were signs that insurgents had selected a new target: teachers. Up until that time, teachers had largely been spared the violence inflicted upon other occupations. In late September Sunni insurgents dressed as Iraqi police officers stormed the Jazeera primary school in Muwelha, a Sunni suburb of Iskandariya, killing five teachers and their driver.<sup>270</sup> The attack raised fears among many Iraqis that insurgents would now begin to target Iraqi schools. A few days later, on September 29, gunmen opened fire on a mini-bus transporting teachers in the Al-Mansuriyah district of Baquba, killing one and wounding several.<sup>271</sup>

On October 9, gunmen entered a school in Samarra and executed a teacher in front of students and other teachers.<sup>272</sup> In all of the incidents, the teachers were Shi'ites, leaving many to believe that the attacks were motivated by sectarian violence rather than insurgent hostility toward their profession. A number of schools, many in Shi'ite neighborhoods, have responded to the wave of attacks by erecting security barriers and hiring guards.<sup>273</sup> On October 20, a mortar hit a public school in the al-Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad, killing one student and wounding four others.<sup>274</sup> Attacks on schools, however, are still relatively rare. University professors have also become popular targets for insurgents. In a five-day period in late November 2005 five university professors were killed, three of them in greater Baghdad area.<sup>275</sup> In March 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research said that 89 university professors had been killed since 2003. 311 teachers were allegedly murdered between December 2005 and March 2006. Academics themselves estimated that up to 105 of their colleagues have been assassinated.<sup>276</sup>

**Kidnap Iraqi professionals for ransom and extort local businesses:** Insurgents, local gangs and militias often turned to intimidation and extortion of doctors and other well paid professionals in order to raise funds. In return they, often would offer "protection." This risked creating a "brain drain" in which some of the most qualified and highly trained professionals began leaving Iraq for neighboring countries.<sup>277</sup>

By the end of March 2006, Iraqi police said that as many as 30 people are reported kidnapped every day.<sup>278</sup> It is likely that many kidnappings go unrecorded however, as families prefer to pay the ransom rather than involve the police who may be involved in the abduction.

In one instance, a British-trained surgeon received a phone call at his practice from the "Mujahideen" who asked for "a donation to help our cause." They made a suggestion of 10,000 dollars in exchange for protection. The doctor, given two days to collect the money, fled to Jordan when he received a text message threatening his life.<sup>279</sup>

In another case, men claiming to be from an anti-terrorist squad walked into a medical supply store and removed 40,000 dollars from the safe. They proceeded to kidnap the owner's son and detained him until the family paid 40,000 dollars, only a fraction of the 250,000 dollars they originally demanded.<sup>280</sup>

A Shi'ite resident and owner of a mini-market in Mosul said that while he had not received any threats, two of his friends were abducted and later killed because the family could not afford to pay the ransom.<sup>281</sup>

A string of these kidnappings and assaults happened in March:<sup>282</sup>

March 8, 2006: 50 employees are abducted from a Baghdad security company.

March 27, 2006: Gunmen in military uniforms kidnapped 16 people from an Iraqi export company in central Baghdad.

March 28, 2006: In three separate incidents, gunmen, many in military uniforms wearing masks, kidnapped 24 people from two electronics stores and a currency exchange stealing thousands of dollars in the process.

March 29, 2006: Gunmen identifying themselves as MOI police entered the offices of a construction firm and lined up the employees, killing 8. They abducted the manager and fled the scene.

In one day in March, 21 people were abducted in four separate incidents. 15 men dressed as members of the Iraqi Army dragged six people out of a money exchange shop and stole almost 60,000 dollars. In two other similar events, men wearing MOI uniforms kidnapped individuals from two electronics shops.<sup>283</sup>

A joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in late March, allegedly on a Shi'ite mosque, resulted in the rescue of one Iraqi hostage who had been threatened with torture and death by militiamen if his family did not pay 20,000.<sup>284</sup>

The identity of the attackers is almost impossible to distinguish. Some claimed to be Mujahideen insurgents, others Iraqi security forces. The MOI denied widespread claims that its soldiers had been involved in these attacks and instead suggested that the perpetrators were insurgents or foreign terrorists who had obtained MOI and army uniforms.

**Kill and kidnap Iraqi government officials, political leaders, religious figures and heads of the police, military and security forces:**

Targeted political assassinations also appeared to be on the rise in the summer and fall of 2005. Popular targets include local political and religious leaders, the heads of local police forces and ministry officials from Baghdad. For the month of August, these attacks included:<sup>285</sup>

- August 1, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen storm the house of Haider Mohammed Ali al-Dujaili, an aide to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, and kill him.
- August 3, 2005: Gunmen kill General Abdel Salam Rauf Saleh, the head of the Interior Ministry's commando unit. Also in Baghdad, gunmen kill a police colonel and two finance ministry employees.
- August 4, 2005: In Diyala, gunmen kill the director of planning for the region.
- August 8, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen assassinate two officials from the Oil Ministry and wound two others.
- August 9, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Abbas Ibrahim Mohammed, an Iraqi Cabinet employee, in Baghdad.
- August 10, 2005: Gunmen kidnap Brig. General Khudayer Abbas, head of administrative affairs for the Ministry of the Interior.
- August 14, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnap Husam Kazim Juwayid, general manager of the central bank.
- August 15, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Muhammad Husayn, a member of the municipal council of Al-Khalis. A failed assassination attempt is carried out on Iraqi Vice-President Adil Ab-al-Mahdi in Al-Azim.
- August 16, 2005: Gunmen attack and wound several bodyguards of former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- August 18, 2005: Unknown gunmen assassinate Jasim Waheeb, a Baghdad judge.
- August 19, 2005: Insurgents in Mosul gun down three members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country's largest Sunni party. Gunmen kill Aswad al-Ali, an Arab member of a local council near Kirkuk.
- August 25, 2005: Insurgents attack the convoy of Iraqi president Jalal Talabani south of Tuz Khormato killing two bodyguards and wounding three others
- August 26, 2005: In Mosul, gunmen kill Jiyam Hussein, the leader of the local Reform Party. Gunmen assassinate an Iraqi police officer in northeast Baghdad
- August 27, 2005: Insurgents kill Lt. Col. Mohammed Salih in Kirkuk. Also in Kirkuk, gunmen kill Lt. Col. Muhammad Fakhri Abdullah.
- August 29, 2005: Gunmen kill Brig. Gen. Numan Salman Faris, director of the rapid response team for Baghdad's Azamiyah district.

Periods of relative calm could be followed by sudden escalations. For example, in one twenty-four hour period in late September 2005, insurgents assassinated Colonel Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, the head of Diyala's Police Command; killed four workers from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in

Baghdad; and carried out other assassinations in Baquba, Ramadi, Latifiyah and Mosul.<sup>286</sup> On October 30, gunmen assassinated Ghalib Abdul Mahdi, adviser to the cabinet of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and brother of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. Mahdi was being driven to work in Baghdad by his driver when the two were ambushed and killed. Gunmen struck again later in the day, wounding the deputy trade minister, Qais Dawood al-Hassan.<sup>287</sup> Such attacks, attempts by the insurgents to weaken the new government, are becoming more frequent.

#### **Attack those involved in the trial of Saddam Hussein and other Ba'ath leaders:**

In what appears to be a new twist in political assassinations, gunmen have begun to target those involved in the trial of former regime officials like Saddam Hussein. On October 20, one day after the start of the trial in Baghdad, gunmen assassinated Saadon al-Janabi. Al-Janabi had been defending Awad al-Bandar, a former Ba'ath Party official. Two weeks later, on November 8, gunmen killed Adel al-Zubeidi, the lawyer for former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan. Al-Zubeidi was riding in his car in the Sunni neighborhood of Adil in western Baghdad when insurgents sprayed the car with bullets, injuring another attorney, Thamir al-Khuzaie in the process.

In response to the attacks, more than 1,100 Iraqi lawyers withdrew from Saddam Hussein's defense team on November 12. The attorneys had earlier said they would not return to court until security was stepped up and reaffirmed their intention not to return to court on November 28 when the trial was scheduled to resume. In the statement they released, the attorneys said they withdrew because "there was no response from the Iraqi government, US forces and international organizations to our demands for providing protection to the lawyers and their families."<sup>288</sup> Many of the lawyers have rejected the Interior Ministry's offer to supply them with bodyguards, claiming the Shi'ite-led police and security forces are behind many of the political assassinations.<sup>289</sup>

Iraqi police arrested eight Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk on November 26, two days before Saddam's trial was scheduled to resume in Baghdad. The men were accused of plotting to assassinate Raed Juhi, one of the judges who prepared the case against Saddam. When told of the threat on his life, Juhi said: "As an Iraqi citizen and a judge, I am vulnerable to assassination attempts...If I thought about this danger, then I would not be able to perform my job...I will practice my profession in a way that serves my country and satisfies my conscience."<sup>290</sup>

In a February 2006 report to Congress, the Department of Defense highlighted the threats to judges in general and the security measures taken by the Coalition to attempt and protect them: "Intimidation of judges by insurgents severely affects the rule of law in Iraq. Twenty-nine secure housing units inside the protected International Zone have recently been made available to judges living in the Baghdad area. Eight CCCI (The Central Criminal Court of Iraq) judges have access to up-armored vehicles, and 33 CCI judges have trained private security details at their constant disposal."<sup>291</sup>

- **"Horror" attacks, atrocities, and alienation:** Whether or not the tactics were initially deliberate, insurgents in Iraq found that atrocities like desecrating corpses and beheadings are effective political and psychological weapons for those Islamist extremists whose goal is to divide the West from the Islamic world, and create an unbridgeable "clash of civilizations."

Experts have long pointed out that one of the key differences between Islamist extremist terrorism and previous forms of terrorism is that they are not seeking to negotiate with those they terrorize, but rather to create conditions that can drive the West out of the Middle East, undermine secular and moderate regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and establish the conditions under which they can create "Islamic" states according to their own ideas of "Puritanism."

This is why it serves the purposes of Islamist extremists, as well as some of the more focused opponents of the US and the West, to create mass casualties and carry out major strikes, or carry out executions and beheadings, even if the result is to provoke hostility and anger. The goal of Bin Laden and those like him is not to persuade the US or the West, it is rather to so alienate them from the Islamic and Arab world that the forces of secularism in the region will be sharply undermined, and Western influence can be controlled or eliminated. The goal of most Iraqi insurgents is narrower – drive the US and its allies out of Iraq – but involves many of the same methods.

Seen in this context, the more horrifying the attack, the better. Simple casualties do not receive the same media attention. They are a reality of war. Killing (or sometimes releasing) innocent hostages does grab the

attention of the world media. Large bombs in crowds do the same, as does picking targets whose innocence or media impact grabs headlines. Desecrating corpses, beheading people, and similar acts of violence get even more media attention – at least for a while.

Such actions also breed anger and alienation in the US and the West and provoke excessive political and media reactions, more stringent security measures, violent responses, and all of the other actions that help instigate a “clash of civilizations.” The US and the West are often provoked into playing into the hands of such attackers.

At the same time, any attack or incident that garners massive media coverage and political reactions appears to be a “victory” to those who support Islamist extremism or those who are truly angry at the US – even though the actual body count is often low, and victory does not mean creating stronger forces or winning political control. Each such incident can be used to damage the US and Western view of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Two incidents in particular, both involving the murder and mutilation of US contractors, deserve special mention. On March 31, 2004, insurgents in Fallujah attacked two SUVs carrying four civilian contractors charged with providing security for food convoys in the area. The insurgents attacked the vehicles with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire before pulling the bodies from the burning vehicles and dragging them through the street. Several of the bodies were mutilated and two were strung up on a nearby bridge while local crowds chanted, “Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans.” Footage of the burned and mutilated corpses was broadcast around the world.<sup>292</sup>

The brutality of the attack drew comparisons to a similar incident in Mogadishu a decade earlier when American soldiers were dragged through the streets by angry mobs.<sup>293</sup> Experts like John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org said the comparison to the 1993 attack was spot-on and suggested the Mogadishu attack probably served as an inspiration for the Fallujah attack: “They knew how to stage that. They are trying to frighten Americans. They want to frighten us out of Iraq...It was premeditated, planned, skillfully staged terrorism. They know the degree of dread it will inflict in American family members.”<sup>294</sup> In July, after a three-week siege of Fallujah by US Marines, a militant group calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>295</sup>

A similar incident occurred on September 20, 2005, when insurgents attacked a convoy of US contractors north of Baghdad. The convoy, which included US military guards, came under attack after making a wrong turn in the largely Sunni city of Duluiyah, 45 miles north of Baghdad. Insurgents opened gunfire on the convoy, killing four and wounding two.<sup>296</sup> The British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* broke the story more than a month later, with a grisly account of the attack. The paper described how the insurgents dragged two contractors from their truck and forced them to kneel, “[k]illing one of the men with a rifle round fired into the back of his head, they doused the other with petrol and set him alight. Barefoot children, yelping in delight, piled straw on the screaming man’s body to stoke the flames.” Afterwards, a crowd dragged the corpses through the street, chanting anti-US slogans.<sup>297</sup> The military did not confirm the attack (in fact, no mention of it seems to have appeared before the *Telegraph* account,) until October 22, and said only it was investigating the incident.

In 2005, insurgents began adopting a new “horror” tactic, targeting funeral processions. These attacks included:<sup>298</sup>

- March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a Shi’ite mosque during a funeral in Mosul.
- March 12, 2005: Gunmen killed three Iraqi police officers as they drive to a colleague’s funeral in Mosul.
- May 1, 2005: A car bomb detonated next to a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.
- July 2, 2005: A bomb went off in a local market in Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad. The attack, which killed two and wounded 10, occurred minutes after the funeral procession of Sheik Kamaledin passed by.
- October 5, 2005: A bomb exploded outside the Shi’ite Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama mosque in Hillah, killing 25 and wounding 87. Among the victims were mourners attending a funeral service for a local restaurant owner killed by insurgents two days earlier.

- November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber killed at least 36 people and wounded 50 more in a Shi'ite funeral procession north of Baghdad.
- January 4, 2006: A suicide bomber struck a Shi'ite funeral east of Baquba, killing 37 people and wounding 45 others.

These attacks, the majority of which targeted Shi'ites, received a lot of media attention. After the January 2006 bombing, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan released a statement saying he was "appalled" by the suicide bombing. Annan also condemned the crime, saying it targeted innocent civilians "in total disrespect for human life and dignity." The Secretary-General urged all parties to come together and refrain from violence that could undermine the country's recent democratic progress.<sup>299</sup>

- **"Body dumps:"** Body dumps became a variation of "horror" attacks and atrocities. It has become increasingly difficult to determine who is responsible for body dumps, and there are clear indications that the number of Shi'ites killing Sunnis increased steadily in 2005, just as Sunni insurgents increased their killings of Shi'ites. It is clear, however, the bodies of Iraqi forces, pro-government Iraqis, and other Iraqis that have no links to Shi'ite attacks have been dumped in rivers, soccer stadiums, and other public places where they were found without any clear picture as to who had killed them or why. In mid March 2005, for example, some 80 bodies were found in four dumps in Iraq, many of who were police officers and soldiers.<sup>300</sup> Other notable discoveries in late 2005 included:<sup>301</sup>
  - April 20, 2005: 100 bodies were retrieved from the Tigris River, near the town of Madain.
  - April 22, 2005: The bodies of 19 Iraqi soldiers were found near Beiji.
  - May 15, 2005: The bodies of 38 men shot execution-style were discovered at an abandoned chicken farm, west of Baghdad.
  - May 28, 2005: The mutilated bodies of 10 Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims were found in the desert near the town of Qaim.
  - June 10, 2005: The bodies of 16 people were discovered in western Iraq.
  - June 12, 2005: Police discover 28 bodies in and around Baghdad.
  - August 14, 2005: Captured insurgents lead Iraqi police to a grave containing 30 bodies in southern Baghdad.
  - August 25, 2005: Iraqi police discover 36 bodies in southeastern Baghdad.
  - September 3, 2005: Police discover three bodies in the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
  - September 5, 2005: The bodies of three local politicians were found in Tal Afar.
  - September 8, 2005: Police discover 14 bodies near Mahmoudiyah.
  - September 9, 2005: The bodies of 10 decapitated Iraqis were found.
  - September 12, 2005: Police in Baghdad discover the bodies of 10 Iraqi men.
  - September 17, 2005: A total of 11 bodies, handcuffed and blindfolded, were found around the country.
  - September 18, 2005: 20 bodies were pulled from the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
  - September 22, 2005: The bodies of 10 Iraqis were discovered in Mosul.
  - September 28, 2005: The bodies of seven Sunni men from Hurriya were found in Shula.
  - October 3, 2005: Three bodies were found in Baghdad.
  - October 7, 2005: The bodies of 22 executed Sunnis are discovered in Badra, near the border with Iran.
  - October 11, 2005: A US Army patrol in Tikrit discovers three bodies with multiple gunshot wounds.
  - October 26, 2005: The bodies of nine Iraqi border guards are found in Karbala.
  - October 27, 2005: The bodies of 17 Sunnis are found in Al-Nasiriyah Governorate.

- October 30, 2005: Iraqi police discover 14 bodies near Tal Afar. The victims appeared to have been killed between one and three months ago.
- November 10, 2005: Iraqi soldiers discover the bodies of 27 executed civilians near the border with Iran.
- November 14, 2005: Four bodies are discovered in northern Baghdad.
- November 27, 2005: The bodies of three Iraqi soldiers were discovered in the Baghdad slum of Habibya.
- December 27, 2005: Iraqi authorities discovered the remains of 31 people in a mass grave in Karbala. The remains were believed to be from the 1991 Gulf War.
- December 31, 2005: The bodies of five Iraqis were found in southern Baghdad. Four bodies had been dumped in a river, and the fifth, half-tortured, was found in an orchard.

As the list shows, most of the body dumps have been found in the greater Baghdad area. Some 300 mass graves have been discovered since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in March 2003.<sup>302</sup> According to the Associated Press, at least 204 of the 566 bodies that have been found since the interim government was formed on April 28 were discovered in Baghdad. Although the identities of most victims are unknown, the Associated Press has identified 116 Sunnis, 43 Shi'ites and one Kurd among the victims.<sup>303</sup> The frequency of these discoveries appeared to increase in the run-up to the October election. Body dumps continued in 2006. Political leaders, former Ba'ath Party members and police recruits were common victims. On January 2, 2006, officials discovered eight unidentified bodies inside a water purification plant in Rustimiyah, south of Baghdad.<sup>304</sup> Four days later, on January 6, Iraqi police stumbled upon 10 bodies in Baghdad.<sup>305</sup>

- January 17, 2006: The bodies of Col. Hussein Shi'ite, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Iraqi Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade and his brother were found bound and shot in the head in western Baghdad's dangerous al-Baiyaa district. They were abducted the previous Sunday in Mahmoudiya.
- January 18, 2006: Seven Shi'ites were found murdered in this fashion in Wahdah. 25 bodies were discovered in Nibaei. 25 bodies were discovered in Nibaei.
- January 20, 2006: Police said they had found seven additional bodies in Dujail.
- January 21, 2006: Iraqi authorities found the bullet-riddled bodies of Iraqi commando officer Ali Hussein in an open field and former Ba'ath Party member Abdun Hamid in a playground near Karbala.
- January 22, 2006: The bodies of the 23 men were found partially buried near Dujail, about 50 miles north of Baghdad. They had been abducted Wednesday while traveling from Baghdad to their homes in Samarra after failing to be accepted at a police recruit center. In the central city of Mashru, police found the bodies of two blindfolded men who had been shot in the head and chest. The bodies of prominent Sunni Arab tribal leader, Sayid Ibrahim Ali, 75, and his 28-year-old son, Ayad, were found in a field near Hawija, 150 miles north of Baghdad.
- January 23, 2006: The bodies of eight Sunni Arabs were found in a field north of Baghdad five days after they were seized on their way home by bus after being rejected for admission to the police academy.
- January 26, 2006: Police found four bound and blindfolded bodies riddled with bullet holes in Mahmoudiya, about 20 miles south of Baghdad.
- January 28, 2006: Police found the buried bodies of six laborers who had been bound, gagged and shot in the head south of the southern city of Karbala.
- January 31, 2006: In Baghdad, police found the bodies of 11 handcuffed, blindfolded men inside a truck near the Ghazaliyah district of western Baghdad. Three other bodies were found in Baghdad's Rustamiyah area.
- February 4, 2006: The bullet-riddled bodies of 14 Sunni Arab men purportedly seized by police a week ago were found dumped in Baghdad.
- February 16, 2006: The bodies of 12 men were found dead, shot execution style in the head.

After the February 22 attack on a sacred Shi'ite shrine, the wave of sectarian killings that followed marked an increase in both the frequency of body dumps, and the numbers of bodies discovered in each instance. These often included Iraqi's who were not members of the police, military or security forces, but rather civilian Shi'ites or Sunnis.

- February 23, 2006: At least 47 bodies were found scattered across Iraq late Wednesday and early Thursday, many of them shot execution-style and dumped in Shi'ite-dominated parts of the capital. The individuals, both Shi'ites and Sunnis, were forced from their vehicles on the way to a protest and shot.
- February 24, 2006: Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.
- February 25, 2006: 11 bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad.
- February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baqubah this morning discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head.

The number of body dumps increased in March. By the end of the month, over 385 people were assassinated. The total, if including the last six days in February, was at least 486.<sup>306</sup>

- March 7, 2006: Police said they found the handcuffed bodies of 18 men in the back of a cargo truck abandoned on a roadside in Baghdad's Amariya district, a Sunni Arab neighborhood. Another 18 bodies were washed up into a water treatment facility.
- March 8, 2006: Iraqi police found the bodies of four handcuffed and hanged men in an open field in east Baghdad. Another body, shot in the head, was found near a shop in an eastern suburb.
- March 11, 2006: Authorities discovered nine bodies around the capital, each handcuffed and with bullet wounds to the head.
- March 14, 2006: Police found a 6-by-8-yard hole in an empty field. It contained at least 27 dead men most of them in their underwear in Kamaliyah, a mostly Shi'ite east Baghdad suburb. An abandoned minibus containing 15 bodies was found on the main road between two mostly Sunni neighborhoods in west Baghdad. At least 40 more bodies were discovered in various parts of Baghdad, including both Sunni and Shi'ite neighborhoods. By the following day it was reported that 87 bodies were found in the past 24 hours.
- March 16, 2006: At least 25 bodies were found shot execution style across the capital.
- March 17, 2006: Police in a Shiite area of east Baghdad found the bodies of four Sunni men who had been seized from a taxi by masked gunmen the day before in western Baghdad.
- March 18, 2006: In Baghdad a dozen bodies were found.
- March 19, 2006: The bodies of 17 men tortured or shot to death were found in Baghdad, 11 of them flushed by city sewers into the tanks of water-purification plants.
- March 20, 2006: Police found the bodies of at least 15 people including a 13-year-old girl dumped around Baghdad.
- March 22, 2006: Police discovered eight more blindfolded corpses in west Baghdad, some of them showing signs of torture. In Suwera, four more corpses were found on the bank of the Tigris River.
- March 23, 2006: 3 bodies were found in Baghdad and 8 in Fallujah.
- March 24, 2006: 13 executed bodies were discovered in Binok, Kasimiyah and Sadr City neighborhoods.
- March 25, 2006: two more bodies were found in the capital, shot in the head with their hands and feet bound.
- March 26, 2006: 10 bodies were found blindfolded, bound and shot in Baghdad, and 30 decapitated corpses were found in Baquoba.
- March 27, 2006: 12 bodies were found in southwestern Baghdad. 9 bodies were found in west Baghdad handcuffed, blindfolded and with ropes around their necks.
- March 28, 2006: 17 bodies were discovered in Baghdad, all handcuffed and shot in the head.



- **Deprive the central, regional, and local governments' efforts to expand legitimacy. Attack nation-building and stability targets:** There is nothing new about attacking key economic targets, infrastructure, and aspects of governance critical to the functioning of the state in an effort to disrupt its economy, undermine law enforcement and security, and encourage instability. Iraqi insurgent and Islamist attacks on aid workers and projects, and their role in encouraging looting, sabotage and theft did, however, demonstrate a growing sophistication in targeting stability efforts and tangible progress in aid and governance. These tactics also interact synergistically with the above tactics.
- **Seek to create sanctuaries like Fallujah and the river areas in Al Anbar, Ninevah, and Mosul Provinces; and to take shelter in mosques, shrines, and high value targets, and targets with high cultural impact:** Again, exploiting facilities of religious, cultural, and political sensitivity is not a new tactic. However, as operations against Sadr and in Fallujah have shown, the tactics raise the media profile, create a defensive deterrent, and can be exploited to make the US seem anti-Islamic or to be attacking a culture and not a movement.

Areas like mosques are also used by insurgents to conduct meetings and serve as sanctuaries by allowing them to give orders face to face without having to worry about a U.S. presence.<sup>307</sup>

In a different case, driving insurgent cells out of Iraq's cities in 2004 led them to move into Al Anbar Province in the West, and to seek shelter in towns along the route from the Syrian border along the Euphrates, and through Qaim, Rawa, Haithah, and Fallujah to Baghdad. Insurgents have also taken refuge in the largely Sunni towns and cities along the Tigris from Mosul to Baghdad. The areas along the rivers gave the insurgents a population to hide in and disperse among. Unlike the flat desert areas, there were also hills, tree cover, and numerous built up areas, with many potential ambush sites and predictable lines of communication where IEDs could be implanted. While Coalition forces could always enter such areas, they could rarely stop the insurgents from dispersing and later regrouping— at least in those cases where no permanent garrison and defense force was deployed and the Iraqi government did not provide effective governance.<sup>308</sup> As late as the winter of 2005, insurgents continued to exert control over a number of Iraqi cities. In early December, some 300 insurgents took over the streets of Ramadi for several hours. One eyewitness told *The Washington Times*:<sup>309</sup>

It was easy for them to take Ramadi...it was like a message to the American and Iraqi forces to show their power, their ability to take a city.

In many other incidents, insurgents held cities for several days or weeks at time. Faris and Ameriya, two cities in Iraq's violent Anbar province, were without police officers for seven months in 2005, from February until September.<sup>310</sup>

- **Exploit, exaggerate, and falsify US attacks that cause civilian casualties, collateral damage, friendly fire against local allies, and incidents where the US can be blamed for being anti-Arab and anti-Islam:** Terrorists and insurgents have found they can use the media, rumor, and conspiracy theories to exploit the fact that the US often fights a military battle without proper regard for the fact it is also fighting a political, ideological, and psychological war.

Real incidents of US misconduct such as the harsh treatment of detainees and prisoners, and the excessive security measures are cases in point. So too are careless political and media rhetoric by US officials and military officers.

Bin Laden, the Iraqi insurgents, etc., all benefit from every Western action that unnecessarily angers or frustrates the Arab and Islamic worlds. They are not fighting to influence Western or world opinion; they are fighting a political and psychological war to dominate Iraq and the Arab and Islamic worlds.

- **Kill members of the constitutional committee and the newly elected legislature:** This tactic discourages political participation, or in the case of the Sunni delegation, deprives the committee of the necessary numbers of Sunni participants to move forward. Proceeding without the requisite numbers of Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds would thus bring the committee's legitimacy into question.

After weeks of protesting their lack of representation on the constitutional committee, Sunni Arab groups reached a compromise with senior members of the Shi'ite dominated body on June 16, 2005. Under the deal, 15 Sunni Arabs representatives joined the committee. As a result, the committee grew in size from 55 to 70. An additional 10 Sunni Arabs were given special advisory roles, serving as consultants in the

constitutional process. US officials strongly supported the changes in the hopes that it would lead to greater Sunni participation in the upcoming constitutional referendum.

Insurgents did not take long to strike, however. On July 19, gunmen assassinated Mijbil Issa, one of the newly appointed Sunni delegates working on the constitution. His bodyguard and one of the Sunni consultants, Dhamin Hussein al-Obeidi, were also killed. The three men were leaving a Baghdad restaurant when three gunmen inside a minibus opened gunfire on the car carrying them. For many of Iraq's Sunnis, the violence showed the consequences of participating in Iraq's new political process.

On July 20, the 12 remaining members of the Sunni Arab delegation -two had earlier resigned after being threatened by insurgents-suspended their membership in protest over the murder. Five days later, the delegation ended its boycott and returned to the committee.

- **Kidnap, kill and attack candidates running in the December 15 parliamentary elections as well as local election officials in order to disrupt the political process:** Members of the Iraqi National Assembly were frequent targets of attacks by insurgents in 2005. Although many believed Sunnis members of the Assembly were being singled out for attacks, a list of some of those killed shows that both Shi'ites and Kurds were among the victims as well:

- April 27, 2005: Insurgents in Baghdad gun down Lamia Abed Khadouri Sakri. She was elected in January as part of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi List Party, which received 40 seats in the new cabinet. Sakri is the first member of the Iraqi National Assembly to be assassinated.
- June 28, 2005: A suicide attack takes the life of Sheik Dhari Fayad, the oldest member of the Iraqi National Assembly.
- July 30, 2005: Sheik Khalaf Aliyan, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Council, escaped an assassination attempt in southern Baghdad.
- September 17, 2005: Gunmen kill Faris Nasir Hussein, a member of Iraq's Shabak ethnic minority. Hussein was elected to parliament on the Kurdish ticket. The attack, which took place on a road from Mosul, also injured another politician, Haidar Qassem.

After the success of the October referendum, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. For the month of November, these included:

- November 3, 2005: An internet statement posted on a website by Al Qa'ida in Iraq says the group had kidnapped Majida Yussef Sael, a candidate in the December elections and a member of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party.
- November 8, 2005: In Kirkuk, insurgents kidnap Hatam Mahdi al-Hassani, the brother of a leading Sunni Arab politician.
- November 12, 2005: Jamal Khaz'al, the chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Party in Basra, escaped an assassination attempt.
- November 13, 2005: Insurgents assassinate Kiaweh, a member of the Al-Naafi Advisory Council.
- November 17, 2005: Tariq al-Ma'muri, the deputy chairman of the Al-Ummah al-Iraqiyah Party and a candidate for the upcoming elections, escaped an assassination attempt in Al-Qut.
- November 18, 2005: For the second day in a row, Ma'muri escaped an assassination attempt. This time in southern Baghdad.
- November 18, 2005: Insurgents kidnapped Tawfiq al-Yasiri, secretary general of Iraqi Democratic Coalition and Shams al-Iraq candidate.
- November 22, 2005: Unknown gunmen broke into the headquarters of the Communist Party's branch offices in Sadr City, and killed two activists.

- November 23, 2005: Insurgents wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In a statement posted on an Islamist website, Al Qa'ida in Iraq announced it had killed Miqdad Ahmed Sito, a Kurdish election activist, on November 22 in Mosul.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in Baghdad kill Ayad Alizi and Ali Hussein. Both were members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni party that had boycotted the January elections but was running candidates in the December elections. Alizi had been selected to run as part of a Sunni ticket.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in southern Baghdad killed Ghalib al-Sideri, a candidate for the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue.
- November 28, 2005: Insurgents attacked members of the Assyrian Party in Mosul, killing two and wounding two others.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent female Shi'ite politician, wounding two guards.
- December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen killed Sheik Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi'ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Muqtada al-Sadr.
- December 5, 2005: An election worker was killed and his assistant wounded in Baquba.
- December 13, 2005: Gunmen in Ramadi killed Sunni Arab candidate Mizhar al-Dulaimi.
- December 13, 2005: A roadside bomb in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, targeted the convoy of Sheik Jalal Eddin al-Sagheer, a Shi'ite member of the National Assembly.

Assassinations, attempted assassinations and kidnappings of political figures, government workers and their families continued even after the elections had ended.

- December 17, 2005: Gunmen killed two relatives of a senior Kurdish official in Mosul. The men, Dhiab Hamad al-Hamdani and his son-were relatives of PUK party official Khodr Hassan al-Hamdani.
- December 19, 2005: Ziyad Ali al-Zawba'i, the Deputy Governor of Baghdad, and three of his bodyguards escaped an assassination attempt in the western Baghdad district of Al-Amil. The brother of Sa'd Nayif al-Hardan, minister of state for governorate affairs, was kidnapped in Al-Khalidiyah City in western Iraq.
- December 22, 2005: Gunmen assassinated Sheik Saffah Nayif al-Fayyad, a tribal leader of the Al Bu-Amir tribe, north of Baghdad.
- January 3, 2006: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnapped the sister of Bayan Jabr, the interior minister.
- January 4, 2006: Gunmen kill Rahim Ali Sudani, a director-general at the oil ministry, in Baghdad.
- January 18, 2006: The bodies of three men, including a relative of Iraq's defense minister, were found with gunshot wounds to the head in a Baghdad apartment. Gunmen in the area of Al-Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad assassinated the bodyguard of Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.
- January 21, 2006: A roadside bomb blast also wounded five bodyguards of President Jalal Talabani in northern Iraq.
- January 26, 2006: Two Iraqi government employees were gunned down by drive-by militants in separate attacks in the northern city of Kirkuk. One was a senior official of Iraq's anti-corruption commission.
- February 8, 2006: Iraq's higher education minister escaped unharmed from a car bomb attack on his convoy that lightly wounded three of his bodyguards.
- February 12, 2006: A group of armed men in a speeding car killed Education Ministry official Karim Selman al-Zaidi in Baqouba.

- February 13, 2006: Iraq's former electricity minister, Ayham al-Samarie, escaped injury when a roadside bomb exploded near his three-vehicle convoy in Baghdad, but two bodyguards were wounded.
- February 28, 2006: a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injured three.
- March 2, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on the car of Iraqi Sunni political leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front Adnan al-Dulaimi killing a bodyguard and wounding three others as the car was stopped to repair a punctured tire.

## ***Methods of Attack and Combat***

There is no clear division between the mix of insurgent and terrorist tactics focused on the political and psychological nature of war and those that focus more directly on attacking military targets like MNF-I and Iraqi government forces, Iraqi and Coalition officials, and the Iraqi economy and nation building process. The insurgents again made major adaptations in their tactics and methods of attack that still further increased the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces:

- **Adapt targets to place maximum pressure on Iraqi social and political apparatuses:** Insurgents have adapted their tactics as well, focusing greater attention on Iraqi military forces and police. In January 2005, 109 Iraq police and military were killed through insurgent activity. By May, this number had spiked to 259, and by July 304.<sup>311</sup> As the Iraqi constitutional process unfolded – which the Sunnis were largely absent from due to their widespread boycott of the Parliamentary election – sectarian violence became increasingly apparent. Sunni attacks on Iraqi security and political figures increased as radicals sought to derail the political process. On August 19, 2005, three Sunni election workers were kidnapped in Mosul, driven to Al Noor and executed before a throng of people gathered before the Al Noor Mosque. Of the election workers murdered, one was identified as Faris Yunis Abdullah, a senior official in the mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party. The three men were posting placards encouraging Iraqis to vote in the October 15 election when they were abducted.<sup>312</sup> In the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006, the number of Iraqi military and police killed per month hovered around 200. In November, December and January, deaths totaled 176, 193 and 194, respectively.<sup>313</sup>
- **Suicide bombs, car bombs, and mass bombings:** The use of such tactics increased steadily after late 2003, in part due to the high success rate relative to alternative methods of attack. By late 2004, exploding vehicles accounted for approximately 60% of Iraqi police and recruit fatalities.<sup>314</sup> Suicide attacks have increased, and killed and wounded Iraqis in large numbers. The number of car bombs rose from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005, the number of suicide car bombs rose from 133 to 411, and the number of suicide vest attacks rose from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005.<sup>315</sup> In case after case, Shi'ite civilians and Sunnis cooperating with the government were successfully targeted in ways designed to create a serious civil war.

According to the Associated Press, there were 190 suicide bomb attacks in the six-months between the creation of the interim Iraqi government on April 28 and October 28, 2005. Suicide attacks claimed some 1,458 lives, roughly one-third of all violence-related deaths during this period. Of the 3,902 Iraqis killed, 1,128 were security personnel and the overwhelming majority, 2,744, were civilians. More than 40 percent of the fatalities occurred in the greater Baghdad area. After Baghdad, the cities with the largest number of fatalities from suicide attacks were Mosul, Tal Afar, Balad and Kirkuk with 196, 188, 124 and 118 deaths respectively. September proved to be the deadliest month for these attacks, with at least 804 people killed. That number fell by almost half in October.<sup>316</sup>

The trend appeared to continue into the winter. In November, there were only 23 suicide attacks, the lowest number in seven months. Maj. Gen. Mark Lynch attributed the drop to successful US and Iraqi operations along the Syrian border designed to prevent weapons and insurgents from infiltrating Iraq. Lynch said at least 96 percent of suicide bombers come from outside of Iraq.<sup>317</sup>

It is not always clear that suicide-bombing techniques were tactically necessary. In many cases, timed devices might produce the same damage. Events in Iraq showed, however, that suicide bombers had a major psychological impact and gain exceptional media attention. They also came to serve as symbols of

dedication and commitment, can be portrayed as a form of Islamic martyrdom, and attract more political support and attention among those sympathetic to the cause involved.

The “cost” of suicide bombers was also low. While no reliable figures are available, only about 10% seemed to have been Iraqis as of August 2005, and most had been recruited from outside Iraq by various Islamist organizations. Key sources were North Africa, the Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, and Central Asia.

The limited evidence available indicates that many were chosen because they could be persuaded to seek Islamic martyrdom, and do so collectively and without trying to call great public attention to themselves. They often could be rapidly indoctrinated and given minimal training and then be used as “force multipliers” for relatively small Islamic extremist groups. A single volunteer could use a strap-on bomb, or single vehicle filled with explosives, penetrate a crowded area or high profile target area, and then set off an explosion producing high casualties.

Many of these attacks were aimed at soft targets such as Iraqi civilians. The increase in the use of explosive vests worn by individuals in some cases enabled the attacker to infiltrate into areas populated with Iraqi forces, often secured by a perimeter designed to defend against car bombs and suicide car bombers.

Even when such attacks fail to reach their target the explosion often got intense public and media attention. They also became political weapons by exploiting the fact Arab Sunni Islamists were being used to kill and maim large numbers of Arab Shi'ites and Kurds, as well as any Sunni volunteers and military in the Iraqi forces. Some of the larger weapons approached the status of weapons of mass terrorism, and even much smaller levels of casualties got enough attention to make them weapons of mass media and weapons of mass politics – tools that could be used to encourage ethnic and sectarian civil war. In the spring of 2005, some 170 such attacks were conducted in April, 151 in May, and 133 in June.

These attacks generate even greater public and media attention when women carry them out. Zarqawi has asserted that many Iraqi females have come to him asking to be dispatched on suicide missions. In the past, he has used this to try and shame Iraqi males into volunteering for suicide missions.<sup>318</sup> Although Saddam Hussein's security forces used female bombers at least once during the 2003 war, Al Qa'ida in Iraq did not begin using female suicide bombers until the fall of 2005. (Prior to 2005, Coalition forces had reported capturing a number of female suicide bombers on foot, including one trying to enter the Green Zone in October 2003.<sup>319</sup>)

The first female suicide attack occurred on September 28 in the city of Tal Afar. After having been denied entry to a civil military operations building, the bomber detonated her explosives in a nearby square where Iraqi civilians and US soldiers often interacted. The attack claimed the lives of five civilians and injured more than 30. Zarqawi's organization asserted responsibility for the attack in an Internet posting saying a “sister” of the Malik Suicidal Brigade had carried out the successful mission.<sup>320</sup>

The first female suicide attack of the insurgency was followed closely by a female suicide car bombing. On October 11, a female suicide bomber detonated her car near a group of US soldiers on patrol in Mosul. The only other known incident of a female suicide car bomber occurred in Haditha in April of 2003 when two women, acting on the orders of officials in Saddam Hussein's regime, killed three US soldiers.<sup>321</sup>

In response to the bombing in Tal Afar, the regional police chief-General Ahmed Mohammed Khalaf-issued the following statement:

Today's attack seems to represent a new tactic by the insurgents to use women, who are rarely searched at the Tal Afar checkpoints because of religious and social traditions that grant women special treatment.

Because of the bombing, Gen. Khalaf said women and children would now be searched “in the same manner as men”.<sup>322</sup> Cultural and religious barriers have made any interaction between US forces and Iraqi women difficult in the past. Following the attacks, the Ministry of Defense announced there would be no new security measures other than “being more aware that females as well as men can be suicide bombers.”<sup>323</sup>

The most well-known Iraqi female suicide bomber was that of Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, a 35-year-old mother of four from Ramadi, who was to have been the fourth suicide bomber of the November 9 hotel

attacks in Amman. Rishawi fled the Radisson hotel after her husband detonated his explosives and her own failed to go off. She was picked up by Jordanian police three days later and made a televised statement that was subsequently aired around the world.

Hussein al-Dulaimi, a cousin of Rishawi, believes she was motivated by anger and humiliation. Three of her brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq. According to Dulaimi, the family was often harassed by US troops:<sup>324</sup>

“In one incident, Sajida’s house was raided, and an American soldier put his boot on the head of Sajida’s husband...that made her very angry, as this was a big insult against her and her husband.”

Rishawi’s case is unusual in that it is believed to be the first case of husband and wife suicide bombers.

In late November, reports surfaced that a European woman had been involved in a suicide attack in Iraq. Iraqi officials believe a Belgian woman who had converted to Islam after marrying a radical Muslim carried out a November 9 attack on a US military convoy in Baghdad. The woman, identified as Muriel Degauque, was the only fatality in the attack and had traveled to Iraq to carry out jihad with her husband.<sup>325</sup> The case was the first instance of a European female suicide bomber.

On December 6, 2005, two female suicide bombers blew themselves up at Baghdad’s police academy, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 70. The attack was the deadliest against Iraqi security forces since February 28, 2005. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>326</sup>

After the December election and in early 2006, suicide bombings continued to target predominately Shi’ites civilians and Iraqi police forces. Although consistent, the December bombings were not particularly deadly. On December 18 in eastern Baghdad, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and injured two others. On December 22, a suicide car bomb in Iskandariyah wounded seven policemen. The following day, In Balad, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing four people. The next day, a suicide car bomber targeting two Iraq army vehicles in Baghdad killed five soldiers and wounded seven others, including several police officers. On December 29, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the interior ministry in Baghdad, killing four policemen and wounding five.

In the span of eight days in early January, several suicide bombings targeting police recruits and Shi’ites killed almost 180 people. On January 3, 2006 a suicide car bomber attacked a bus carrying police officers in Baquba, killing three and wounding 14. The following day, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a funeral in Miqdadiya, killing 37 Shi’ite mourners and wounding 45 others. On January 5 in Karbala, a suicide bomber struck outside the Imam Hussein Shrine, killing more than 49 Shi’ites. The same day a suicide bomber targeting a police recruitment center in Ramadi killed more than 50 and wounded as many as 60 others. On January 6, a suicide car bomb targeting a police checkpoint in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Zafaraniya killed one police commando and injured three. Later, in Mosul, a suicide car bomber struck a police patrol, wounding 11 people, including four policemen. On January 9, Two suicide bombers carrying police identity cards and dressed in police uniforms walked up to the Interior Ministry compound on Monday morning and blew themselves up hundreds of yards from a ceremony attended by the American ambassador, killing 29 Iraqis. On January 19, a suicide attacker detonated an explosive vest in a crowded downtown coffee shop, killing 16 and wounding 21

- **Use foreign Islamist volunteers as cannon fodder; put “paid” and low value Iraqi insurgents in high risk positions:** Both Islamist extremist cells and more nationalist cells and groups learned to exploit young men recruited from outside Iraq as “Islamic martyrs” in suicide bombings and other high risk missions. They developed foreign recruiting networks, often staging such volunteers through Syria and Jordan, indoctrinating them, and then using them ruthlessly. Alternatively, groups and cells learned to isolate their leaders, financiers, and experts from high risk and front line missions, sending in inexperienced and junior personnel to take risks – sometimes young Iraqis paid token fees for risking the actual attack. In at least some cases, Iraqis were sent out to conduct high-risk conventional attacks where the planner must have known they had little or no chance of survival.
- **Stay behinds, diehards, and suicide squads:** During and after Fallujah, insurgents increasingly had teams stay behind who seem to have been prepared to die or to seek martyrdom. Many were Iraqis. Their willingness to defend a building or small area with suicidal determination and no regard for retreat often inflicted higher casualties on MNF-I and Iraqi forces.

- **Mix crude and sophisticated IEDs:** Hezbollah should be given credit for perfecting the use of explosives in well structured ambushes, although there is nothing new about such tactics – the Afghans used them extensively against the Soviets. Iraq has, however, provided a unique opportunity for insurgents and Islamist extremists to make extensive use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) by exploiting its massive stocks of arms. The insurgents were able to draw on large stocks of explosives, as well as large bombs and artillery shells. Nearly 400 tons of HMX and RDX plastic explosive disappeared from the Qaqaa weapons facility alone after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

The Iraqi attackers also learned to combine their extensive use of low grade IEDs, more carefully targeted sophisticated IEDs, very large car bombs and other devices to create a mix of threats and methods that is much more difficult to counter than reliance on more consistent types of bombs and target sets.<sup>327</sup>

The insurgents based many of their initial efforts on relatively simple weapons designs, some of which seem to have been adapted from the Arabic translations of US field manuals on booby traps and similar improvised devices. The insurgents soon learned, however, to use more sophisticated detonators and triggering systems to counter US electronic countermeasures, and increase their distance away from the bomb. According to one report, only 10% of the IEDs used in Iraq as of May 2005 were modeled on the pressure-detonation devices shown in US Army Field Manual 5-31 and in a direct Iraqi translation published in 1987.<sup>328</sup> Insurgents had also learned how to make crude shaped-charges to attack US armored and other vehicles.

Triggers for IED devices grew more sophisticated as well. One IED found by soldiers was connected by a wire to a long-range transmitter on top of a telephone poll. Insurgents incorporated new technology with pressure-plated IEDs that are only triggered by tracked vehicles. One soldier remarked about the adaptation of insurgent forces and the use of new technology saying, "I didn't see that when I first came in."<sup>329</sup>

Insurgents also incorporated the use of IEDs into the tactic of follow-on attacks or ambushes. This allowed insurgents to target support vehicles that arrive on the scene of an attack, once an initial IED has gone off. Lt. Col. Ross Brown described one such experience: "I brought in vehicles to support them [the patrol] and they hit four more IEDs. These were 250-pound aircraft bombs buried in the dirt. It was an IED ambush."<sup>330</sup> Once several vehicles are disabled insurgents then attacked the convoy's using small arms and mortar fire.

By the summer of 2005, insurgents were attempting an average of 65 IED attacks a day. Many were detected and defeated, but their use of shaped charges had become more sophisticated, using technology first developed by the Lebanese Hezbollah. In addition, the insurgents had learned to cluster and stack anti-tank mines, and use brute force IEDs like adapted 500-pound bombs.<sup>331</sup> They also learned the vulnerabilities of US and Coalition armored vehicles and which held the most troops and crew. They learned more about the probable routes Coalition and Iraq forces would have to take, and which kind of attacks would do most to disrupt a given movement.

Insurgent organizations improved in structure to the point where key personnel directing operations, financing them, and providing technical support were far less active in the field, and more and more use was made of foreign volunteers, quickly recruited Iraqis, and Iraqis paid small sums to do part of the work in implanting IEDs.

Small, mostly independent cells came to carry out many operations – a technique which ensured that operations were hard to detect and penetrate, making it difficult to roll up an organization by catching men in the field or interrogating members of any one cell. In some cases, holes and locations for IEDs were prepared by one small team -- sometimes using vehicles with holes cut in the bottom to defeat visual detection. A different team might cruise through an area and plant an IED on a target quickly on of the basis of opportunity to defeat surveillance and patrols. Al Qa'ida in Iraq and Ansaar al Islam became particularly skilled in such operations. In short, the insurgents advanced both their IED technology and tactics in tandem.<sup>332</sup>

IED "teams" also frequently delegated three roles to its members: a lookout, a triggerman, and an emplacer. These cells often also include a rifleman to distract the gunners in the American vehicle while the triggerman detonates the IED device. The emplacer is one of the most valuable members as it is not only a risky position, but necessitates experience to cause increased damage and casualties.<sup>333</sup>

The insurgents also paid close attention to US intelligence collection methods, and counter-IED operations and change their behavior accordingly. They used improved methods of concealment such as digging holes in a road and then “paving over” the hole. Other methods have included stealing police, military, and government vehicles, along with uniforms and IDs to penetrate in to secure areas, and linking bombings to ambushes with rifles and RPGs – or additional IEDs – to attack the response force. As Coalition troops became more adept at uncovering IED factories and storage area, insurgents became more systematic with their construction and supply system. IEDs were often built in factories in the small villages around Baghdad then smuggled into the city to a few suppliers who then sell them to insurgents. Insurgents also turned to car dealerships to store munitions and IEDs instead of houses, making transportation easier.<sup>334</sup>

In September 2004, General Richard Cody, the US Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that some 500-600 IEDs were going off each month, and roughly half either harmed US personnel or damaged US vehicles.<sup>335</sup> While Coalition forces claimed to find some 30-40% of IEDs, and render them safe, by May 2005, they also reported that the number of IED incidents had steadily climbed to some 30 per day.

IEDs accounted for 189 of 720 US combat deaths in 2004 -- about 26 percent. Deaths caused by IEDs rose by more than 41% during the first five months of 2005, compared with a similar period in 2004, and accounted for 51% of the 255 combat deaths as of June 9, 2005. There were 85 deaths attributed to IEDs in the first five months of 2004, and 120 in 2005. This was a primary reason that the number of uparmored Humvees in US forces rose from around 200 in the summer of 2004 to 9,000 in June 2005.<sup>336</sup>

Lt. General James T. Conway, Director of Operations in the US Joint Staff, stated in May 2005, that a total of 70% of all Coalition casualties to date since the fall of Saddam Hussein had been caused by IEDs, an effort that had been so successful that the US announced that even uparmored Humvees were unsafe in high threat areas, and were being replaced with heavily armored 5-ton “gun trucks.”<sup>337</sup> The use of roadside bombs remains a major problem for US and other Coalition forces. The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. While the success rate of IED attacks dropped significantly, from 25-30% in 2004 to 10% in 2005, they still had a major impact. During 2005, there were 415 IED deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths, or 61.6 % of all combat deaths. IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941, some 71.6% of the wounded. From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 US service members out of a total of 369 total combat deaths, or 63.4%. They accounted for 2314 wounded out of 2980 total combat wounded, or 77.7 %.

To put these numbers in perspective, IEDs caused 900 deaths out of a total of 1,748 combat deaths, or 51.5 % during the entire post-Saddam fall from March 2003 and January 2006. IEDs caused 9,327 wounded out of a total of 16,606 or 56.2%.<sup>338</sup> However, the numbers of personnel killed and wounded by IEDs are scarcely the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped but the number of attacks has gone up. IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt operations, disrupt economic and aid activity, and interact with attacks on Iraqi civilians and forces to limit political progress and help try to provoke civil war.

Similar data are not available on Iraqi casualties, a larger percent of whom seem to have been hit by suicide bombers and in ambushes, but the chronology in the Appendix to this analysis shows there have been many effective attacks. For example, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and 44 were wounded in a single VBIED bomb attack on their bus on April 6, 2005.<sup>339</sup> Iraqi military, security, and police are particularly vulnerable because they have little or no armor, and often must move into insecure facilities or go on leave in unprotected vehicles simply to perform routine tasks like bringing money to their families in a cash-in-hand economy.

The number of roadside bombs continued to increase in the fall of 2005, part of the larger wave of violence unleashed by insurgents in the run-up to the December 15 elections. The US military reported that for September and October 2005, there were more than 2,000 roadside bombs. While IED attacks had numbered around 700 a month in the spring of 2004, there were 1,029 attacks in August, 1,044 in September and 1,029 in October. Although both the Iraqi and US security forces were becoming more adept at detecting the bombs, the insurgents were planting explosives in greater numbers than ever before.

The lethality and effectiveness of the devices that were successful also increased. In the six month period between May and October 2005, more than 60 per cent of all US troop fatalities were caused by IEDs. Of the more than 569 attacks across Iraq that occurred during the last week of October, 40 percent involved



improvised bombs. IED attacks for that period accounted for 64 percent of coalition casualties and 37 percent of Iraqi security force casualties.<sup>340</sup>

Similar trends continued in November. The U.S. suffered 40 deaths from IEDs, almost half of the total losses for the month. In December this number increased; 61 percent of all U.S. troop casualties were from IEDs. Near the end of January, the overall deaths caused by IEDs as a percentage of attacks on US forces was down to just below 40 percent. Yet the U.S. suffered fewer overall casualties that month, 63, nine of which came from helicopter crashes due to hostile fire or mechanical malfunctions.<sup>341</sup>

Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated at a press briefing in November:<sup>342</sup>

Between the increase in armor and the changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that we've employed, the number of attacks-IED attacks-that have [killed or wounded troops] has gone down...That said, there are more overall IED attacks by the insurgents, and we are working on that problem.

But US efforts to combat the effectiveness of the IEDs and find them before they detonate have not always been successful. Jammers used by US troops in Iraq to prevent insurgents from detonating IEDs with cell phones or garage-door openers often interfere with US radio signals, causing troops to turn off the jammers when they use their radios.<sup>343</sup> And newer infrared triggers cannot be blocked by electronic countermeasures, such as devices that jam signals sent from cell phones and remote-control devices used to detonate the bombs.<sup>344</sup>

According to Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita, IEDs pose a "tough" and evolving challenge because the problem that existed last year "is a different IED problem than the IED problem that exists today."<sup>345</sup> In late fall, the Pentagon announced that insurgents were using new triggers or sensors on the devices but that it was unable to figure out where the new technology was coming from or how best to defeat it. Although most bombs were still believed to be coming from inside Iraq, the military said it had evidence that bombs and technology were entering Iraq from the outside. Iran, as discussed below, is the candidate most often suspected as the source of this new technology.

US military officials believe IEDs are likely to be a problem for US forces for years to come, and not just in Iraq. Improvised bombs could become the weapon of choice for future insurgencies and guerilla wars. A 140-person Pentagon task force began working on ways to combat the roadside bombings in mid-2004. Brig. Gen. Joseph Votel, who currently leads the Pentagon's anti-IED effort, said in early November 2005 that IEDs "remain the only thing that we haven't solved, I think, in terms of the enemy capability to operate against us." Lt. Gen. James Conway, the operations director of the Joint Staff, agreed, saying the US military was placing a greater emphasis on IEDs "because it's the only tool the enemy really has left in order to be able to take us on and be able to really cause casualties." Similarly, Di Rita has said that once the US finds a way to eliminate the improvised devices, "it's over."<sup>346</sup>

The problem of IEDs, and the apparent increase in lethality and sophistication of technology must not be exaggerated however. Pentagon officials asserted in early January 2006 that insurgents had developed "jumping" IEDs and were using them to attack low-flying Coalition helicopters. These claims were retracted later in the month when the Department of Defense released a statement indicating that it did not know of any incidences of this nature.<sup>347</sup>

The Pentagon has been looking at how the British and Israelis dealt with similar problems in Northern Ireland and Lebanon in order to learn from those experiences. So far, however, the taskforce, which has received more than \$1.5 billion in funding to date, has been unable to produce a "silver bullet" against IEDs.<sup>348</sup>

In December 2005 the Department of Defense announced that two training centers would be opened in the US to help teach soldiers how to detect and disarm IEDs. Previously, soldiers had only received IED training upon their arrival in Iraq. The headquarters of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force will be located at Fort Irwin, California. A second training facility will open in January 2006 at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. Together, the centers will teach soldiers how to use robotics and UAVs as well as other technology to combat the IEDs. Speaking about the centers, Lt. Col. Thomas Magness said: "We've got to help these guys before they deploy...the threat evolves every day. This is an enemy that has demonstrated that they're going to change."<sup>349</sup>

- **Adapt technology and tactics to match updates in Coalition defense capabilities:** Despite technological advances and changes in tactics by the US military, insurgents continue to remain one step ahead. The summer of 2005 brought an increase in “shaped-charge” explosives, the use of sophisticated infra-red motion detectors to fire them as targets passed by, and new radio-controlled triggers with enough range and power to work from outside the range of the Coalition’s ECM bubble.

The number of American troops killed by IEDs spiked during the summer, with 35 deaths in May; 36 in June; and 39 in July.<sup>350</sup> Another adaptation that has increased the lethality of insurgent IED attacks was the increased size of the weapons, a response to the up-armoring of U.S. vehicles. Initially, IEDs in Iraq were small charges composed of single 60mm and 81mm mortars. Insurgents have since increased the size to 122mm and 152mm, and begun to use buried 500 and 1,000-lb airplane bombs to effect an explosive upward force that can render current up-armoring useless.<sup>351</sup> The 39 deaths by bombing in July 2005 was the largest to-date monthly toll since the war began.

In early October 2005, the British government announced that the recent increase in sophisticated roadside bombs in Iraq could be traced to Iran. During the summer of 2005 insurgents began using infrared “trip wires” rather than the less sophisticated remote control devices to detonate IEDs. The technology is similar to that used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. While cautioning that they could not be sure about the level of official or unofficial Iranian involvement, Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters that new explosive devices being used against Coalition troops in Iraq could nevertheless be traced “either to Iranian elements or to Hezbollah.”<sup>352</sup> In January of 2006, the British government issued a formal protest to Iran after similar electronically triggered devices were found in eastern Iraq.<sup>353</sup> A breakaway group from Moqtada al-Sadr’s militia is believed to be using the trip-wires, as are Sunni insurgents.

- **Increase the size and power of IEDs to nullify the advantages of US and Coalition armor and find countermeasures to US jamming and other countermeasures:** In two separate instances in early January 2005, IEDs destroyed a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and an Abrams tank. The two vehicles are among the more heavily armored vehicles in the US arsenal. Prior to the two bombings, both the Abrams and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle had proven relatively effective in protecting troops inside. More generally, insurgents have learned to use vehicles with holes drilled in their floors to rapidly dig holes, and only emplace IEDs when they know convoys are on the way. They have learned simple radio control devices like garage door openers and cell phones are detectable and jammable. They have imported more sophisticated trigger devices, arm IEDs before convoys or vehicles are in line of sight, and use IR motion detectors and trip wires to detonate the IED when they are not present to be counterattacked. Alternatively, they have learned to use more than one IED, fire additional weapons after vehicles have halted to deal with the first attack, and sometimes “swarm” the vehicles under attack with rapid strikes with RPGs and automatic weapons. These attacks have become more lethal as insurgent fire has become more accurate, and they have learned to strike at vulnerable points in armored and uparmored vehicles (like the windows of uparmored Humvees.)
- **Attack convoys to force the US and Coalition to defend logistics and supply operations, hit a more vulnerable target, and disrupt US operations.** The GAO reported in February 2006, that, “the security environment in Iraq has led to severe restrictions on the movement of civilian staff around the country and reductions of a U.S. presence at reconstruction sites,” according to U.S. agency officials and contractors. For example, the Project Contracting Office reported in February 2006, the number of attacks on convoys and casualties had increased from 20 convoys attacked and 11 casualties in October 2005 to 33 convoys attacked and 34 casualties in January 2006. In another example, work at a wastewater plant in central Iraq was halted for approximately 2 months in early 2005 because insurgent threats drove away subcontractors and made the work too hazardous to perform. In the assistance provided to support the electoral process, U.S.-funded grantees and contractors also faced security restrictions that hampered their movements and limited the scope of their work. For example, IFES<sup>14</sup> was not able to send its advisors to most of the governorate-level elections administration offices, which hampered training and operations at those facilities leading up to Iraq’s Election Day on January 30, 2005.<sup>354</sup>
- **Specialize and compartment operations, use isolation, affiliation, and “swarming:”** Insurgent groups have learned to create structures where leadership cadres are almost totally isolated from operations and communication, allowing them to focus on providing broad guidance and the propaganda and media struggle. Finance, planning, armor, and other operational groups are similarly isolated and physically

separated from the leadership and each other. Specialized groups are created in larger organizations for IED operations, assassinations, even strikes focused on specialized groups like Shi'ite clergy. Other cells focus solely on surveillance, reconnaissance, transportation and safe houses.<sup>355</sup> Suicide bomber groups are kept separate from those planning and arming the attacks and treated as expendable. Low level and low value cadres are expended in defensive operations or attacks, while higher value cadres disperse and seek to survive. Paid elements are used to avoid loss of cadre personnel.

Cell structures are deliberately kept loose, and direct command and communication minimized. Mission tasking replaces the kind of direct tasking and communication that the Coalition and Iraqi forces might detect. Affiliated groups and different mixes of cells may be brought in to "swarm" a given target or support a given operation, but the proliferation of different groups and elements helps ensure the survival of all insurgent groups by making it impossible to target a given set of cells and leaders.

What the military calls "low-level" insurgent cells, operate and attack in a specific region. But other more larger and hierarchical groups, many made up of former Iraqi military and intelligence officers, cover wider areas and can organize larger attacks. There is evidence that the insurgency is increasingly able to conduct complex attacks. For example on January 24, 2006 in Ramadi, it took the combined forces of U.S. marines working with Iraqi troops and supported by attack aircraft to defeat a series of coordinated insurgent attacks in broad daylight. The insurgents used weapons including mortars, small arms and RPGs.<sup>356</sup>

One such insurgent network, the Islamic Patriotism Movement numbered about 55 fighters and was associated with the larger Secret Islamic Army. Led by a former Iraqi intelligence officer named Abu Omar, known as the groups' emir, he assigns operations and planning to his lieutenants, many who are former Republican Guard members. Each cell leader then has three to four cells consisting of three to four men apiece. Each man has a specific function: kidnapping; IEDs; support; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.<sup>357</sup>

The insurgents also use their own version of "swarming." They use media coverage, key calendar events, and other forms of "open source" targeting and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of given attacks to know which strike have high profile, what methods of attack work, and the media and military impact of their actions. The proliferation of groups and cells, attack somewhat at random, but against high value targets in given place or time, of a given type, or simply in a constant stream of diverse attacks removes the need for coordination and complex C4I/BM operations, and allows a slow and uncoordinated tempo of operations to be effective.

- **Use "Swarming" techniques for attacks on vehicles:** The quality of urban and road ambushes improved strikingly in Iraq, as did the ability to set up rapid attacks, and exploit the vulnerability of soft skinned vehicles. Insurgents also learned to "swarm" coalition forces by rushing in from different points or firing simultaneously from multiple locations. In some cases, a single vehicle could take eight RPG rounds in a short encounter. Particularly in built-up areas, these tactics could kill or disable even heavy armor like the Abrams tank, and posed a major threat to lighter armored vehicles, as well as exposed infantry.
- **Use mixed attacks and sequential ambushes to attack military and emergency forces in follow-on attacks:** Iraqi insurgents steadily improved their ability to carry out complex attacks where an IED might be set off and then either more IEDs or other methods of attack would be used against rescuers and follow-on forces. Alternatively, an ambush might be used to lead US and Iraqi forces into an area with IEDs.

By the spring of 2005, insurgents increasingly used such mixed attacks to strike at US facilities. For example, they used a mix of gunmen, suicide car bombs, and a large fire truck filled with explosives to attack a US marine base at Camp Gannon at Husaybah near the Syrian border on April 11, 2005.<sup>358</sup> On May 9, 2005, they used a hospital at Haditha as an ambush point, and then attacked the US forces that responded with suicide bombs once they are entered. This mix of unpredictable attacks, many slowly built up in ways difficult for US intelligence methods to detect, has greatly complicated the operations of US and Iraq forces, although scarcely defeated them.

In 2005 IEDs were used to initiate an attack at a pre-selected location and were often followed on by small arms fire, mortar attacks, or more IEDs explosions as reinforcements attempted to arrive.<sup>359</sup>

On April 2, an attack on Abu Ghraib was initiated with multiple car bombs against the entrance gates and then followed by mortar fire, rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire, which forced the Marines to abandon their positions. Reinforcements were struck by multiple IEDs on their way to the scene and

encountered small arms fire. According to intelligence analysts, 12 coordinated attacks took place in under 30 minutes.<sup>360</sup>

On June 20, an Army patrol interrupted a group of insurgents assembling mortars and machine guns for what appeared to be a large-scale attack against a commando compound with more than 100 fighters. In the large-scale chase that ensued, insurgents managed to detonate one suicide car bomb and a second went off as a result of the gunfire. IEDs and car bombs struck arriving reinforcements who then came under fire from nearby rooftops.<sup>361</sup>

One intelligence officer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division characterized these attacks as “complex, professional-style attacks, militarily thought out, planned and resourced operations.”<sup>362</sup>

A large-scale assault on an Iraqi prison in March of 2006 using combined arms, was an example of simple but effective planning and coordination amongst insurgents. Nearly 100 insurgents armed with automatic rifles and RPGs stormed a jail in north Baghdad, killing 20 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed 33 prisoners; 18 of whom had been captured in police raids just two days earlier. The assault left 10 attackers dead. They cut the telephone wires before they entered to prevent the police from calling for backup and detonated a series of roadside bombs as they fled to prevent a chase.<sup>363</sup>

- **Exploit the weaknesses in US, Coalition, and Iraqi combat and logistic vehicles:** The insurgents soon learned to target unarmored and lightly armored vehicles, and to hit at their weakness point. Deliberately or not, they learned this forced the US to use steadily heavier armor, disperse force to protect most movements, and pay the cost of trying to uparmor and uparm everything from truck and Humvees to armored fighting vehicles like the Stryker. At the same time, insurgents learned how to place IEDs where they could kill many armored vehicles from below –where their armor was lighter or less effective, and to use detonating devices that allowed remote triggering as armored vehicles passed above an IED or group of anti-tank mines.
- **Develop complex mixes and ambushes using small arms and light weapons like automatic weapons, RPGs and mortars:** At least through the spring of 2005, insurgents did not make effective use of looted guided anti-tank weapons, and had only been able to down one aircraft with man-portable surface to air missiles (MANPADS).<sup>364</sup> They did, however, steadily improve their tactics from single fire ambushes to multiple firings of RPGs against the same target, mixes of firing positions, and sequential fire points, ambushes, and defenses -- mixing small arms, RPGs, and light automatic weapons.

While much will depend on the level of insurgent and Islamist extremist access to arms, Iraq and Afghanistan have seen a steady improvement in the use of systems like mortars, anti-tank weapons, rockets, and timed explosives. It has also seen improvements in light weapons and the increasing use of armor piercing ammunition as a cheap way of attacking body armor, vehicles, and penetrating walls.

Insurgents have also used surface-to-air missiles such as the Russian-made SA-7 Grail to bring down at least one U.S. Apache helicopter. One insurgent group with ties to Syrian intelligence was believed to have more than a dozen of these missiles. It was unclear where the SAMs originated.<sup>365</sup>

- **Import small “force multipliers”:** Rather than smuggle large numbers of arms, and create highly visible lines of supply, the insurgents imported devices like night vision systems, commercial communications, sniper rifles, and new forms of more sophisticated detonators.
- **Make effective use of snipers:** Iraqi insurgents initially had poor marksmanship and tended to fire off their weapons in sustained and poorly armed bursts. With time, however, some groups and cells not only developed effective snipers, but trained spotters, learned how to position and mix their snipers with other elements of Iraqi forces, and developed signals and other communications systems like them in tactical operations. Overall fire discipline and marksmanship remained poor through the late spring of 2005, but sniper elements became steadily more effective, and the overall quality of insurgent fire discipline and marksmanship was generally no worse than that of Iraqi soldiers, security personnel, and police. Snipers acquired new types of rifles, ant-armor ammunition, and body armor from outside Iraq, indicating they might have both support and training from Islamist extremists. Islamist web sites also began to include interactive sniper “training” data as a recruiting tool and crude training aid.<sup>366</sup>
- **Attack lines of communication (LOCs), rear area, and support activity:** Iraqi insurgents soon found that dispersed attacks on logistics and support forces often offer a higher chance of success than attacks on

combat forces and defended sites, and make the Coalition fight wars based on “deep support” rather than “deep strikes” beyond the Forward Edge of Battle Areas (FEBA). In some cases, like the road from the Green Zone and central Baghdad to the airport, insurgents also chose routes that the Coalition and government forces could not avoid, where constant attacks both harassed operations and became a political statement and symbol of Iraq’s lack of security. These “ambush alleys” allowed the insurgents to force a major Iraqi or MNF defensive effort at relatively little cost.

- **Strike at highly visible targets with critical economic and infrastructure visibility:** Water and power facilities have a broad political, media, economic, and social impact. Striking at critical export-earning facilities like Iraq’s northern export pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields to the IT-1A storage tanks near Beiji, where oil accumulates before it is pumped further north to Cheyhan, has sharply affected the government’s revenues, forced it to create special protection forces, and gained world attention.
- **Kill Iraqi elites and “soft targets”:** The insurgents soon found it was far easier to kill Iraqi officials and security personnel, and their family members, than Americans. They also found it was easier to kill mid-level officials than better-protected senior officials. In some areas, simply killing educated elites and/or their family members – doctors, professionals, etc. – could paralyze much of the nation building process, create a broad climate of insecurity, and force the US and Iraqi forces to disperse resources in defensive missions or simply have to stand aside and tolerate continued attacks.
- **Target elections, the political process and governance:** Elections and the local presence of government are soft, dispersed targets whose operation is critical to political legitimacy. Hitting these targets helps derail the political process, gets media visibility, offers vulnerable “low hanging fruit,” and intimidates the government and population in much wider areas than those subjected to direct attack.

In the run up to the October referendum, insurgents intensified their attacks upon political and infrastructure targets. Insurgents bombed a number of party offices, including those of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party. The latter was attacked after it urged its followers to vote in favor of the constitution.

Despite predictions of major violence, there are relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital’s 1,200 polling stations are attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty.

- In Ramadi, US patrols clashed with insurgents in the early morning hours. Also in Ramadi, a roadside bomb kills five US soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers. Insurgents fired six mortar rounds at a sports hall being used as a polling center.
- A roadside bomb in Saqlawiyah killed a US Marine.
- South of Basra, gunmen attacked an empty polling station at 3 a.m., but were apprehended.
- In Baquba, a roadside bomb struck an Iraqi army and police convoy on patrol, killing three soldiers and wounding another three.
- In Baghdad, insurgents targeted five polling stations: A roadside bomb exploded early Saturday near a school polling station in the Amiriyah neighborhood of western Baghdad, wounding two policemen. At 8:30 a.m., a rocket landed nearby a voting station in Azamiyah, northern Baghdad, injuring one civilian. Half an hour later, a mortar landed near a polling station in the Kazemiyah area. The mortar did not explode. Insurgents opened fire on a polling station in the Amil district of western Baghdad. Iraqi policemen returned fire, accidentally wounding three civilians on their way to vote. At midday, insurgents shot and killed a voter walking home from a polling station in western Baghdad.

As already discussed, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. Attacks against party offices have also become common.

But as with the October referendum, violence on the day of the election was relatively light. Some of day’s violence included:

- Three separate attacks on polling stations in Mosul: at the first, a bomb killed one person; at another station, a grenade killed a school guard; a mortar attack on a third polling station did not cause any casualties however.
- In Tal Afar, a mortar shell killed one civilian outside a polling station.
- A bomb exploded in Ramadi.
- In Tikrit, a mortar round struck a polling station.
- A mortar attack injured one child in Baghdad. A second mortar attack (on a different polling station) caused no injuries.
- In Muqdadiyah, north of Baghdad, a bomb injured two election workers after security forces accidentally set it off while trying to defuse it.
- In Fallujah, a bomb was defused. US forces also reported defusing several bombs in other predominantly Sunni neighborhoods in the country.
- **Strike at major aid and government projects after completion; break up project efforts when they acquire visibility or have high levels of employment:** Insurgents and terrorists often simply struck at the most vulnerable projects, but they seem to have learned that timing their attacks, looting, sabotage, and intimidation to strike when projects are completed means the Coalition and government aid efforts have maximum cost with minimum effect. They struck at projects when the security forces protecting workers and aid teams were no longer there. This often led the local population to blame the Coalition or government for not keeping promises or providing the proper protection. Alternatively, breaking up project efforts when they began to have maximum local visibility and employment impact had many of the same effects.
- **Hit the softest element of Iraqi military, security, and police forces:** The insurgents found they could strike at men on leave, their families, recruits or those seeking to enlist, green troops and trainees, and low quality units with limited fear of effective retaliation. High profile mass killings got major media attention. Moreover, isolated forward elements in hostile or threatened areas not only were vulnerable, but successful attacks broke up governance, aid efforts, and intimidated local populations. This strategy has been most damaging to Iraqi police, which remain the weakest element in the security apparatus.
- **Create informal distributed networks for C<sup>4</sup>I—deliberately or accidentally:** Like drug dealers before them, Iraqi insurgent and Islamist extremists have learned enough about COMINT and SIGINT to stop using most vulnerable communications assets, and to bypass many – if not most – of the efforts to control cash flow and money transfers.

The use of messengers, direct human contact, coded messages through the Internet, propaganda web pages, and more random methods of electronic communication are all cases in point. At the broader level, however, insurgents in Iraq seem to have adapted to having cells and elements operate with considerable autonomy, and by loosely linking their operations by using the media and reporting on the overall pattern of attacks to help determine the best methods and targets.

Smuggling, drug sales, theft and looting, and direct fund transfers also largely bypass efforts to limit operations through controls on banking systems, charities, etc. Under these conditions, a lack of central control and cohesive structure may actually be an asset, allowing highly flexible operations with minimal vulnerability to roll-up and attack.

The existence of parallel, non-competing groups of hostile non-state actors provide similar advantages and has the same impact. The fact that insurgent and Islamist extremist groups operate largely independently and use different tactics and target sets greatly complicates US operations and probably actually increases overall effectiveness.
- **Denying the Coalition and Iraqi government local victory:** The other side of the coin was that the insurgents found they could disperse and infiltrate into many towns and parts of cities the moment Coalition and combat-ready Iraqi elements left and deny the Iraqi government the ability to either deploy police or govern. Alternatively, bombings and sabotage could prevent or restrict the recovery of a town or

area, and create a level of risk that meant many would not return or attempt to live a normal life. Even as late as November 2005, insurgents were able to capture large parts of Ramadi and exert control.

- **Street scouts and spotters:** Like many previous insurgent groups, Iraqi hostiles learned to have children, young men, and others use cell phones, signals, and runners to provide tactical scouting, intelligence, and warning in ways that proved very difficult to detect and halt.
- **Make cities and towns urban sanctuaries and defensive morasses:** Iraqi insurgents found that cities with supportive and/or accepting populations can be made into partial sanctuaries and centers for defensive fighting and ambushes, and that tactical defeat can normally be dealt with by dispersal and hiding among the civilian population. Such tactics work well in attacks on local authorities and security forces friendly to the US, efforts to block nation building at the local level, and efforts to exploit religion, ethnicity, tribalism, etc. Several cities in Al Anbar province have served as sanctuaries for militants. Insurgents typically leave the cities before a major US operation begins and return once the operation has ended.
- **Use neighboring states and border areas as partial sanctuaries:** While scarcely a new tactic, Iraqi insurgents have made increased use of cross border operations and taken advantage of the difficulties in securing the Syrian, Iranian, and Saudi borders. By March 2005, for example, these tactics had created a near sanctuary in the area along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha toward Syria and through Ubaydi, Qaim, Karabilah, and Qusaybah to the Syrian border along the road to Abu Kamal.<sup>367</sup> The Vietnamese used the same tactic in Cambodia and Laos, as have many other insurgent forces. The idea of securing a nation by securing the territory within its boundaries is often a tactical myth.
- **Create dispersed and rapidly mobile operations and centers, mixed with fixed “diehard” and “sleeper” installations.** The insurgents rapidly learned not to concentrate operatives and to keep them rapidly mobile. They mixed these with “die hard” facilities designed to fight and defend themselves and inflict casualties if attacked, and with sleeper cells and stay behind operations to recover after an area was attacked, captured, and “secured” by Coalition and Iraqi forces.
- **Exploit weaknesses in US human intelligence (HUMINT), battle damage assessment (BDA), and damage characterization capabilities:** Iraqi insurgents and other Islamist extremists learned that US intelligence is optimized around characterizing, counting, and targeting things, rather than people, and that the US has a poor capability to measure and characterize infantry and insurgent numbers, wounded, and casualties. They exploit these weaknesses in dispersal, conducting attacks, concealing the extent of losses, and manipulating the media by claiming civilian casualties and collateral damage.
- **Counter US advantages in intercepting satellite and cellular communications:** Insurgents utilize the text messaging function of cell phones to communicate in an effort to avoid electronic eavesdropping by the US. Insurgents will often use more than one phone to communicate a message, so that those listening in only hear part of the message.
- **Exploit slow Iraqi and US reaction times at the local tactical level, particularly in built up areas:** Learn to exploit the delays in US response efforts, and rigidities in US tactical C<sup>4</sup>I behavior, to attack quickly and disperse.
- **Exploit fixed Iraqi and US patterns of behavior:** Take advantage of any tendency to repeat tactics, security, movement patterns, and other behavior; find vulnerabilities and attack.
- **Hit at US HUMINT links and translators:** US dependence on Iraqi translators and intelligence sources is a key area of US vulnerability and one the insurgents have learned to focus on.
- **Use “resurgence” and re-infiltration – dig in, hide, and reemerge:** Disperse under pressure or when defeat seems likely. Let the US take an “empty” city or objective. “Resurge” when the US tactical presence declines.
- **Use incident frequencies, distribution of attacks and tactics that strain or defeat US intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (IS&R) assets and ability to support Iraqi forces:** Assets like RPVs, aircraft, SIGINT systems, etc. can provide significant capability *when they are available*. It is unclear whether it is deliberate or not, but the geographic spread and daily incident count in Iraq indicates that insurgent movements and actions often reach numbers too large to cover. In fact, the US averaged some

1,700-2,000 patrols per day during May 2004. While it is nice to talk about net-centric warfare, it is a lot harder to get a big enough net.

Insurgents learned that the US has less ability to track and characterize irregular forces, insurgent/terrorist teams, and urban and dispersed infantry than forces using mechanized weapons or significant numbers of vehicles. Blending into the civilian population has worked well for local insurgents and Islamists in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iraqi insurgents learned that they can exploit rules of engagement where the US and Iraqi government forces do not have soldiers or agents on the ground to perform targeting and IFF functions. As valuable as IS&R assets are, they do not provide some critical kinds of situational awareness with any reliability.

- **Choose a vulnerable Iraqi and US force:** Deny the US and Iraqi forces a large, cohesive enemy while attacking small or dispersed elements of US and Iraqi forces, facilities, or targets.
- **Counter US IS&R capabilities by adapting new techniques of communication and interaction:** The steady leakage of details on US and allied intelligence collection methods has led Islamist extremist and terrorist movements to make more use of couriers and direct financial transfer; use electronic communications more safely, find ways to communicate through the Internet that the US cannot target, disperse better, and improve their hierarchy and cell structure.
- **Counter US and Iraqi government IS&R assets with superior HUMINT:** Developments in Iraq indicate that the US faces a repetition of its experience in Vietnam in the sense that as various insurgent factions organize, they steadily improve their intelligence and penetration of organizations like the CPA, CJTF-7, the Iraqi government and security forces, and the Iraqi factions backing nation building.

Like Vietnam, Iraq is a warning that hostile HUMINT sources are often pushed into providing data because of family ties, a fear of being on the losing side, direct and indirect threats, etc. In Iraq, it seems likely that family, clan, and ethnic loyalties have made many supposedly loyal Iraqis become at least part time sources, and that US vetting will often be little more than either a review of past ties or checks on the validity of data being provided. The end result may be an extremely high degree of transparency concerning US and Iraqi government operations. This will often provide excellent targeting data on key US and allied officials, events, etc. It can include leverage and blackmail, and vulnerability data, as well as warning of US and other military operations. Dual loyalty and HUMINT penetration of Iraqi security and military forces may be the rule, rather than the exception.

.According to U.S. military sources, insurgents had recruited Iraqi prostitutes and children to gather intelligence around the Green Zone in an effort to pinpoint vulnerabilities. Because women are not stopped and searched at checkpoints as frequently as men, insurgents increasingly used them to transport munitions. Prostitutes have been used to gain information from their customers about coalition operations and children, who mostly go about unnoticed, have been used to count vehicles and identify patterns in coalition patrols and schedules. It was suspected that this information is then passed to insurgent sympathizers within the Iraqi police forces who can enter and exit the zone without being searched.<sup>368</sup>

- **Use the media, infiltrators/sympathizers, and ex-detainees for counterintelligence:** Constantly monitor the media and Internet for data on US and Iraqi intelligence, targeting, and operational data. Use infiltrators and sympathizers. Debrief released prisoners and detainees to learn what their capture and interrogation reveals about US and Iraqi intelligence efforts.

Iraq's Interior Ministry alleged in March 2006 that 3,000 insurgents had infiltrated the security forces.<sup>369</sup>

## ***Overall Patterns***

In summary, the insurgency has evolved tactics that pose a major challenge to both the conventional warfighting superiority of US-dominated Coalition forces and the concepts such as forces have had of swarming and adapting high technology systems to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The insurgents have shown that low technology insurgent forces can, in some ways, be far more effective at "swarming" than high mobility, high technology, advanced IS&R forces.



This is not a new lesson. Many insurgent tactics are similar in many ways to the tactics used by other insurgent forces in dealing with conventional forces virtually since the beginning of war. Rather than some “fourth generation” concept, they stem back at least to the days of Sun Tzu, and many of the problems the Iraqi government and Coalition forces face as similar to those raised in modern, successful insurgencies like the Communist Chinese and Vietnamese:

- The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated movements with well-organized cells. There are at least three major groups of Islamist extremist insurgents, and while they are loosely affiliated in an informal “Majlis” created in 2005, they are virtually independent. They are difficult to attack and defeat on an individual basis because they do not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy. The larger movements have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. These cells have become increasingly specialized and compartmented to simplify training and retain expertise, as well as improve security. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.
- The insurgency has developed a form of low technology “swarm” tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a countermeasure. The insurgents have a natural advantage in terms of time and their tempo of operations because they are fighting a “long war” or war of attrition. They do need to respond to the pace of political and military events in Iraq, but they can still move much more slowly, “swarm” in cycles and episodically, and concentrate on highly vulnerable targets at the time of their choosing.
- The heavy use of IEDs, suicide bombings, short-term ambushes, and low-level killings and assassinations ensures that the exposure of insurgent forces is limited and only a minimal insurgent presence is needed. Concentrating on soft targets, remotely triggered IEDs and bombs, and carefully controlled ambushes reduces the profile that the Coalition can use for intelligence collection, and any exposure to Coalition and the more effective Iraqi forces units. “Swarming” in the form of steadily increasing numbers of IED and low-level attacks partially compensates for the relatively low success rate of many attacks.
- Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can “swarm” slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to “swarm” against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.
- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against.
- Insurgent groups take advantage of substantial popular support in some Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.
- The insurgents have carefully studied the lessons of the “battle of Fallujah” in 2004. They realize that they do not benefit from major battles against Coalition forces and are too weak to take on Coalition-supported Iraqi forces in direct combat. Dispersal and concealment are essential parts of both survival tactics and swarming, as are efforts to wait out the presence of Coalition forces in areas where the insurgents have been pushed out or dispersed. The insurgents are often able to either force the Coalition to hold a “liberated” area indefinitely, or return when the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces prove unable to function

effectively once Coalition forces withdraw. They can also exploit high unemployment and ethnic and sectarian tension when the government cannot put a Sunni face on its presence and the fact that the Iraqi police are generally unable to provide security unless Coalition or Iraqi army/special security forces are present.

- The insurgents attack above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are designed paralyze to the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.
- While some Sunni Islamist extremist groups have been so extreme that they have alienated the local Sunni population, or even provoked attacks by Iraq Sunnis, most have realized they need to moderate their words and actions to some degree and downplay foreign leadership and the role of foreigners. Zarqawi has either downplayed his role or been pushed somewhat to the sidelines. The leading "Emirs" are now said to be Iraqi, other leaders take on pseudonyms designed to at least make them seem Iraqi and propaganda is more focused on Iraq. Most Neo-Salafi groups now downplay their religious and ideological opposition to Shi'ites and other branches and voices within Islam, or avoid such charges entirely. At the same time, the various Sunni insurgent groups that are tied to the Ba'ath or more nationalist objectives have also become more religious, at least in terms of their public rhetoric. As in other insurgencies, finding the right public voice, and the mix of ideology and propaganda that provides public support, is an essential tool for both sustained operations and providing the popular base for "swarming."

The problems such changes in insurgent tactics have created for Coalition forces is that they have often allowed insurgents to continue to fight below the threshold where US, British, and other Coalition forces could exploit their superior conventional weapons and technology. They have kept casualties high enough to create a serious war of attrition and have forced Coalition forces to spend at least several orders of magnitude more on countermeasures than the insurgents had to spend on new weapons and tactics.

The insurgents have also exploited the much greater vulnerability of Iraqi forces as a means of defeating the Coalition as well as the new Iraqi government. The effectiveness of these tactics has been greatly enhanced by Coalition mistakes. The US initially failed to provide minimal facilities and equipment such as body armor, communications and vehicles. While the US training teams and US commanders in the field made steadily better efforts to organize and train Iraqi forces to protect themselves, the US as a whole concentrated on manpower numbers and then left Iraqis out in the field to die.

The seriousness of this problem is all too clear when one considers the impact of less serious shortfalls in equipment for US forces. It is clear from the Congressional and media reaction to the discovery that the US was slow to uparmor Humvees and trucks for its ground forces. At the same time, it is striking that the resulting debate over the equipment issued to US and Coalition forces failed to ask what equipment was being provided to Iraqi forces although they had been a prime target of the insurgents and terrorists since late summer of 2003.

## V. Characterizing the Insurgency

Coalition and Iraqi forces must now deal with a complex mix of threats – which may broaden sharply if the country moves towards a more intense form of civil conflict. The key issues deciding whether the country does move towards civil war are whether the Sunni side is dividing, the nature and effectiveness of the various Sunni insurgent movements, the risk that the country will divide versus the prospects for unity, and the role that Shi'ite, Kurdish and foreign factions might play if the nation is plunged into a far more serious form of civil war.

The Bush Administration has gradually accepted the fact that it faces a very real insurgency with diverse elements that will take years to defeat. It still, however, tends to understate the level of the insurgent threat, and the broader risks it poses. The Administration characterized the insurgency as follows in the Department of Defense's October 2005 quarterly report to Congress on the stability and security of Iraq:<sup>370</sup>

The insurgency is primarily a Sunni Arab phenomenon and is not a national movement; it has a very narrow base in the country. It continues to be comprised of semi-autonomous and fully autonomous groups with a variety of motivations. Measuring the strength of the insurgency in terms of numbers alone does not provide an adequate assessment of insurgent capabilities.

Insurgent numbers are a very small fraction of Iraq's population. The vast majority of these groups are connected in some way through members belonging to social networks (e.g., familial, tribal, and former professional) that stretch across Iraq and beyond. Insurgents can also be grouped into several strands: terrorists and foreign fighters, "rejectionists" (mostly Sunni), Saddam loyalists, and criminals.

The main threat to achieving Iraqi control of and responsibility for security in provinces is, in the near and medium term, terrorists and foreign fighters because of the psychological impact on the population of their terror campaign, which appears to target Iraqi civilians indiscriminately.

... One noteworthy strategic indicator of progress in the security environment is the continued inability of insurgents to derail the political process and timelines. This is a key objective they are failing to achieve. As expected, there has been an increase in the average number of insurgent attacks during the period leading to the constitutional referendum. Insurgent attacks remain concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces; half of the Iraqi population lives in areas that experience only six percent of all attacks. Six provinces reported a statistically insignificant number of attacks based on population size. Although about 80% of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, the Iraqi population suffers about 80% of all casualties.

...Iraqi rejectionists maintain a steady level of violence that complicates efforts to stabilize Iraq. Criminal elements and corruption often enable the insurgency. As noted, these several strands of the insurgency have failed to derail the political process, and their efforts to foment ethno-sectarian conflict have not been successful due in large part to key Iraqi figures calling for restraint among their communities.

Successful elections will not likely change the foreign fighters' strategy. The Iraqi rejectionists – particularly those who are Sunni – may, nonetheless, lose some of their support base as the political process advances. Saddam loyalists may present a longer-term threat to building a democratic, prosperous Iraq because they remain focused on creating conditions in which they can disrupt and subvert the government.

Multi-National Force-Iraq operations in several of the areas most affected by the insurgency have combined with local commanders' engagement of local officials, tribes, and clerics. These operations have disrupted a number of key insurgent cells, limited their freedom of action, and maintained cooperation with influential local leaders in order to keep reconstruction and democracy building moving forward. A significant factor enabling progress against the insurgency is the dramatic increase in intelligence tips received from the population in the past several months, indicative of increasing popular rejection of the insurgents.

... Insurgent groups continue...to demonstrate an ability to adapt, relocate, regenerate, and sustain a campaign of intimidation against Iraqi officials, professionals, "collaborators with the coalition," and

religious figures.

The insurgency remains concentrated in Baghdad, Nineveh, al-Anbar, and Salah ad Din provinces. In these areas, the insurgency sustains a level of violence and casualties that can produce effects that include: maintaining a non-permissive environment that undermines local governance, emerging institutions, reconstruction efforts, and economic growth; inhibiting foreign investment and diplomatic representation; limiting the roles of non-governmental organizations and contractors; and increasing the costs of reconstruction.

Many aspects of this summary was correct at the time, but it did underplay the complexity of the Sunni insurgency, ignore the role of other factions in Iraq's low-level civil war, and – above all – downplay the risk of a far more intense civil conflict.

The Department of Defense provided a similar characterization of the insurgency in its February 2006 quarterly report. It again claimed that the insurgency was growing weaker and Iraq was moving towards unity:<sup>371</sup>

...A noteworthy indicator of progress in the security environment has been the enemy's inability to derail the political process and to foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence.

Rejectionists, Saddamists, and Terrorists have failed to achieve their common operational objectives to:

- Derail the political process.
- Foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence
- Deter development of the Iraq Security Forces
- Damage Iraqi public trust in the Iraq Security Forces
- Expand the conflict regionally
- Widen their political support among the Iraqi people
- Force the premature disengagement of the Coalition

...Since the last report, some Sunni rejectionist groups recognized that not participating in the January 2005 elections was a strategic mistake. Even as they continued to use of condone violence, they attempted to advance their agendas through political means; they succeeded in convincing great numbers of their Sunni supporters to vote in the October referendum and in the December 2005 elections...It has also paved the way for separating those Sunnis willing to accept and work with the new Iraqi regime from those irrevocably committed to violent overthrow of the new Iraq and rule by the privileged and unelected few.

The report elaborated on the growing divide between al-Qa'ida and the more "nationalist" Sunni insurgents due in part to Zarqawi and affiliated organizations' "overkill" attacks on Iraqi civilians:

...These developments put Sunni rejectionist groups at odds with Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, which remain intractable and opposed to democracy. The September 14, 2005, Al-Qa'ida in Iraq declaration of "War on Shi'a" was the final wedge that split the bond between Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and the Sunni rejectionists. The November 2005 Amman, Jordan, bombing further alienated Iraqi Sunnis and regional Arabs who had given either overt or tacit support to the insurgency. The resulting fracture alters the dynamics of the insurgency in Iraq. Previously, the strategies of Sunni rejectionists, Al-Qa'ida, and its affiliates were largely complementary. Now, the two groups' lines of operation are divergent and increasingly opposed.

...These developments – coupled with successful Coalition operations to disrupt terrorist networks in Ninawa and Anbar provinces – have combined to change the nature of the collective enemy forces, and, as a result, the overarching term 'insurgency' is less of a useful construct today. Previous synergy among enemy groups is breaking apart. Saddamists remain a potential long-term threat due to historical success in seizing power through infiltration and subversion although it is difficult to determine their current capabilities. Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates are moving into an increasingly isolated violent position, while Sunni Arabs appear to be moving toward increased political participation.

It again downplayed the risk of civil war and stated that while this was a concern, sectarian conflict remained minimal and that the risk was often exaggerated:

...Terrorist groups have so far failed to create widespread sectarian conflict, despite this being a clear goal of some. Terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has publicly advocated attacks that intensify sectarian tension and has "declared war" on the Shi'a. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq has killed thousands of Shi'a men, women, and children throughout the year in a series of bloody suicide attacks against mosques, markets, and other locations where Shi'a gather in large numbers. Ministry of Interior security units, which are majority Shi'a and Arab and which are suspected of being penetrated to some degree by Shi'a militias, have carried out attacks against and detention of Sunni Arabs that are suspected Ba'athists. Ethnic tensions also exist in northern Iraq between Kurds and ethnic minorities, including Turkomans, Assyrians, and Chaldeans.

The number of estimated sectarian incidents is low when compared to total attacks, but the brutal methods used and the media coverage of these incidents increase concerns that sectarian violence could escalate. Government power sharing, integration of ISF, and events such as the recent reconciliation conference in Cairo are just some of the initiatives underway to defuse sectarian tensions.

Classifying violence as 'sectarian' is frequently a matter of perception; it is often difficult to differentiate between attacks on citizens in general (including tribal and local vendettas, and pure criminal activity) and those specifically targeting members of a particular sect. To date, the level of sectarian violence has been sporadic, but ethno-sectarian attacks may increase in an effort to provoke reprisals. Iraqis may counter violence with localized protection "militias," discussed earlier. Positive statements from religious and political leaders will continue to help dampen violent reactions to such provocations.

In reality, the insurgency has remained a serious threat, and the risk of civil war did not diminish after the February 22 Askariya shrine attack. US military commanders and U.S. officials in Baghdad made it clear in March 2005 that containing the civil conflict was now their primary concern. They acknowledged that the increase in sectarian violence in the weeks following the attacks was an even greater threat to U.S. efforts in the country and the unity of the Iraqi state than the insurgency.

Ambassador Khalilzad warned that a major civil war remained a serious possibility. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that Iraq "is not in civil war at the present time." He did, however, admit the risk and summarize U.S. policy plans for responding if civil war should break out: "The plan is to prevent a civil war, and to the extent one were to occur, to have the...Iraqi security forces deal with it to the extent they're able to."<sup>372</sup>

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Peter Pace, characterized Iraq as "a place that is having some real difficulties right now." He also gave a more balanced assessment that seemed to indicate that whether civil war occurred or not was a function of a collective Iraqi decision: "Everything is in place if they [Iraqis] want to have a civil war...everything is also in place if they want to have a united, unified future."<sup>373</sup>

General John Abizaid told a Senate committee, "There's no doubt that the sectarian tensions are higher than we've seen, and it's a great concern to all of us." He added that the nature of the security situation in Iraq was changing "from insurgency toward sectarian violence." He later clarified this in the context of the U.S. mission in Iraq saying, "sectarian violence is a greater concern for us security-wise right now than the insurgency."<sup>374</sup>

Iraqi officials were even more frank. On March 19th, former Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi stated in a BBC interview that, "It is unfortunate that we are in civil war. We are losing each day as an average 50 to 60 people throughout the country, if not more...If this is not civil war, then God knows what civil war is." Allawi said the violence in the country was moving towards "the point of no return" and that Iraq was "in a terrible civil conflict."

That same day, President Talibani stated in another BBC interview that,

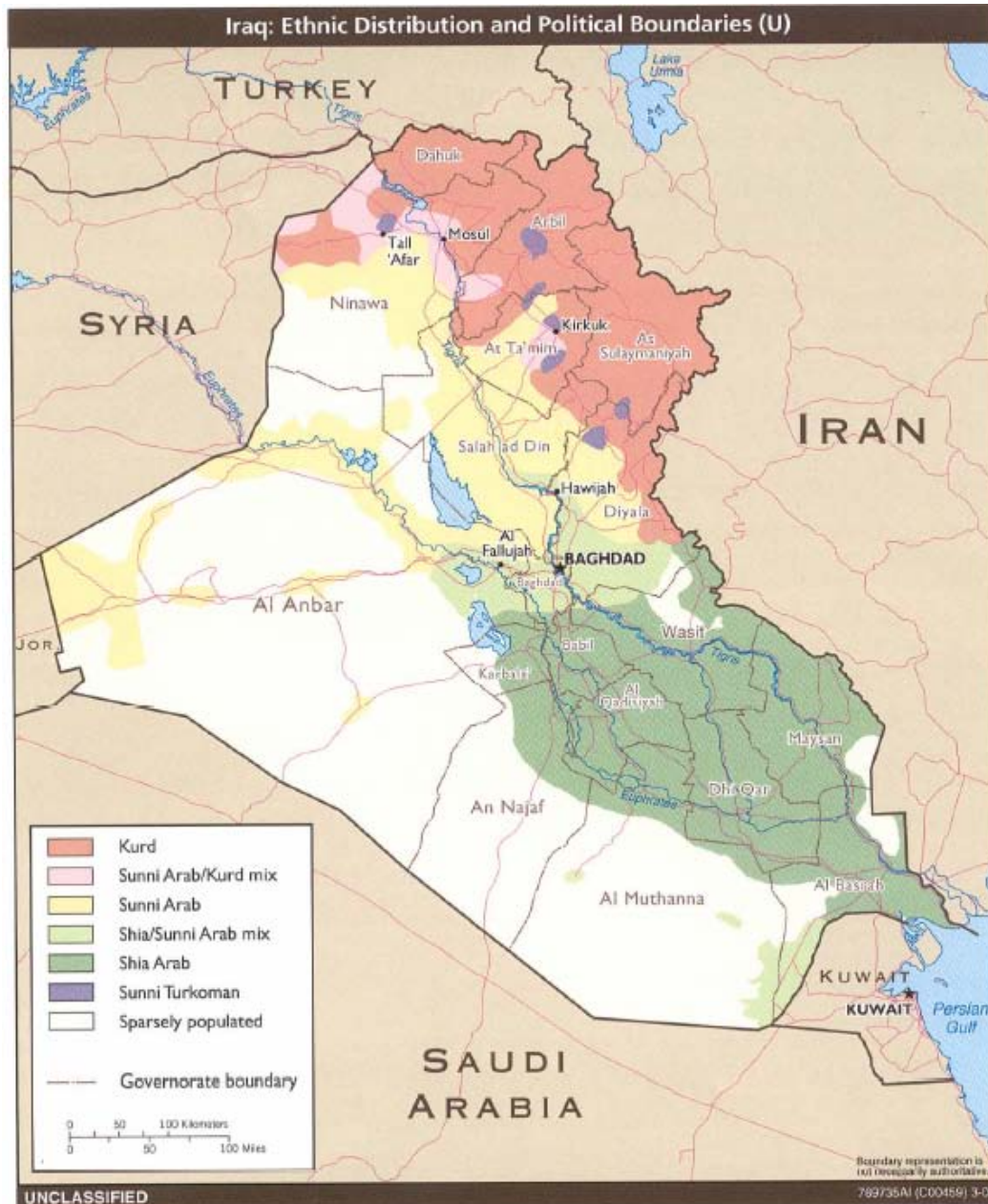
"I cannot deny the danger of it, but I don't think that now it's that serious. It was very close after the evidence of what happened in Samarra against these two holy shrines, but nowadays I think that it is far from (certain)...I am afraid of another Samarra, it would lead to some kind of clashes. What is very good and we can say it will be a big obstacle to civil war is the leaders of all parties and groups are against civil war, they are working towards calming down the streets and to bring the people together...People are feeling now that there are more sectarian problems, the life conditions are not so good, the levels of danger, many people are trying to leave the country

...I am optimistic because Iraqis have got no choice. There is no possibility of dividing Iraq. Take Kurdistan. Kurdistan cannot be independent while all the neighboring countries are against. Arabs of Iraq, Sunnis don't want to separate Iraq they are dreaming to come back and rule the country. Shi'ites think that they are the majority, they think they have the right to rule the country for that there is no possibility for internally and also the international community and the regional governments are not permitting any kind of division of Iraq. For that I am very optimistic that Iraq will remain, and if we can achieve as much as possible peace and security with democracy and federation we will have a strong and united Iraq.

### ***The Regional, Sectarian, and Ethnic Nature of the Insurgency***

So far, the insurgency is largely sectarian and driven by a minority of Sunni Arabs. As the previous chapters have shown, is not a national insurgency. Iraqi Kurds have never supported it, and only small numbers of Shi'ites have taken an active role. It has been driven by a relatively small part of Iraq's Sunni population concentrated in part of the country, and many of its most violent actions have been led by a cadre of foreign volunteers and extremists which did not seem likely to exceed 3,000 full time insurgents as of September 2005.

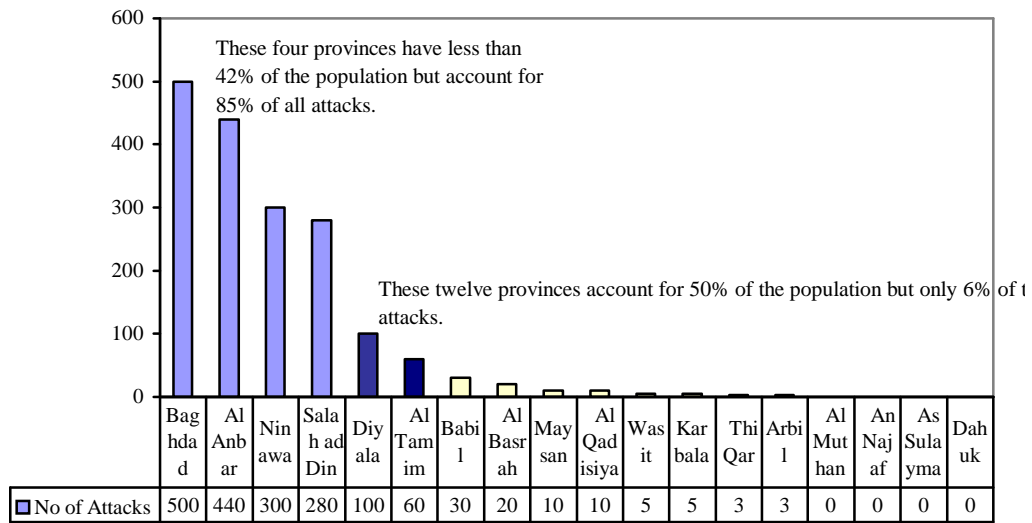
Although there are no accurate census data, the Arab Sunni population may only be around 15-20% of Iraq's total population. Such estimates are, however, uncertain. The CIA placed Iraq's population at 26,074,906 as of July 2005. The CIA estimated in January 2006 that Iraq's population was 75-80% Arab, 15%-20% Kurdish, and 5% Turkoman, Assyrian or other 5%. It estimated that the sectarian split in the entire population was 97% Muslim (Shi'a 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), and 3% Christian. This estimate by Muslim sect, however, included the 20%-25% of the population that was not Arab, and not just Arab Sunnis.<sup>375</sup> It is unclear if any accurate figure exists for the number and percentage of Sunni Arabs, although election registrations to date would put in close to the 20% figure. Map V.1 shows the distribution of the ethnicities across Iraq's governates.

**Map V.1: Ethnic Distribution and Political Bounderies**

As Figures V.1 and V.2 show, more than 80% of all attacks have consistently occurred in only four provinces, although they are home to some 42% of the population. Its main base has been Al Anbar province and a relatively limited number of towns and small cities in the West. If one only considers the hard-core Sunni insurgent areas in Western Iraq, they probably only have about 6-8% of Iraq's total population.<sup>376</sup>

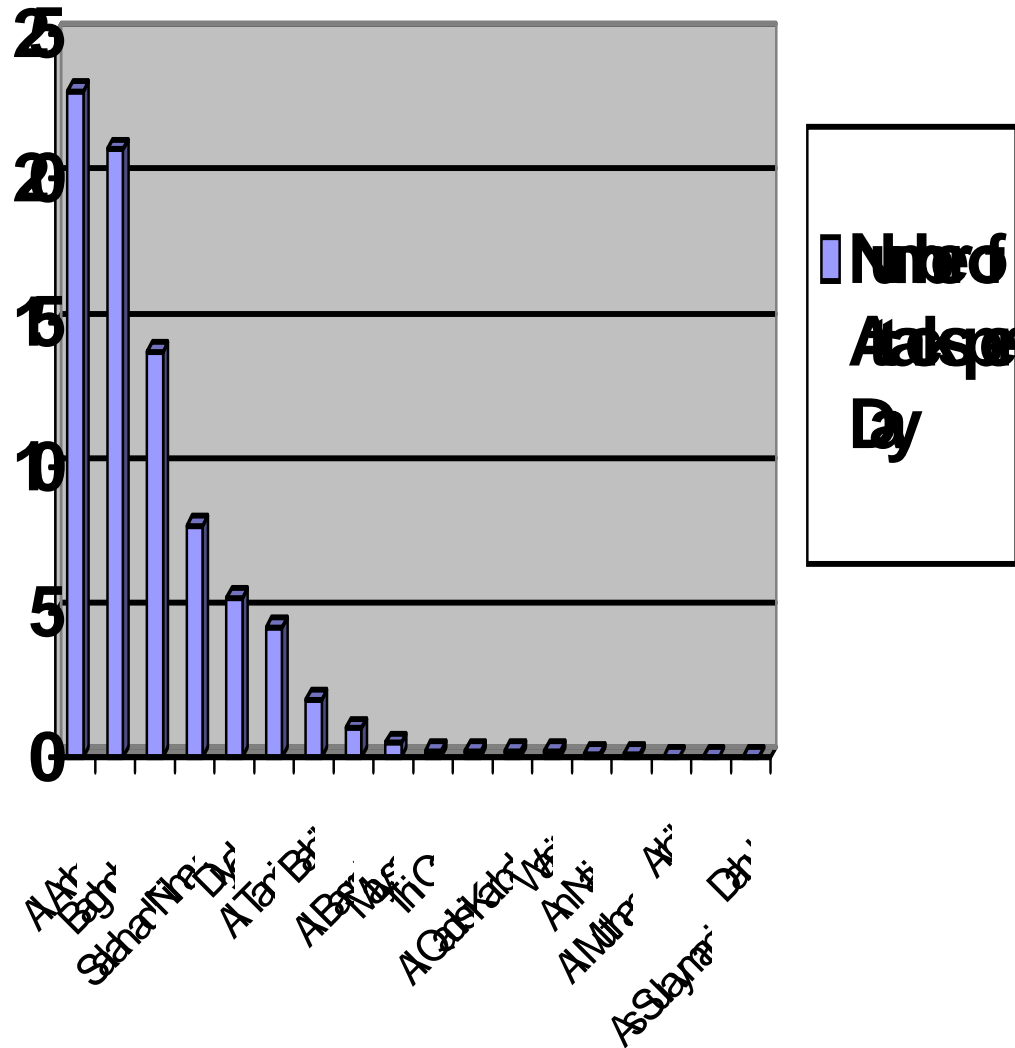


**Figure V.1: The Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Total Attacks by Province: August 29-September 16, 2005**



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p.21-22.

**Figure V.2: Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Daily Attacks by Province:  
August 29, 2005-January 20, 2006**



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security In Iraq," DoD Quarterly Report to Congress, February 2006, p.26.

Note: Actual numbers are estimates based on data provided in the report.

## ***Estimates of Total Insurgent Forces***

Estimates of the size of the insurgency have varied widely since the struggle first became serious in August 2003. Much depends on the definition of insurgent and the level of activity and dedication involved, and virtually every intelligence source that has such estimates has made it clear that any figures for the total manning of insurgent forces are little more than "guesstimates."

The Coalition was, however, slow to make such "guesstimates" even marginally realistic. US officials kept repeating estimates of total insurgent strengths of 5,000 from roughly the fall of 2003 through the summer of 2004. In October, they raised their estimates to a range of 12,000 to 16,000 but have never defined how many are hard-core and full time, and how many are part time. As has been discussed earlier, estimates as divergent as 3,500 and 400,000 were being cited in the spring and early summer of 2005.<sup>377</sup>

US and Iraqi officials have, however, been consistently careful to note that they are uncertain as to whether the numbers are increasing or decreasing with time as a result of US and Iraqi operations versus increases in political and other tensions that lead Iraqi Arab Sunnis to join the insurgents. There is no evidence that the number of insurgents is declining as a result of Coalition and Iraqi attacks to date. US experts stated in the spring of 2005 that they had no evidence of a decline in insurgent numbers in spite of large numbers of kills and captures since the summer of 2004.

US experts also caution that much depends on how insurgents are defined and counted: core, full time, part time, sympathizers, etc. They also note that almost all counts only include men although women do play an active role in support functions, and a number of insurgent groups operate in a family environment, rather than as isolated groups of men. Mixing active insurgents with families both provides support in ways that free male insurgents to act, and provides protective cover which can be used to charge that Coalition and Iraqi forces abusing civilians when insurgent cells and facilities are attacked.

This explains why a few outlying estimates were still as low as 3,500 full-time actives making up the "core" forces in 2005. Most US military estimates range between 8,000 and 18,000, perhaps reaching over 20,000 when the ranks swell for major operations. Iraqi intelligence officials, on the other hand, have sometimes issued figures for the total number of Iraqi sympathizers and insurgents as high as 200,000, with a core of anywhere between 15,000 and 40,000 fighters and another 160,000 supporters.

Newsweek quoted US sources as putting the total of insurgents at 12,000-20,000 in late June 2005. Another US expert was quoted as saying it had some 1,000 foreign jihadists, 500 Iraqi jihadists, 15,000-30,000 former regime elements, and some 400,000 auxiliaries and support personnel.<sup>378</sup> Throughout 2005, the numbers put forth publicly fluctuated between 15,000-20,000 for the total number of insurgents. Near the fall of 2005, estimates of foreign insurgents were between 700 and 2,000. That estimate stayed consistent into 2006.<sup>379</sup>

The true figure may well fall somewhere with this range of different figures, but the exact number is largely irrelevant. There is no single meaningful definition of the term. There are many different kinds of "insurgents": cadres, full time, part time, sympathizers, collaborators and those who passively tolerate their actions.

Insurgent leaders, cell group leaders, cell leaders, and experts determine success or failure. In spite of many killings and arrests, these cadres have become steadily more experienced, adapting

tactics and methods of attack as fast as the Coalition can counter them. They have also developed networks with some form of central command, planning, and financing. These are the numbers that are truly important, but no one has made a meaningful unclassified estimate of this aspect of insurgent strength.

Furthermore, the ability of insurgents to find replacements is as critical as their current numbers at any given time. US officers have repeatedly commented on the resiliency of the insurgency. Col. Ed Cardon said, "One thing that has really surprised us is the enemy's ability to regenerate, we take a lot of people off the streets, but they can regenerate very rapidly. The insurgent networks are complex, [and] diffuse. We can take out the leadership, but it doesn't take long for them to grow new legs."<sup>380</sup>

Much depends on whether the insurgency continues to enjoy enough popular sympathy among Sunnis and others to continue to fight, and whether the violence of Sunni Islamist extremist groups can paralyze efforts at inclusiveness and national unity, or even trigger civil war. In practice, suicide bombings by small groups of such extremists may be far more dangerous than the lower levels of violence by larger mainstream Ba'athist or Sunni groups.

### ***The Iraqi Insurgency vs. Other Insurgencies***

One can only speculate on how the strength Iraqi insurgency compares with that of other modern insurgencies. In August 2005, U.S. Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command, estimated that the insurgency was only 20,000 strong, and that it could be even less than that. This number amounted to less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the Iraqi population.

Figure V.3 displays data on seven twentieth century insurgencies analyzed in a 1963 government-sponsored report by Andrew Molnar. The figure shows the percentage of the total population represented by each respective insurgency. The average number is about 2.4 percent, well above the 0.1 percent that Gen. Abizaid cited for Iraq's insurgency.

**Figure V.3: Ratios of Insurgents to Population and Guerillas to Underground Members**  
(For Seven Irregular Conflicts)

Country	Insurgents as % of Population	Ratio of Armed Guerillas to Unarmed Members of the Underground
France (1940-45)	0.97 %	1:3
Yugoslavia (1941-45)	1.65 %	1:3
Algeria (1954-62)	0.29 - 0.58 %	1:3
Malaya (1948-60)	1.9 %	1:18
Greece (1945-49)	8.86 %	1:27
Philippines (1946-54)	0.58 %	1:8
Palestine (1945-48)	2.25 %	1:2

Source: Adapted from Andrew R. Molnar, *Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare* (Washington, DC: Special Operations Research Office, 1963), Page 13-16.

## ***Comparisons of Insurgent and Iraqi Forces***

There is no way to quantify how the trends in insurgent strength have kept pace with development of Iraqi military, security, and police forces. There are also no meaningful comparative casualty estimates, although MNSCT-I has issued reports of over 1,000 dead in the various elements of Iraqi forces, and one US commander has talked about 15,000 insurgent and terrorist casualties.<sup>381</sup>

In any case, the value of any numerical comparisons of insurgent to Iraqi forces is uncertain. In some historical cases, the ratio of security forces to insurgents has sometimes had to reach levels of 12:1 through 30:1 in order to provide security in a given area. These, however, have generally been worst cases where tiny cadres could hide in large areas or among large populations, and where there was no political solution to the problems that created the insurgency and little or no active presence by the government. In other cases, a small number of security forces have decapitated a movement or cell and ended the insurgency. Intangibles like the battle for political perceptions and “hearts and minds” have often been more critical than the comparative numbers of insurgents and defenders.

The effectiveness of the insurgents relative to the effectiveness of their opposition has also generally been more important than such ratios. As the previous Chapters have shown, threat forces have never been strong enough to win more than small ambushes or clashes, but their tactics and capabilities have evolved steadily through the course of the conflict in response to attacks by Coalition and Iraqi forces, their own inventiveness, and lessons learned from other conflicts.

It does seem clear from the previous chapters that the he insurgents and terrorists have grown in capability, although serious fighting in Fallujah, Mosul, Samarra, and Western Iraqi may have reduced their size. The insurgents have learned a great deal about how to use their weapons, build more sophisticated IEDs, plan attacks and ambushes, improve their security, and locate and attack targets that are both soft and that produce political and media impact.<sup>382</sup>

## ***The Intelligence and Security Problem***

There are several additional aspects of the insurgency that are an important background to any discussion of its individual elements.

### ***Insurgent Intelligence Capabilities***

“Ba’athists,” “Sunni nationalists,” and Sunni Islamist extremists, all pose acute security and counterintelligence problems for MNF-I and Iraqi forces. As has been touched upon in previous chapters, the insurgents have good sources within the Iraqi Interim Government and forces, Iraqi society and sometimes in local US and Coalition commands. This is inevitable, and little can be done to stop it. Iraq simply lacks the resources and data to properly vet all of the people it recruits. US officials believe the insurgent leadership is often so well informed by its intelligence network that it can stay ahead of US and Iraqi forces, fleeing towns before Coalition forces arrive and slipping in and out of the country.<sup>383</sup>

There are good reasons for these intelligence and security problems. Many Iraqis only work for the government or in the Iraqi forces because they cannot find other employment. They may, in fact, quietly sympathize with the insurgents. Workers in US and government facilities, and in various aid and construction projects, are even harder to vet. Men who do support the

government are vulnerable to threats against the families, kidnappings, and actual murders of friends and relatives.

The end result is that the insurgents often have excellent intelligence from sources within the Iraqi government, Iraqi forces, the Iraqis supporting Coalition forces and government activities, and Iraqi industry. This enables them to locate soft targets, hit at key points in terms of Iraq's economy and aid projects, and time their attacks to points of exceptional vulnerability. In practice, it also allows them to pick weak and vulnerable elements of the Iraqi military, security, and police forces and often produce significant casualties. At the same time, in many areas they can use intimidation, threats, kidnappings, and selective murders and assassinations to paralyze or undercut Iraqi units. This means a comparatively small number of core insurgents can bypass or attack the developing Iraqi forces with considerable success.

The insurgents also can take advantage of new reporting on the Internet, the steady growth of Iraqi media and near-real time news reporting, and other media coverage of the fighting, particularly Arab satellite television. This coverage has often provided almost immediate feedback and a picture of what tactics and weapons work, what strikes have most media and political impact, and what targets are vulnerable. This "Al Jazeera Effect" substitutes for many elements of a CI system. At the same time, confronting this confusing array of threats is made more difficult without general Iraqi loyalty and stand-alone Iraqi forces.

### ***Counterintelligence and Iraqi Government Efforts***

Some US officials have expressed frustration with the Iraqi government for failing to move quickly enough in developing its own intelligence agency. US and Iraqi authorities worked together in a joint intelligence effort to capture former Ba'ath Party members, including Saddam Hussein, and Washington would like to see the same happen with Zarqawi. But according to US officials, Baghdad has been unable to establish a network of local informants.<sup>384</sup>

US, allied, and Iraqi human intelligence is improving but Coalition efforts are badly hurt by high turnover and rotations, poor allocation of human resources that sharply overstaff some areas and under staff some key links, over-compartmentalization, over reliance on contractors, and poorly designed and executed IT and secure communications systems.

Most Iraqi networks serving the US in hostile areas have quality and loyalty problems, while others either use their positions to settle scores or misinform Coalition troops. Iraqi intelligence is just beginning to take shape, and has only limited coverage of Sunni areas. Training and equipment have improved significantly over time. The October 2005 report to Congress showed the number of tips from Iraqi citizens had increased by more than six fold from 483 March, to 1,581 in April, 1,740 in May, 2,519 in June, 3,303 in July, 3,341 in August 2005 and 4,749 in September.<sup>385</sup> More recent reporting shows they totaled 3,162 in October, 4,212 in November, and 3,840 in December.<sup>386</sup>

The organization of effective Iraqi government intelligence and counter intelligence efforts will take at least until the end of 2005 and probably well into 2006. Moreover, Coalition and Iraqi government vulnerability is unavoidable to some extent. Aid projects are easy to infiltrate and to target when nearing completion. NGO or contractor headquarters are easily observable targets. Infrastructure and energy facilities are typical targets that have long lines of pipes or wires and many vulnerable links. The media has to be careful and defensive, as do emergency workers and medical teams. Any nation is invariably filled with soft or vulnerable targets that experienced insurgents can, and do, target at will.

## ***Financing the Insurgency***

The exact sources of insurgent finances are another major area of debate. Analysts believe that elements of Saddam Hussein's regime sought refuge in the UAE, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria at various points before, during, and after major combat operations in Iraq. Those elements were then able to establish a financial base from which to send funds to the insurgents on the ground.

In July 2005 a senior intelligence officer in the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Caleb Temple, testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities and the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Temple stated that the insurgents' financiers had the connections and enough money to fund their activities, perhaps even increase the violence, for some time. He stated:<sup>387</sup>

We believe terrorist and insurgent expenses are moderate and pose little significant restraints to armed groups in Iraq. In particular, arms and munitions costs are minimal—leaving us to judge that the bulk of the money likely goes towards international and local travel, food and lodging of fighters and families of dead fighters; bribery and payoffs of government officials, families and clans; and possibly into the personal coffers of critical middlemen and prominent terrorist leaders.

Temple and Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser asserted that various criminal activities as well as certain Islamic charities also contributed to the flow of funds to insurgents in Iraq. Vital to strangling the insurgency, Temple stated, was the ability to staunch the flow of money. He asserted, "Drying up money and stopping its movement degrades terrorist and insurgent operations. It hinders recruitment and impedes couriers, disrupts procurement of bomb components, and creates uncertainty in the minds of suicide bombers regarding whether their families will receive promised compensation."<sup>388</sup>

In July 28, 2005 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Glaser listed some of the most common methods of funding the insurgency:<sup>389</sup>

- Funds provided by charities, Iraqi expatriates, and other deep pocket donors, primarily in the Gulf, but also in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and Europe;
- Criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, possible narcotics trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling, and counterfeiting (goods and currency).

Glaser also reviewed some of the efforts underway to help stanch these cash flows:

- Since March 2003, the U.S. Government has focused on the need to locate, freeze, and repatriate Iraqi assets from around the world, as well as to find cash and other assets within Iraq that were stolen and hidden by Former Regime Elements.
- In May 2003 the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1483, which calls on U.N. Member States to identify, freeze and transfer to the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) assets of senior officials of the former Iraqi regime and their immediate family members, including entities owned or controlled by them or by persons acting on their behalf. The President subsequently issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13315, which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to freeze the assets of former regime elements. To date, under E.O. 13315, the Department of the Treasury has designated scores of Iraq-related entities and individuals (including 55 senior Iraqi officials who were named by the President in issuing E.O. 13315, and 47 administrative or "derivative" designations.) The U.S. Government, in turn, submits these names to the United Nations for listing by the UN 1518 Committee under UNSCR 1483.
- Only a week ago, the Department of the Treasury designated six of Saddam Hussein's nephews (sons of Saddam's half brother and former presidential advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan Al-Tikriti), and we understand that their names have now been accepted at the UN. Four of the designated individuals provided financial support (and in some cases, weapons and explosives) to Iraqi insurgents. Similarly, on June 17,



2005, we designated, Muhammad Yunis Ahmad for providing funding, leadership and support from his base in Syria to several insurgent groups that are conducting attacks in Iraq.

- On June 9, 2005, we also designated two associated Syrian individuals, General Zuhayr Shalish and Asif Shalish and a related asset, the Syria-based SES International Corporation for their support to senior officials of the former Iraqi regime. SES also acted as false end-user for the former Iraqi regime and facilitated Iraq's procurement of illicit military goods in contravention of UN sanctions.
- Just as there is a U.N. Security Council Resolution requiring countries to freeze the assets of former Iraqi regime elements, so too are there U.N. Security Council Resolutions requiring countries to freeze the assets of individuals and entities related to al Qa'ida, Usama bin Laden, and the Taliban (UNSCR 1267) and other global terrorist groups (UNSCR 1373). The U.S. implements its obligations under these resolutions through E.O. 13224. To date, the Treasury Department has designated over 400 individuals and entities under E.O. 13224. These actions include individuals and entities tied to jihadist insurgency groups: -- Sulayman Khalid Darwish (January 25, 2005) (Syria-based Zarqawi supporter/financier), also designated by the UN, pursuant to UNSCR 1267; Syria joined the U.S. in co-designating Darwish at the UN.
- U.S. outreach efforts to countries in the Gulf region are manifold, both bilaterally and multilaterally. For example, just this calendar year I have personally traveled to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait, and have led the U.S. delegation to the Middle East/North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF) - a new multilateral body that works to ensure the implementation of comprehensive anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems throughout the region. Launched in November 2004, this 14-member body held its first plenary session in Bahrain in April 2005 and is preparing for its second plenary session in September of this year, currently scheduled to take place in Beirut. This body has the potential to be effective in persuading its members to implement systems to freeze assets in a timely and effective manner.
- We also have extensive outreach efforts to Europe - most prominently the US-EU Counter-Terrorist Financing Working Group, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Anthony Wayne. Through this and other mechanisms, we are working to ensure the effective and aggressive implementation of targeted financial sanctions throughout Europe.
- The full range of U.S. efforts against terrorist financing are coordinated by the Terrorist Financing Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), which is chaired by Deputy National Security Advisor Juan Zarate, and includes representatives from the Departments of the Treasury, State, Justice, and Defense, as well as representatives from the law enforcement and intelligence communities.

## ***The Role of Crime and Criminals***

There is no reliable way to distinguish insurgency from crime. The vast majority of Iraqi criminals probably have limited or no ties to the insurgents. Yet some are clearly "for hire" in terms of what they target or in being willing to take pay for sabotage or acts of violence that help create a climate of violence in given areas.

At least some elements in the Sunni insurgency do, however, work with criminal elements' looting and sabotage campaigns. These clearly involve some native and foreign Sunni Islamist extremists – particularly in areas like kidnappings – but the alliances "Ba'athists" and "Sunni nationalists" have with criminal groups seem to be much stronger. They also seem to dominate the cases where tribal groups mix insurgents and criminals.

Many US and Iraqi intelligence officers believe that some criminal networks are heavily under the influence of various former regime elements or are dominated by them, and that some elements of organized crime do help the insurgency. The US Defense Intelligence Agency stated in July 2005 that some aspect of insurgent financing was derived from kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling and the counterfeiting of goods and

currency.<sup>390</sup> Furthermore, at least some Shi'ite criminal groups and vendettas use the insurgency or Sunnis as a cover for their activities.

### ***The Impact of Crime on the Insurgency***

Crime affects intelligence as well as security. Independent criminals, insurgents and their criminal allies understand the limits of Coalition ability to cover the given areas and the Coalition's vulnerabilities. Many patterns of Coalition, Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces activity are easily observed and have become predictable. Bases can often be observed and are vulnerable at their entrances to rocket and mortar attacks, and along their supply lines. There are many soft and relatively small isolated facilities.

The crime problem also affects Iraqi confidence in the government and its popular legitimacy. Far more Iraqis face day-to-day threats from criminals than from terrorists and insurgents, although there is no area totally free from the risk of attack. If Iraqis are to trust their new government, if insurgents are to be deprived of recruits and proxies, and if Iraq is to move towards economic development and recovery, the crime problem must be solved at the same time the insurgents and terrorists are being defeated. This is a key priority in terms of Iraqi force development because it means effective regular policy is critical, and must have the same emphasis as developing military and security forces.

The Bush Administration summarized the impact of crime in Iraq as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq." The report made it clear that corruption was in many ways as important a criminal activity as the threat outside government, and that the development of an effective judicial and police structure for dealing with crime was still in the initial stages of progress:

The most obvious indicator of success in establishing rule of law in Iraq is probably the crime rate. Unfortunately, data on criminal activity in Iraq are unreliable. If such statistics become available, they will be included in future reports.

All 869 judges in Iraq have been reviewed and 135 removed because of substantial evidence of corruption or Ba'ath Party affiliation. All Iraqi provincial criminal courts are also now operational, although the number of trials proceeding in these courts varies. In some areas, relatively few cases are tried. In general, the primary impediment to prosecuting more cases is the ability of police and prosecutors to collect evidence and prepare cases for trial. The Coalition has therefore trained 99 judicial investigators, who in Iraq assume some of the investigative duties performed by detectives in American police departments.

Training of Iraqi judges is ongoing, with 351 Iraqi judges having received at least some training. The Coalition has also established a witness protection program and a judicial security program to protect judges and courthouses. In addition, the Coalition is engaged in ongoing efforts to build Iraqi prisons and train corrections officers and to encourage the Iraqi government to assume full responsibility for security internees.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq is the court that tries defendants accused of terrorism and crimes against the Coalition, among other crimes. Since its inception, it has conducted 544 trials and handed down 522 convictions. (Some of the trials involved multiple defendants.)

The Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) has begun the process of prosecuting Saddam Hussein and other top officials of his regime. Under the Iraqi system, a defendant is given a separate trial for each event that constitutes a crime. Saddam is therefore likely to face multiple, different trials. The first of these trials is currently scheduled to begin on October 19. The U.S. Department of Justice-supported Regime Crimes Liaison Office continues to assist with preparing the IST, providing training and other support for IST attorneys and judges.

### ***The Strength of Criminal Activity***

Like most aspects of the insurgency, it is difficult to know the strength of criminal elements and the extent to which they are and are not tied to insurgent groups. The collapse of Saddam's regime, massive unemployment, the disbanding of a wide range of military and security elements, the destruction of Iraq's military industries, de-Ba'athification, and sheer opportunism have all combined to make organized and violent crime an endemic part of Iraqi society even in many areas where the insurgents have little real strength. Criminals are also a powerful force behind local vigilante and militia efforts that at least indirectly challenge the legitimacy of the central government.

Crime has virtually the same impact as sabotage even when there is no deliberate intent to support the insurgency. Acts like wire and equipment theft limit the government's ability to distribute electrical power add to the image of ineffective governance. Similarly, oil and gas thefts add to Iraqi fuel problems and deprive the government of revenues. While most kidnappings are almost certainly decoupled from any political motive, some may have been done for hire at the bidding of various insurgent groups. At best, the end result is a climate of cumulative violence, with some elements of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension. At worst, crime vastly compounds the government and Coalitions security problems, offers insurgent groups yet another kind of informal network, helps block investment and development, compounds the problem of hiring security forces, and undermines legitimacy.

The fact that the Ministry of Interior stopped reporting meaningful crime statistics in mid-2004 makes trend analysis almost impossible. The same is true of the casualties involved. The Ministry of Health reported in the spring of 2005 that some 5,158 Iraqis had died from all forms of criminal and insurgent activities during the last six months of 2004, but most experts felt such reporting might only include about half the real total. The Baghdad Central Morgue counted 8,035 deaths from unnatural causes in Baghdad alone in 2004, a major increase from 6,012 in 2003 and a figure that compared with 1,800 in 2002 -- the last year of Saddam Hussein. The morgue reported that 60% of those killed were killed by gunshot wounds and were unrelated to the insurgency. These deaths were largely a combination of crime, tribal vendettas, vengeance killings, and mercenary kidnappings.<sup>391</sup>

It is also all too clear that the focus on defeating active insurgents has not been matched by similar efforts to develop effective police forces and prison system, eliminate corruption, create a working and efficient judicial system, or create an effective system for prosecution. The end result is that day-to-day security, even in areas without active insurgent activity, is often poor to non-existent, dependent on local forces or militias, and/or dependent on bribes and protection money. This makes it easier for insurgents to infiltrate, allows them to become the de facto security force or intimidate the population in some Sunni areas, alienates some of the government's potential supporters, and leads to widespread distrust of the police and criminal justice system. The situation has not been helped by the relatively limited staffing of the Ministry of the Interior, the Sunni perception that it is Shi'ite dominated, and the fact that the Coalition advisory effort remained limited and understaffed through October 1, 2005 -- when it was reorganized and put under the MNSTC-I.

In the early months of 2006, there appeared to be an increase in the number of abductions for ransom, and attacks and follow on robberies of local businesses. Many of these acts, however, are difficult to distinguish from ongoing sectarian violence and the perpetrators are not easily

identified. It is likely a mix between insurgent groups, militias, organized crime and simple criminals.

By the end of March 2006, Iraqi police said that as many as 30 people are reported kidnapped every day.<sup>392</sup> It is likely that many kidnappings go unrecorded however, as families prefer to pay the ransom rather than involve the police who may be involved in the abduction.

In one instance, a British-trained surgeon received a phone call at his practice from the “Mujahideen” who asked for “a donation to help our cause.” They made a suggestion of 10,000 dollars in exchange for protection. The doctor, given two days to collect the money, fled to Jordan when he received a text message threatening his life.<sup>393</sup>

In another case, men claiming to be from an anti-terrorist squad walked into a medical supply store and removed 40,000 dollars from the safe. They proceeded to kidnap the owner's son and detained him until the family paid 40,000 dollars, only a fraction of the 250,000 dollars they originally demanded.<sup>394</sup>

A string of these kidnappings and assaults happened in March:<sup>395</sup>

March 8, 2006: 50 employees are abducted from a Baghdad security company.

March 24, 2006: In the Saydiyah district, south of Baghdad, gunmen killed four pastry shop employees

March 26, 2006: Gunmen in military uniforms kidnapped 16 people from an Iraqi export company in central Baghdad.

March 28, 2006: In three separate incidents, gunmen, many in military uniforms wearing masks, kidnapped 24 people from two electronics stores and a currency exchange stealing thousands of dollars in the process.

March 29, 2006: Gunmen identifying themselves as MOI police entered the offices of a construction firm and lined up the employees, killing 8. They abducted the manager and fled the scene.

In one day in March, 21 people were abducted in four separate incidents. 15 men dressed as members of the Iraqi Army dragged six people out of a money exchange shop and stole almost 60,000 dollars. In two other similar events, men wearing MOI uniforms kidnapped individuals from two electronics shops.<sup>396</sup>

A joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in late March, allegedly on a Shi'ite mosque, resulted in the rescue of one Iraqi hostage who had been threatened with torture and death by militia men if his family did not pay 20,000.<sup>397</sup>

## **VI. The Dominant Role of Iraqi Sunni Arab Insurgents**

There is no debate among experts over the fact that Sunni Arabs dominate the insurgency. There are serious debates over the extent to which the insurgency is now dominated by Neo-Salafi Islamist extremists or whether there are still large numbers of insurgents that are more nationalist, secular, and pro-Ba'ath in character. Similar debates have emerged over how unified and coordinated the various insurgent groups are, over the extent to which they have non-Iraqi leaders and members, and over possible conflicts between the Neo-Salafi Islamist extremist

groups and other more “nationalist” Iraq insurgent groups and Iraqi Arab Sunnis who wish to join the political process or simply be left to get on with their lives.

As is the case with efforts to estimate the total manning of the insurgents, there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of the various types of Sunni insurgents, or breakdowns of their strength by motivation and group. Some 35 Sunni Arab "groups" have made some kind of public announcement of their existence, or claimed responsibility for terrorist or insurgent attacks – although many may be little more than cells and some may be efforts to shift the blame for attacks or make the insurgent movement seem larger than it is.<sup>398</sup>

There seem to be at least three main groups of insurgents but other groups may simply be cover names, cells or elements of other larger groups, or little more than tribal or clan groupings, since some local elements of the Sunni insurgency have strong tribal affiliations or cells.

The Sunni elements of the insurgency clearly involve a wide range of disparate Iraqi and foreign groups, and mixes of secular and Islamic extremist factions. There are elements tied to former Ba’athist officials, and to Iraqi and Sunni nationalists. There are elements composed of native Iraqi Sunni Islamists, groups with outside leadership and links to Al Qa’ida, and foreign volunteers with little real structure -- some of which seem to be seeking Islamic martyrdom rather than clearly defined political goals. An overwhelming majority of those captured, killed, and detained to date, however, have been Iraqi Sunnis.

The leading insurgent groups complicate analysis because they may use several different names, organize themselves into compartmented subgroups, and are increasingly organized so that their cadres are in relatively small and specialized cells. Some cells seem to be as small as 2 or 3 men. Others seem to operate as much larger, but normally dispersed groups, capable of coming together for operations of as many as 30-50 men. These subgroups and cells can recruit or call in larger teams, and the loss of even a significant number of such cells may not cripple a given group. Even if it did, several Sunni groups operate in most high threat areas.

Tribal and clan elements play a role at the local level, creating additional patterns of loyalty that cut across ideology and political goals. In one documented incident, a Sunni tribe in Samarra tried and publicly executed al-Qa’ida members for the murder of a local sheik after an interrogation.<sup>399</sup> The stated objectives of various groups range from a return of some form of Ba’athist like regime to the creation of an extremist Sunni Islamic state, with many Iraqi Sunnis acting as much out of anger and fear as any clearly articulated goals.

The various insurgent and terrorist groups often cooperated, although there are indications of divisions between the more-Ba’ath oriented Iraqi Sunni groups and some of the Sunni Islamic extremist groups with outside ties or direction. At least some Sunni groups were willing to consider negotiating with the new government, while Islamist extremist groups were not. This led to threats and some violence between various Sunni factions.<sup>400</sup>

At the same time, the threat continues that Sunni Arab extremists will provoke something approaching a full-scale civil war. They have stepped up suicide and other attacks on Shi’ites and Kurds. Many of these attacks have clearly been designed to block efforts at including Sunnis in the government and to try to provoke Shi’ites and Kurds into reprisals that will make a stable national government impossible to achieve.

The constant Sunni insurgent efforts to divide the country along sectarian and ethnic lines could radically alter the balance of power if Iraq does drift into full-scale civil war. There is also the risk that new insurgent groups could emerge. A violent split between the Arab Shi’ites and Kurds

remains possible, as do such splits within the major Shi'ite factions inside and outside the government.

Barring such divisions, however, the insurgency will remain largely Iraqi and Sunni dominated. CENTCOM estimated in the summer of 2005 that 90 percent of the insurgency was Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower.<sup>401</sup> While relatively small, this foreign element is recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.

### ***The Areas of Major Sunni Insurgent Influence***

The main Sunni insurgent groups are concentrated in cities ranging from areas like Mosul and Baghdad; in Sunni-populated areas like the "Sunni Triangle," the Al Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, and the so-called "Triangle of Death" to the southeast of Baghdad; and in Sunni areas near the Iraqi and Turkish borders. As a result, four of Iraq's provinces have both a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence. At the same time, they have continued to lack the ideological cohesion and operational coordination necessary to mobilize Iraqi Sunni Arabs with optimal effect.

Sunni insurgents have exerted considerable sway--at various points--in Fallujah, Rawa, Anna, Haditha, Ramadi, Rutbah, Qaim, Ubaydi, Karabilah, Haqliniyah, Barwanah, Tal Afar, and others. They have not, however, established long-term control over "safe havens" from which to operate, and Coalition assaults have disrupted continuous insurgent control in such areas and the creation of insurgent sanctuaries.

General John Abizaid, commander of the US Central Command, has said that the four provinces with particularly difficult security situations are western Baghdad, Al Anbar, Nineveh and Salahuddin.<sup>402</sup> Yet, even in these areas -- where insurgents have significant local influence -- much of the population is divided and only limited areas have normally been under active insurgent control.

In October of 2005, a Congressional report noted that the insurgency remained concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces: Baghdad, Al Anbar, Ninewah, and Salah ad Din. As has already been shown in Figure V.1, these four provinces have less than 42% of the country's population but account for 85% of the violence.<sup>403</sup>

Al Anbar is both Iraq's largest province (roughly the size of Belgium), and one of its least populated -- roughly one million people out of Iraq's 27 million. It is at least 90% Sunni Arab, and offers a route to a potential sanctuary in Syria, and has borders with Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well. Aside from Fallujah, the area immediately surrounding the Euphrates, and its agricultural areas have become a key operating area for insurgents. So have the towns along the Iraqi-Syrian where insurgents have take advantage of the desert and rough terrain for smuggling and dispersal. While it has some major cities, it has long been a tribal area where the government has exercised limited control.

Given these factors, it is scarcely surprising that it has been a center of the Sunni insurgency, and some estimates indicate that 500 of the 1,630 US servicemen killed in Iraq during the war up to June 2, 2005, died in Al Anbar. It is one of the few areas where insurgents have openly occupied towns and set up check points, and large numbers of Jordanian truck drivers have been killed on the road from Amman in an effort to break up lines of supply.<sup>404</sup>

## ***Sunni Islamist Extremist and Neo-Salafi vs. “Nationalist” Insurgents***

Experts differ on how much insurgent groups compete or coordinate, and how different their goals are. The groups that make the most use of public statements and the Internet do tend to advance common themes. They at least claim to be Sunni Islamist in character, and insurgent web sites do reflect a shift towards the use of more religious rhetoric and themes over time. Like many oppositionist and radical movements, however, it is not always clear what such Islamist claims really mean.

Leaders may be true believers and strongly support Neo-Salafi beliefs, but such Puritanism does not really set clear goals for the future. It seems likely that most leaders and the vast majority of Sunni insurgents know far more about what they are against than what they are for.

This does give them a common set of targets and to some extent means they pursue a common strategy. At the same time, a number of intelligence, Coalition, and Iraqi government experts feel the insurgents do divide into two major groups.

- *The first are largely native Iraqi Sunni insurgents.* They still seem to be primarily nationalist in character. They are not seeking regional or global Jihad, but rather the ability to influence or control events in Iraq. In general, native Iraqi Sunni “nationalists” want to return to a government closer to the Ba'athist regime. They may be religious, but a secular regime under Sunni control is acceptable. Their primary goal is to regain the power they once had, or at the minimum obtain their “fair share” of power and not be subject to Shi'ite rule.. Anger, revenge, economic need, opposition to the US invasion and any government that grows out of it or sheer lack of hope in the current system are all motives as well.
- *The second consists of Sunni “neo-Salafi” insurgents* – particularly those led by harder-line neo-Salafi figures like Zarqawi. These groups have different goals. They believe they are fighting a region-wide war in Iraq for a form of Sunni extremism that not only will eliminate any presence by Christians and Jews, but also create a Sunni puritan state in which other sects of Islam are forced to convert to their interpretation or are destroyed.

Most of these groups avoid attacking other sects of Islam, at least publicly and have made a growing effort to identify themselves as Iraqi rather than as groups dominated by foreign leaders or influence. Others, like the group led by Zarqawi, are more extreme. These neo-Salafis have little of mainstream Islam's tolerance for “peoples of the book,” but they have no tolerance of other interpretations of Islam. Such insurgents are known in the Muslim world as *Takferies*—a term that refers to groups that base their ideology on determining who is a believer in their view. They see those who do not fit their definition of piety as apostates. To some, particularly the group led by Zarqawi, all other Islamic sects like Shi'ites and even other Sunnis, are effectively nonbelievers or *Kafirs*.

Such generalizations have severe limits and uncertainties. There is no way to know how many Iraqis support the neo-Salafi and other Sunni extremist elements of the insurgency, any more than there are any precise counts of the foreign volunteers who support them. It is unclear how many members of Sunni extremist groups actually support the group's ideological goals rather than act out of anger, misinformation, and/or a naïve search for martyrdom.

It is also important to point out that Sunni Puritanism does not, in itself, mean advocating violence against other Islamic sects or those outside Islam. Other Sunni puritan movements call Shi'ites and other sects heretics (*bid'a*), attacker of God's unity (*tawhid*), and even as advocates of polytheism (*shirk*). Some extremist puritan Salafis preachers have called Shi'ites apostates, and advocate shunning them, hating them, and scorning them as *rawafidh* (which means rejectionists; a reference to the Shi'ites' rejection of electing Abu Bakr as the first Caliph after the death of the Prophet over Ali, Islam fourth Caliph and Shi'ites first Imam). Yet, such

religious rhetoric has rarely taken the form of violence. Like Christian and Jewish extremists, words do not necessarily mean a commitment to action.<sup>405</sup>

Some traditional Salafist groups and traditional Shi'ite groups have coexisted and worked closely together. Notable examples include Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Palestine. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with Iran after the revolution in 1979, despite some of the country's actions against Iranian Sunnis.

### ***The Nature and Role Neo-Salafi and Islamist Extremist Groups***

The ideological belief structure of the various Neo-Salafi and other Islamist extremist groups is hard to characterize. They are far more political and military activists than theologians. As such, they are not puritans in the sense of Wahhabi, nor are they Salafis in the traditional sense of the word. While they are "Islamist," they are not so much religious as committed to a violent struggle for their beliefs. Their foreign leaders and cadres have been created in past wars, and their Iraqi members have been created since the Coalition invasion of Iraq.

Religion has proven to be an important factor in the composition of these groups and extending their reach into the Iraqi population. There have been reports that some "nationalists" have joined ranks with these neo-Salafi groups in Iraq. Mowaffak Rubaie, Iraq's National Security Advisor, was quoted as saying, "Religion is a strong motive. You are not going to find someone who is going to die for Ba'athists. But Salafists have a very strong message. If you use the Koran selectively, it could be a weapon of mass destruction."<sup>406</sup>

### ***An Addiction to Violence and Extremism***

The violent Sunni neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups do, however, clearly differ from other Sunni insurgents in their willingness to use violence against non-combatants and the innocent and in their willingness to use violence against other Muslims. They are far more willing to use extreme methods of violence, like suicide bombs, against Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. They are equally willing to use these methods of attack against Iraqi officials and Iraqis in the military, security, and police services, and Iraqis of all religious and ethnic background that do not support them in their interpretation of jihad.

Moreover, some have been willing to act on the principle that ordinary Iraqi citizens can be sacrificed in a war fought in God's cause. These Sunni Islamic extremists are fighting a war that extends throughout the world, not simply in Iraq, and their goals affect all Arab states and all of Islam.

It also seems clear that many such insurgents do not believe they have to "win" in Iraq, at least in any conventional sense of the term. They do not need to restore Sunni power or control, at least in the near term. Simply driving the US and its Coalition allies out of Iraq in a war of attrition is seen as a key goal and would be seen as a major strategic victory.

An outcome that left Iraq in a state of prolonged civil war, and forces a spreading conflict in Islam between Sunnis and other sects, and neo-Salafists and other Sunnis, is seen a prelude to a broader eschatological conflict they believe is inevitable and that God will ensure they win. They are not fighting a limited war -- at least in terms of their ultimate ends and means. Compromise is at best a temporary action forced upon them for the purposes of expediency.

True Neo-Salafis also seen the insurgency are part of a general war for the control and soul of Islam, rather than Iraq. If anything, they ultimately gain the most if the Sunni and Shi'ite worlds



divide, if Iraq becomes the continuing scene of violence between the US and Arabs, if US forces remain tied down, and if their actions create as much regional instability as possible.

This means there are no clear limits to the willingness of some of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this means trying to drive the nation into a civil war they cannot win. They are also likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened.

Neo-Salafi extremist groups, such as that of Abu Musab Zarqawi are the main causes of suicide bombings and mass attacks on civilians, especially the ones directed against the Shi'ites. Zarqawi has been ambiguous in his permissibility of attacking other Muslims and has issued various statements, some of which sanction attacks on Iraqi Shi'ites, and others emphasizing that such casualties should be avoided. Such neo-Salafi extremists have used religious rhetoric effectively in Iraq, and have tried to link the conflict in Iraq to other Muslim struggles in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Their statements and recruitment tapes start with references to these conflicts and tie their "struggle" in Iraq as part of this worldwide Islam vs. the West conflict.

Such groups extend their commitment to violence to other Sunnis and Iraqis, although they differ over how willing they are to state this publicly. Until September of 2005, most Sunni Islamist extremist groups were generally careful to avoid any open claims of a split with Iraqis Shi'ites, and some cooperated with Sadr and his militia. Since, they have carried out mass attacks and bombings on Shi'ites, and they have repeatedly shown that they place few -- if any -- limits on the means of violence against those they regard as enemies of Islam.

From the viewpoint of negotiation and deterrence, this belief structure means that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded, only defeated. Furthermore, they not only will remain alienated and violent --almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis and Sunni insurgents do -- they will remain active diehards until they are rooted out, move on to new countries or areas if forced to disperse, and join other extreme Sunni Islamist movements if the ones they currently support are defeated.

### ***Guessing at Their Strength***

No one can reliably estimate how many such neo-Salafi extremists there are in the field. No one fully understands how many movements and cells are involved. It seems fairly clear, however, that such neo-Salafi groups are a driving force in the insurgency. It is also fairly clear that they are tactical and lethal in their violence in Iraq.

The most visible groups or names for a mix of affiliates including Sunni Islamist groups like Al Qa'ida and Ansar al Sunna, and more nationalist or "Ba'athist groups like the Victorious Army Group. More than 35 groups have claimed to exist at various times. Their numbers include groups like the Supporters of the Sunni People. Some sources put the number at over 100, but these totals seem to include mere fronts and Sunni groups that are more secular or affiliated with the Ba'ath. The names include groups like the Men's Faith Brigade; the Islamic Anger, Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade; and the Tawid Lions of Abdullah ibn al Zobeir.

A study of Internet websites and postings by SITE found more than 100 groups claimed to exist in various proclamations and Sunni Islamist websites. Of these, SITE found that 59 were claimed by Al Qa'ida and 36 by Ansar al Sunna. Another eight groups claimed to be operating under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups claimed to be operating under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade.<sup>407</sup>

Work by the Crisis Group found at least 14 largely neo-Salafi groups had web pages, and that large numbers of brigades and formations existed that had some degree of autonomy or independence.<sup>408</sup> It also found that the major groups were loosely linked in an informal "Majlis," although it is unclear how real such a body is, how often it meets, or what it does.

The major groups do seem to have cadres of leaders, planners, financiers, and "armorers." These may or may not control a given operation; have jurisdiction over a given group of cells, or simply supply affiliates. It is clear that Al Qaeda sometimes claims attacks are coordinated by different elements. For example, an October 24, 2005 attack on the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels in central Baghdad was claimed by the "Attack Brigade," the "Rockets Brigade," and "Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade." It was far from clear who was really involved. As these names indicate, some groups also seem to specialize in given type of attacks, and other on given types of targets. Some, for example, only seem to attack Coalition targets while others (the "Omar Brigade"?) attacks Iraqi elements such as the Badr Organization on the grounds they attack Sunnis.

Insurgent groups often act alone, or claim affiliation with other organizations. Some, such as the Ansar, or "Suicide" Brigade, create confusion because their name implies they are members of one group but claim affiliation with another. The Ansar Brigade claims an affiliation with Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Al Qaeda, however, openly associates itself with only some of the groups that claim affiliation with it.

The high degree of compartmentalization, isolation, and independence of such movements not only helps protect them and enables them to operate as informal distributed networks; it makes their strength fluid and extremely hard to estimate. As Bruce Hoffman of the Rand Corporation pointed out, "There is no center of gravity, no leadership, no hierarchy; they are more a constellation than an organization. They have adopted a structure that assures their longevity." Abdul Kareem al-Eniezi, the minister for national security, has said that, "The leaders usually don't have anything to do with details... Sometimes they will give the smaller groups a target, or a type of target. The groups aren't connected to each other. They are not that organized."<sup>409</sup>

When it comes to estimating the number of Neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups relative to other insurgents, some experts guesstimate the number of Islamist extremist insurgents at as little 5-10 percent of the total insurgents without being able to say what base number they are a percent of, or distinguishing core insurgents from part timers or sympathizers.

As has been noted earlier, US experts and officers sometimes make reference to a total of 20,000 insurgents of all kinds, but such experts are among the first to state that these numbers are more nominal mid-points in a range of guesses than real estimates. Other experts estimate the total number of Sunni insurgents and active sympathizers insurgents of all kinds at totals from 15,000 to 60,000, with far larger numbers of additional passive sympathizers. These guesstimates would put the Sunni Islamist extremists at anywhere from 1,500 to 6,000.

Some estimates do put the total number of neo-Salafi Sunni extremists much higher.<sup>410</sup> Anthony Lloyd of the *London Times* has stated that, "An intelligence summary, citing the conglomeration of insurgent groups under the al-Qaeda banner to be the result of rebel turf wars, money, weaponry and fear, concluded that of the estimated 16,000 Sunni Muslim insurgents, 6,700 were hardcore Islamic fundamentalists who were now supplemented by a possible further 4,000 members after an amalgamation with Jaysh Muhammad, previously an insurgent group loyal to the former Ba'athist regime."

Given the difficulty in distinguishing core activists from part time or fringe activists, no one can discount such estimates. The fact is, however, that such estimates again highlight the level of uncertainty surrounding a number of key aspects of the insurgency

## ***Key Islamist Extremist Groups***

There is a broad consensus over which Islamist extremist groups are most important, but little consensus over their relative strength and power, and the nature of the smaller groups.

### ***The State Department Estimate***

While the various Sunni Islamist extremist groups are in a constant state of flux, the unclassified assessments in the US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, provided the following description of the key Islamist groups as of April 2005:<sup>411</sup>

Iraq remains the central battleground in the global war on terrorism. Former regime elements as well as foreign fighters and Islamic extremists continued to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians and non-combatants. These elements also conducted numerous insurgent attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, which often had devastating effects on Iraqi civilians and significantly damaged the country's economic infrastructure.

...Jordanian-born Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and his organization emerged in 2004 to play a leading role in terrorist activities in Iraq. In October, the US Government designated Zarqawi's group, Jama'at al Tawhid wa'al-Jihad, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In December, the designation was amended to include the group's new name Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (or "The al-Qa'ida Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers") and other aliases following the "merger" between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida organization. Zarqawi announced the merger in October, and in December, bin Laden endorsed Zarqawi as his official emissary in Iraq. Zarqawi's group claimed credit for a number of attacks targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as civilians, including the October massacre of 49 unarmed, out-of-uniform Iraqi National Guard recruits. Attacks that killed civilians include the March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel, killing seven and injuring over 30, and a December 24 suicide bombing using a fuel tanker that killed nine and wounded 19 in the al-Mansur district of Baghdad.

In February 2004, Zarqawi called for a "sectarian war" in Iraq. He and his organization sought to create a rift between Shi'a and Sunnis through several large terror attacks against Iraqi Shi'a. In March 2004, Zarqawi claimed credit for simultaneous bomb attacks in Baghdad and Karbala that killed over 180 pilgrims as they celebrated the Shi'a festival of Ashura. In December, Zarqawi also claimed credit for a suicide attack at the offices of Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of Iraq's largest Shi'a parties, which killed 15 and wounded over 50.

Zarqawi has denied responsibility for another significant attack that same month in Karbala and Najaf, two of Shi'a Islam's most holy cities, which killed Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 120. Terrorists operating in Iraq used kidnapping and targeted assassinations to intimidate Iraqis and third-country nationals working in Iraq as civilian contractors. Nearly 60 noncombatant Americans died in terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2004. Other American noncombatants were killed in attacks on coalition military facilities or convoys. In June, Zarqawi claimed credit for the car bomb that killed the chairman of the Coalition-appointed Iraqi Governing Council. In April, an American civilian was kidnapped and later beheaded. One month later, a video of his beheading was posted on an al-Qa'ida-associated website. Analysts believe that Zarqawi himself killed the American as well as a Korean hostage, kidnapped in June. Zarqawi took direct credit for the September kidnapping and murder of two American civilians and later their British engineer co-worker, and the October murder of a Japanese citizen.

In August, the Kurdish terrorist group Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and killing of 12 Nepalese construction workers, followed by the murder of two Turkish citizens in September. Many other foreign civilians have been kidnapped. Some have been killed, others released, some remain in their kidnappers' hands, and the fate of others, such as the director of CARE, is unknown.

Other terrorist groups were active in Iraq. Ansar al-Sunna, believed to be an offshoot of the Ansar al-Islam group founded in Iraq in September 2001, first came to be known in April 2003 after issuing a statement on

the Internet. In February 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for bomb attacks on the offices of two Kurdish political parties in Irbil, which killed 109 Iraqi civilians. The Islamic Army in Iraq has also claimed responsibility for terrorist actions. Approximately 3,800 disarmed persons remained resident at the former Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MeK) military base at Camp Ashraf; the MeK is a designated US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). More than 400 members renounced membership in the organization in 2004. Forty-one additional defectors elected to return to Iran, and another two hundred were awaiting ICRC assistance for voluntary repatriation to Iran at the end of the year. PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel, a designated foreign terrorist group, maintains an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 armed militants in northern Iraq, according to Turkish Government sources and NGOs. In the summer of 2004, PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel renounced its self-proclaimed cease-fire and threatened to renew its separatist struggle in both Turkey's Southeast and urban centers. Turkish press subsequently reported multiple incidents in the Southeast of PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel terrorist actions or clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel militants.

The State Department report also provided a more detailed description of the role of Ansar al-Islam (AI) (a.k.a. Ansar al-Sunnah Partisans of Islam, Helpers of Islam, Kurdish Taliban):<sup>412</sup>

Ansar al-Islam (AI) is a radical Islamist group of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs who have vowed to establish an independent Islamic state in Iraq. The group was formed in December 2001. In the fall of 2003, a statement was issued calling all jihadists in Iraq to unite under the name Ansar al-Sunnah (AS). Since that time, it is likely that AI has posted all claims of attack under the name AS. AI is closely allied with al-Qa'ida and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's group, Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) in Iraq. Some members of AI trained in al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan, and the group provided safe haven to al-Qa'ida fighters before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Since OIF, AI has become one of the leading groups engaged in anti-Coalition attacks in Iraq and has developed a robust propaganda campaign.

AI continues to conduct attacks against Coalition forces, Iraqi Government officials and security forces, and ethnic Iraqi groups and political parties. AI members have been implicated in assassinations and assassination attempts against Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) officials and Coalition forces, and also work closely with both al-Qa'ida operatives and associates in QJBR. AI has also claimed responsibility for many high profile attacks, including the simultaneous suicide bombings of the PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) party offices in Irbil on February 1, 2004, and the bombing of the US military dining facility in Mosul on December 21, 2004.

Its strength is approximately 500 to 1,000 members, its location and area of operation is primarily central and northern Iraq... The group receives funding, training, equipment, and combat support from al-Qa'ida, QJBR, and other international jihadist backers throughout the world. AI also has operational and logistic support cells in Europe.

### *Other Estimates*

Virtually all sources agree that two key Iraqi Islamist extremist groups include the one led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, first known as *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, or Unity and Holy War, and now known as *Tandhim Qa'idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* or as the al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers.

The second easily identifiable group with significant numbers of foreign volunteers is the offshoot of Ansar al-Islam, or Protectors of Islam, an Islamist group created in the Kurdish regions in September 2001, called Ansar al-Sunna, or Protectors of the Sunna Faith. Ansar suffered a joint attack from Kurdish and US forces in March 2003, forcing many of its fighters to scatter, possibly to Iran, before several allegedly settled in Mosul.

Two other groups, and their area of operation, include:<sup>413</sup>

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

*Al-Jibha al-Wataniya litahrial-'Iraq* or the National Front for the Liberation of Iraq and which seems to be an umbrella for groups of Islamists and nationalist, namely the Islamic Army of Iraq, the Army of

Mohammad, the Iraqi Resistance Front, the Iraqi Liberation Army, and the Awakening and Holy War: Fallujah, Samarra, and Basra

### *The Crisis Group Estimate*

The Crisis Group believes that Sunni Islamist groups have come to dominate the insurgency and developed a list in early 2006, which it summarized as follows:<sup>414</sup>

- *Tandhim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (al-Qa'ida's Organisation in Mesopotamia). Formerly *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (Monotheism and Jihad), the group has been shaped by the personality of its purported founder, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. The group claims to have 15 brigades or battalions (*Katiba*, plural *Kata'ib*) operating under its banner, including two "martyrs" brigades, of which one allegedly comprises exclusively Iraqi volunteers.
- *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna* (Partisans of the Sunna Army).<sup>415</sup> The group reportedly is an offshoot of *Jaysh Ansar al-Islam* (the Partisans of Islam Army); a *jihadi* organisation previously based in Kurdistan and which by most accounts has ceased to operate in Iraq. (Tellingly, a group claiming affiliation with *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna*, *Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama'a* publishes a magazine in Kurdish). The group claims to have some 16 brigades. It has committed some particularly violent attacks.
- *Al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* (the Islamic Army in Iraq). Thirteen brigades have claimed allegiance to this group. Again, the group's highly Salafi discourse blends with a vigorously patriotic tone. It is widely seen both in Iraq and in the West as one of the armed groups that is more "nationalist" in character and more likely to turn away from armed struggle if a suitably inclusive political compromise is possible. The authors of the Crisis Group study disagree and argue that, "The perception that *al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* comprises chiefly former regime officers while *Tandhim al-Qa'ida* is a gathering of foreign militants is misleading. Undoubtedly, *Tandhim* has tapped into foreign volunteers who are ready to die, but the logistics of suicide attacks (smuggling, hosting, training, and equipping volunteers, gathering intelligence on targets, etc.) require solid rooting in Iraqi society and capabilities Iraqis alone can provide. The make-up of *al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* may well involve a core of experienced Iraqi officers and other members of the former regime, but unseasoned and devout combatants, as well as Iraqi salafi preachers with connections throughout the Muslim world ought not be excluded. Indeed, such mixed composition, as well as cross dependencies (*jihadis* rely on local networks, and on international sources of finance and legitimacy), help explain in part the relative homogeneity in discourse.
- *Al-Jabha al-Islamiya lil-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya* (the Islamic Front of the Iraqi Resistance), known by its initials as *Jami'* (mosque or gathering). This group could be more akin to a "public relations organ" shared between different armed groups, rather than an armed group in itself. Issuing regular, weekly updates of claimed attacks, it also has a comprehensive website and publishes a lengthy, monthly magazine also called *Jami'*. Deeply nationalistic, but with a slight Salafi taint, its discourse counts among the more sophisticated of the groups.
- *Jaysh al-Rashidin* (the First Four Caliphates Army). As many as six brigades reportedly operate under its banner. The group issues regular updates on its activities and of late has recently set up a website.
- *Jaysh al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (the Victorious Group's Army). At least three brigades are known to have pledged alliance to this group, which also issues weekly updates.
- *Jaysh al-Mujahidin* (the Mujahidin's Army). This group too puts out weekly updates and operates a website, which was briefly shut down and suspended in December 2005.
- *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fil-'Iraq* (the Islamic Resistance's Movement in Iraq), which at some stage *Kata'ib Thawrat 'Ashrin* (the 1920 Revolution Brigades) appears to have joined.
- *Jaysh Muhammad* (Muhammad's Army), which issues periodic communiqués and videos focusing on IED attacks in the Anbar governorate.
- *'Asa'ib Ahl al-'Iraq* (the Clans of the People of Iraq).
- *Saraya Al-Ghadhab Al-Islami* (the Islamic Anger Brigades)

- *Saraya Usud Al-Tawhid* (the Lions of Unification Brigades)
- *Saraya Suyuf al-Haqq* (the Swords of Justice Brigades). This group took responsibility for the November 2005 kidnapping of four peace activists from the Christian Peacemaking Team. Its origins and affiliation remain murky, although it claims to operate under the banner of *Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama'a*, a recent offshoot of *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna*.

It is important to note that the Crisis Group created this list largely on the basis of the public statements by various insurgent groups, and that the groups differed significantly in history and credibility. The first five groups were seen as having significant operational status. The second four consisted of groups that took credit for military actions but which tended to use far less elaborate and stable channels of communication than the above four, although their public statements showed beliefs similar to those of *al-Jaysh al-Islami* and *Jami'*. The last four groups "lack regular means of communication and rely instead on periodic claims of responsibility through statements or videos."

The Crisis Group also had counted some 50 different brigades by December 2005, that had claimed to carry out military action or terrorist attacks under the name of one major group or the other. It reported that, "In traditional Arab military parlance, a brigade comprises from 100 to 300 men, which would add up to a total of roughly 5,000 to 15,000 insurgents."

By the time the Crisis Group issued the report in February 2006, none of these groups made formal attacks on Shi'ite sectarianism, but virtually all of the active groups did repeatedly attack Shi'ite targets. All made repeated efforts to establish their credibility by providing detailed on military and terrorist operations. They claimed to act out of Islamic honor and tended to downplay or ignore their worst actions, they attacked US and Iraqi government actions for crimes and atrocities, and accused the Shi'ites and Kurds of sectarian and ethnic separatism – ignoring their own focus on Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. It was the Shi'ites and not the Kurds, however, which they generally accused of using death squads, committing crimes, and fighting "dirty wars."

In practical terms, however, there seemed to be no clear limits to the willingness of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this meant trying to drive the nation into a civil war they could not win. As a result, some are likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened. It seems almost certain that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded, only defeated. Some non-Islamist extremist groups will remain alienated almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis do, and will move on to join the most extreme Islamist movements.

### ***Al Qa'ida in the Two Rivers and the "Zarqawi Factor"***

Zarqawi's *Tandhim Qa'idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, or al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers, is only one Sunni Islamist extremist insurgent group. Views differ regarding the size of al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers, how much control is exercised by Zarqawi, the depth of its ties to Bin Laden and Al Qa'ida, how many of its current "fighters" are Iraqi versus non-Iraqi, and how many other Islamist extremist groups exist and how independent they are of Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida. This debate heightened in 2006, when it seemed that Zarqawi had either given up formal leadership for political and propaganda reasons, or had been pushed into a sideline position.

A number of groups have claimed affiliation with Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida in the Two Rivers since early 2004, but it is unknown how closely tied many of these groups are to Zarqawi. It is

likely that some of them either only claim him as an inspiration, or operate as almost totally independent groups and cells. This seems to include a number of elements organized along tribal lines.

Some experts believe that the Coalition, most analysts and the media have demonized Zarqawi, have overestimated the importance of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, and have made one element of the insurgency the symbol of a much more complex mix of movements. This may be true to some extent, but there is no question that Zarqawi and al-Qa'ida have become the names that dominate much of the reporting on the Islamist extremist aspects of the insurgency.

### *The Zarqawi Organization Structure and Its Strength*

There is no consensus over how al-Qa'ida has organized its operations in Iraq, or over how its structure has changed over time. On November 10, 2005 the Coalition released a diagram (**Figure VI.1**) showing the makeup of the Zarqawi network. At a news conference describing the US military's progress in capturing Zarqawi operatives, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch told reporters:<sup>416</sup>

The insurgency is broken into three groups: terrorists and foreign fighters, Iraqi rejectionists and Saddamists. We believe that the terrorists and foreign fighters are the most lethal group of the insurgency. And it is indeed an organized group, and the face of that group is Zarqawi -- al-Qa'ida in Iraq...

Over the last several months, we've been able to kill or capture over 100 members of al-Qa'ida in Iraq. Since I've talked to you about this graphic last, we have indeed taken out one additional tier-one member.

Reminder: tier one are those people who have direct access to Zarqawi. They are Zarqawi's lieutenants. They are his trusted advisers. They have visibility in al-Qa'ida operations not just in Iraq but also across the entire Middle East. And when Zarqawi loses a tier-one member, he's losing one of his most trusted advisers. The Ramadi military leader was killed in an operation in Ramadi a week ago, Abu Abdullah, along with 12 additional terrorists. So one more tier-one individual killed.

Tier two: tier-two leadership plan and facilitate operations in a region of Iraq. They are responsible for flow of money, for flow of information, for flow of munitions, and flow of foreign fighters. Since we talked last, two additional tier-two members have been killed or captured, both in Mosul -- the emir of Mosul and the chief of Mosul security. Since we talked last, 15 additional tier-three members have been killed or captured. These are the individuals who control cells, local cells -- both Iraqis and foreign fighters -- serving as cell leaders.

**Figure VI.1** lists 38 "Tier 2" and 71 "Tier 3" operatives killed or captured. According to the US military, the influence of foreign fighters was most predominant in the tier-three. Speaking about the new developments, Lynch said: "we have great success at killing or capturing his leaders, his cell leaders, his coordinators and his lieutenants, and this chart just continues to expand, and eventually, he's going to be on this chart."<sup>417</sup>

Manpower does not seem to have been a critical problem in spite of Coalition successes. Zarqawi seems to have been able to recruit more volunteers after the fighting in Fallujah, and substantially more volunteers for suicide bombings after the January 30, 2005 elections brought a Shi'ite and Kurdish dominated government to power. The same has been true since the offensives in western Iraq later in 2005.

It is not clear whether such recruiting has strengthened his movement, or simply helped to cope with the constant attrition caused by MNF-I and Iraqi attacks. A number of experts feel al-Qa'ida probably totals less than 2,000 full and part time men -- including both Iraqis and foreigners -- and probably with a core strength of no more than several hundred

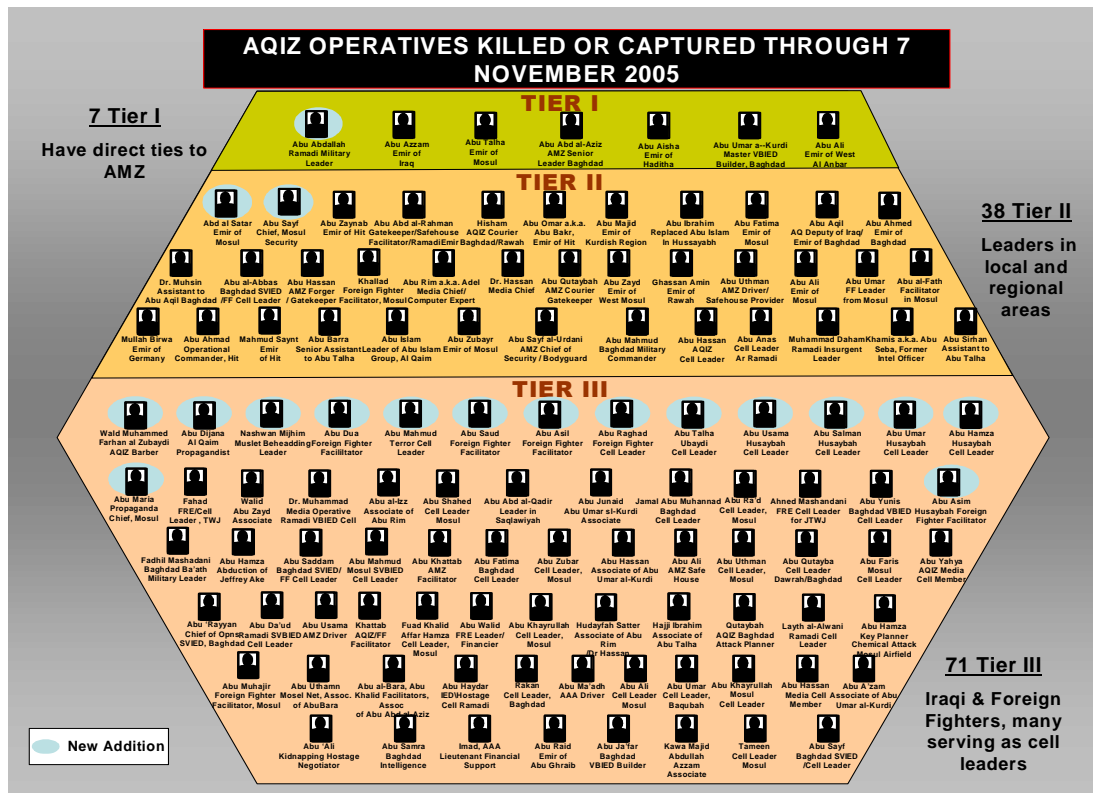
The overall role of foreign fighters is described in more detail later in this analysis, but they have clearly played an important role in al-Qa'ida. In the spring of 2004, US officials estimated that

there might be a core strength of fewer than 1,000 foreign fighters in Iraq or as many as 2,000. A few press estimates went as high as 10,000 before the fighting in Fallujah, but seemed to be sharply exaggerated. It seems likely that the cadres of foreign volunteers in al-Qa'ida have been well under 500 men.

The number of foreign volunteers with ties to al-Qa'ida detained by the Coalition and Iraqi government has remained relatively low. However, some MNSTC-I and Iraqi experts felt in early that so many volunteers were coming in across the Syrian and other borders that the total was rapidly increasing.<sup>418</sup> This helped make improving border security a top Coalition and Iraqi government priority in January and February 2005, and a factor in a major Marine offensive in the Syrian border area in May 2005.<sup>419</sup>



Figure VI.1: Zarqawi's Network in 2005



Source: MNF-I Briefing with Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, November 10, 2005. Available at <http://www.mnf-iraq.com/Transcripts/051110b.htm>

### ***The Zarqawi Hunt***

While US claims about the importance of the killings and captures of Zarqawi's senior lieutenants have sometimes seemed exaggerated – as have claims to have nearly killed or captured Zarqawi – there have been many real successes.

On January 10, 2005, then Prime Minister Allawi announced that Izz al-Din Al- Majid, a chief Zarqawi financier, was arrested in Fallujah in early December 2004. Al Majid had more than \$35 million in his bank accounts and controlled \$2 to \$7 billion of former regime assets stolen from Iraqi government accounts. His objective, according to interrogators, was to unite the insurgent groups Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army. Since that time, the appendix to this report shows that MNF forces have killed or captured many other such senior cadres.

In July 2005, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers announced that the Coalition had captured a long sought after battlefield commander, Abu 'Abd-al-Aziz. According to the US military, al-Aziz had led a foreign fighter cell in Fallujah up until the US took control of the city. Fleeing the city, al-Aziz apparently came to Baghdad and earned the moniker 'the Amir of Baghdad' among fellow insurgents.<sup>420</sup>

Later that month, the US military announced the capture of what was described as an Al Qa'ida commander and close confidant to Zarqawi. Khamis Farhan Khalaf Abd al-Fahdawi, or Abu Seba, was captured with approximately 30 other terrorist suspects. It is believed that Seba played a role in the murder of Egypt's ambassador and in the attacks on the Pakistani and Bahraini envoys. An Internet posting purportedly written by Zarqawi's group claimed that Seba was a low-level leader of a cell in Baghdad and that the US forces were inventing ranks to portray an image of success in taking down the terrorist networks.<sup>421</sup>

Not long after, an Egyptian insurgent named Hamdi Tantawi was captured by Iraqi police in the town of Yusufiya, along with weaponry, computers, and money. It is believed that Tantawi financed insurgent operations and allegedly was a lieutenant to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the second most recognized international Al Qa'ida figure behind Osama bin Laden.

Further details were unavailable, and it is unclear whether Tantawi was operating independently or coordinating with Zawahiri and/or Zarqawi. If he were as close to Zawahiri as suggested by the press reports, it would suggest that the coordination between the old guard Al Qa'ida leadership and the Al Qa'ida in Iraq group is far closer than previously thought. It would also suggest that Bin Laden and Zawahiri are perhaps not as hard pressed and on the run along the Afghan border with Pakistan as has largely been assumed.

US military spokesman General Kevin Bergner told reporters on September 16 that joint operations between Iraqi and US forces in northern Iraq had captured or killed 80 senior leaders since January 2005.<sup>422</sup>

In late September 2005, the US military announced it had killed two senior members of Zarqawi's group. Abu Nasir, believed to be Al Qa'ida in Iraq's leader in Karabilah, was killed near the border with Syria on September 27. Two days earlier, US forces in Baghdad shot and killed Abdullah Najim Abdullah Mohamed al-Jawari, also known as Abu Azzam. Thought to be Al Qa'ida in Iraq's No. 2 man, Abu Azzam was the leader of the insurgency in Iraq's Anbar Province. Recent improvements in US human intelligence, improved technical intelligence,

targeting of insurgents, and more developed informants, are believed to have contributed to the success of the two operations.<sup>423</sup>

Around the same time, soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry from the 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade, known as “2-1”, captured more than 180 suspected terrorists. In late October, the 2-1 killed a terrorist cell leader and his assistant, crippling an al Qa’ida terrorist cell in Mosul. The terrorists, identified as Nashwan Mijhim Muslet and Nahi Achmed Obeid Sultan, were killed during a raid on their safe house on October 22. Muslet and Sultan were behind at least three videotaped beheadings and had terrorized Mosul residents through roadblocks, extortion and kidnappings.<sup>424</sup>

In early November, the US military announced it had killed two regional terrorists in an operation in the town of Husaybah, on the Syrian border. According to a US military press release, the two men, identified as Asadallah and Abu Zahra, were “key al Qa’ida in Iraq terrorist leaders.” The statement described the two men in the following way:<sup>425</sup>

Asadallah was a senior al Qa’ida in Iraq terrorist leader and foreign fighter facilitator in the Husaybah area. Asadallah commanded several terrorist and foreign fighter cells in the Husaybah, and al Waim region. Asadallah also coordinated the funneling and distribution of foreign fighters from Syria into the Husaybah area as well as their employment as suicide bombers. His foreign fighters were responsible for numerous suicide bombings in the region. He also directed, planned and executed many of the terrorist attacks on Iraqi security and coalition forces.

Abu Zahra, a close associated of the current al Qa’ida in Iraq Emir of Husaybah. As a close personal friend and confidant to the Emir of Husaybah he acted as an assistant, helping run the day to day activities of the terrorist organization. Zahra took an active role in planning and coordinating attacks against Iraqi security and Coalition forces. He additionally was reported to provide logistical support for various terrorist cells in the area. This support included providing weapons and ammunition, arranging housing, and money for foreign fighters and terrorists operating in the area.

Also in November, US officials reported that they had come close to capturing Zarqawi on at least three occasions. The military said it was using eavesdropping satellites, unmanned drones and U-2 spy planes to gather intelligence on the insurgency and to track Zarqawi’s movements. US forces were also helping Iraqis in the intelligence process.<sup>426</sup>

US officials do believe they have been close to catching Zarqawi on several occasions. In the past, US forces have stormed restaurants and hospitals after receiving reports about Zarqawi sightings. The US military believes it came closest to capturing Zarqawi in February 2005, when the insurgent leader jumped out of a truck as it approached a US checkpoint outside Ramadi. Zarqawi’s driver and bodyguard were captured, and a large amount of cash along with Zarqawi’s laptop computer was seized.

There may have been other near misses. According to a senior US intelligence official: “Several times we have showed up at places where we know he was hours or days earlier. But the intelligence we get is never fresh enough.” US officials believe Zarqawi has slipped in and out of Iraq during the past few years, traveling to Jordan, Syria and Iran to raise funds and recruits for the insurgency.<sup>427</sup>

US assertions that they were getting closer to Zarqawi intensified in the fall of 2005. In late November, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told CNN, “His [Zarqawi’s] days are numbered, he is going to be ultimately found...Either he will be brought to justice or he will die in the battle to capture him, but we are getting closer to that goal every day. A lot of coalition forces and experts are working hard on this...it’s not a question of whether but when.”<sup>428</sup>

On November 19, US and Iraqi forces surrounded a two-story house in the mostly Kurdish area of eastern Mosul, after receiving intelligence that Zarqawi might be hiding there. Coalition troops encountered fierce resistance by the insurgents, heightening suspicion that a high-value target like Zarqawi was inside the house. Three of the eight insurgents killed during the three-hour raid blew themselves up rather than be captured alive. Immediately following the raid, US forces sealed the house.

Speculation that Zarqawi might have been killed in the raid grew after Iraqi Foreign Minister Hohshyar Zebari told the Jordanian Petra news agency that DNA tests were being carried out on the bodies. But the governor of Nineveh province, Duraid Kashmoula, told the Washington Post on November 21 that there was only a 30 percent chance that one of the bodies was that of Zarqawi adding, "We've had dry holes before."<sup>429</sup>

US officials, however, remained cautious. On November 22, a top US commander in Iraq said there was "absolutely no reason" to believe Zarqawi had died in the raid and Ambassador Khalilzad echoed that assessment, saying, "I do not believe that we got him. But his days are numbered...we're closer to the goal, but unfortunately we didn't get him in Mosul."<sup>430</sup> The following day, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia issued a statement on an Islamic web site denying their leader had been killed. The statement said the group had waited to respond to the rumors of Zarqawi's death "until this lie took its full length to let Muslims know the extent of [the media's] stupidity and shallow thinking."<sup>431</sup>

In late November 2005, US officials believed the best intelligence showed Zarqawi was operating in western Baghdad. But Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told ABC News in mid-November that the Iraqi government had evidence that Zarqawi had been injured in Ramadi sometime in October or early November.

These conflicting reports suggested Zarqawi remained as elusive.<sup>432</sup> US officials also claimed that more and more Iraqis were coming forward with tips on his whereabouts following the November 9 bombings in Amman.<sup>433</sup> But while the military's elite Task Force 145 continued the more than two year old hunt of the elusive leader of the insurgency, the public disowning of Zarqawi by his own tribe after the November 9 bombings may ultimately do more to hasten his capture.

What is clear is that al-Qa'ida remains a major force in the insurgency. Its forces have been capable of what are relatively large offensive operations by insurgent standards, such as the spring 2005 attack on Abu Ghraib prison. Many of the insurgent forces the US Marine Corps fought in its offensive along the Euphrates and near the Syrian border in May 2005 either had ties to Zarqawi or were part of mixes of Zarqawi loyalists and other Iraqi Sunni insurgents.

Al-Qa'ida and other extremist organizations still have the capability to target Shi'ite Iraqis in an effort to heighten civil conflict in early in early 2006. Accordingly to some uncertain reports, al-Qaida was also still capable of capable of organizing large-scale assaults against strongly defended coalition positions.

In March 2006, the Ministry of Interior claimed plot was uncovered that involved an attempt by 421 al-Qa'ida members to stage an attack on the Green Zone. These recruits were, according to Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, a "bureaucrat's signature away" from acceptance into the Army battalions charged with guarding the gates to the Green Zone. After gaining access to the area, the fighters planned on storming U.S. and British embassies taking those inside hostage. Several Defense Ministry officials were implicated as "insiders" in the plot and subsequently jailed.<sup>434</sup> It

is important to note, however, that Coalition sources never confirmed the existence of such a plot.

### ***Zarqawi Ties to Bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups***

Al Qa'ida in Iraq has strengthened its ties to outside terrorist groups. In October 2004, Zarqawi publicly pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and changed the name of his organization from Al Tawhid wal Jihad (Unity and Holy War) to Al Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers.<sup>435</sup> While there is no evidence that the two men have ever met or even directly communicated, Bin Laden issued a statement in December 2004 confirming Zarqawi as the "Emir" of Al Qa'ida in Iraq.

This linkage is part of a broader process. Movements like the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which claimed responsibility for the attack on the US mess tent in Mosul in December 2004 and for many other suicide attacks, seem to have a mix of links to Zarqawi and possibly Al Qa'ida. They seem to be largely Iraqi, but their mix of Sunnis and Kurds is uncertain, as is the extent to which the group and its cells are at least partly a legacy of Ansar al-Islam – an active Islamist group that reportedly provided sanctuary for Zarqawi before the war. In November 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed that it had twice collaborated with Zarqawi's group and another group known as the Islamic Army in Iraq.

In February 2005, a leaked US intelligence memo indicated that an intercepted communication, reportedly from bin Laden to Zarqawi, encouraged Iraqi insurgents to attack the American homeland.<sup>436</sup> Even so, US intelligence analysts view bin Laden and Zarqawi as separate operators, and it remains unclear as to what – if any – organizational or financial support Bin Laden provides Zarqawi's organization.<sup>437</sup>

According to US intelligence officials, Zarqawi has surpassed Bin Laden in raising funds: "Right now, Zarqawi is fighting the war, and [Bin Laden] is not...who would you give money to?" But a Justice Department official downplayed the money issue, saying:<sup>438</sup>

It's not like John Gotti running around Manhattan in fancy suits and limousines...We are talking about a man who is operating in an area that is extremely primitive, in a very clandestine manner and with a huge network of people that do his communications for him and surround him and protect him.

Zarqawi's financial independence from Bin Laden was seemingly confirmed in a 2005 letter to Zarqawi purported to be from Al Qa'ida's No. 2, Ayman Al Zawahiri. In the letter, discussed in detail below, Zawahiri asks Zarqawi to send funds to the Al Qa'ida leadership.

Another "Zarqawi letter," written on April 27, 2005 by one of his associates (Abu Asim al Qusayami al Yemeni), seemed to reflect Zarqawi's complaints about the failure of some of his volunteers to martyr themselves. This was typical of the kind of complaints he has used both to try to lever more support from Bin Laden and gain more support from Arabs outside Iraq.<sup>439</sup>

Some analysts believe that Bin Laden made a strategic error by declaring Zarqawi the "emir" for operations in Iraq. Iraqis are deeply distrusting of outsiders and, in particular, neighbors in the region. Bin Laden's declaration could be seen by Iraqis in highly nationalistic terms as a Saudi ordering a Jordanian to kill Iraqis. These analysts believe that this will motivate those Iraqis who were previously weary of the political process, to offer their support to the elected government.

### ***Zarqawi and Attacks on Sunnis and Civilians***

Zarqawi appears to have made some efforts to remake his organization's reputation to reduce tensions with Iraqi Sunnis, and possibly Iraqi Shi'ites as well. Al Qa'ida website pronouncements claimed that the group had tried to avoid Muslim casualties with the notable

exception being the Iraq military and security forces. They quickly denounced attacks on civilians like the massive suicide car bombing in Hilla in March 2005.<sup>440</sup>

Zarqawi has, however, advocated attacks on Shi'ites and said he views them as apostates. It was clear that many bloody suicide bombings and other attacks had support from elements loyal to Zarqawi, and that many were sectarian attacks on Shi'ites or ethnic attacks on Kurds. It is now unclear if any Shi'ite element, including many of Sadr's supporters, is willing to cooperate with such Sunni extremist groups.

A tape attributed to Zarqawi in May 2005, was anything but reticent.<sup>441</sup> In the one hour and 14 minute tape, he explained why Muslim civilians were being killed in his attacks and justified the killing on the basis of research by "Abu Abdullah al Muhajer". He claimed that many operations were cancelled because they were going to kill large numbers of Muslims, but mistakes were made and "we have no choice...it's impossible to fight the infidels without killing some Muslims." He stated that Muslims were killed in 9/11, and attacks in Riyadh, Nairobi, and Tanzania. He added that if these were considered illegitimate then it would mean stopping jihad in every place.

He said that Iraq's geography made direct combat with the enemy difficult, and the only way around this was to intensify combat through suicide operations. He contrasted Iraqi terrain to Afghanistan's mountains and to Chechnya's woods, where it was easier for the "mujaheddeen" to have a safe place to hide and plan after fighting with the enemy.

He stated that it was difficult for the "mujaheddeen" to move in Iraq because of the checkpoints and the US bases. Suicide operations were easier to carry out, more efficient, and could effectively force the enemy to leave the cities for places where it would be easier to shoot them. "These operations are our weapon...If we stop them jihad will be weaker...If the enemy gets full control of Baghdad it will implement its plan and control the whole nation. The whole world saw what they did in Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca and prisons in Qut, Najaf and Karbala...that's when they did not have full control, so what would happen if they do?"

Zarqawi claimed his group never attacked other sects in Iraq who are not considered Muslims, but fought the Shi'ites because they assist the enemy and are traitors. According to Zarqawi, the Shi'ites only pretend they care about civilian casualties. He also claimed there was a plan to eliminate the Sunnis in Iraq, and that Sunni mosques were being handed over to Shi'ites and that Sunni clerics, teachers, doctors and experts were being killed. He claimed that Sunni women were being kidnapped and that Shi'ite police participated in raping women at Abu Ghraib.

He claimed there were widespread abuses at Iraqi government-run prisons. These accusations included prison in Qut which he said was being run by Iranian intelligence and a prison in Hilla run by a Shi'ite major general called Qays (evidently Major General Qays Hamza, chief of al Hillah police), who "cuts Muslims' bodies and rapes women." He mentioned a specific story where Qays threatened to rape the wife of one of the fighters. He said his fighters unsuccessfully tried to kill Qays. In fact, there was a web statement dated March 30<sup>th</sup> about a suicide bombing in Hilla that targeted Major General Qays.<sup>442</sup>

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

The Jordanian asserted in the message that the US went to war with Iraq in order to advance Israel's interests and refers to the conflict in Iraq as a 'quagmire.' He declared that the US will

soon invade the lands of Sham (Greater Syria) on the pretext of stopping insurgent infiltration, and that this had not yet happen only due to the ferocity of the militant attacks. He also announced the creation of a new brigade charged with killing the members of the Failaq Brigade, a Shi'ite militia.

On September 14, 2005, Al Qa'ida in Iraq released another audiotape by Zarqawi. On the tape, which surfaced on a day when insurgent attacks killed more than 150 people and wounded more than 500, Zarqawi declared "all out war" against Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq.

In a letter released earlier in the day, the organization said the upsurge in violence was in response to the ongoing US operation against insurgents in Tal Afar. Zarqawi accused the US military and Shi'ites of using poisonous gas and rapping women in Tal Afar and appealed to Iraqi sects to renounce the Al-Jaafari government and its crimes. Zarqawi also threatened violence against Coalition troops and Iraqi government officials, calling on them to "come out of their lairs in the Green Zone."

Zarqawi's declaration began:<sup>443</sup>

Days go by, and events follow one after the other. The battles are many, and the names used are varied. But the goal is one: a Crusader-Rafidite [a derogatory term for Shia] war against the Sunnis....

The interests of the Crusaders have converged with the desires of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites, and the outcome was these crimes and massacres against the Sunnis-from Al-Falluja to al-Madain, Al-Diyala, Al-Samarra, and Al-Mosul, through Al-Ramadi, Hit, Haditha, Al-Rawa, Al-Qaim and other places, and recently-but not last-at Tel'afar...

This is an organized sectarian war, whose details were carefully planned against the will of those whose vision has been blinded and whose hearts have been hardened by Allah. Beware, oh Sunni scholars-has your sons' blood become so cheap in your eyes that you have sold it for a low price? Has the honor of your women become so trivial in your eyes? Beware. Have you not heard that many of your chaste and pure sisters from among the Sunnis of Tel'afar had their honor desecrated, their chastity slaughtered, and their wombs filled with the sperm of the Crusaders and of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites? Where is your religion? Moreover, where is your sense of honor, your zeal, and your manliness?

According to Zarqawi, the timing of the operation in Tal Afar had been planned to "cover up the scandal of Allah's enemy, Bush, in his dealing with what was left behind by one of Allah's soldiers-the devastating Hurricane Katrina."<sup>444</sup> Zarqawi also claimed that US forces numbering 4,000 and Iraqi forces numbering 6,000 converged on Tal Afar in order to do battle with a "small group of believers, which number[ed] no more than a few hundred."

In the speech, Zarqawi singled out Iraqi government officials and members of the Iraqi security forces, as well as other "collaborators" for denunciation:<sup>445</sup>

Behold the Rafidites' lackey, [Iraqi Defense Minister] Sa'doon Al-Dulaimi, may Allah keep him miserable, bragging about their victories at Tel'afar. If only I knew what victory they are talking about-these cowards, none of whom dares to leave his lair unless he is shielded by the women of the Marines. Does this traitor believe that bombing houses, with women and children inside, constitutes a victory? By Allah, what a miserable victory...

This lackey [Al-Dulaimi], who betrayed his religion and his nation, and agreed to serve as a tool of the Crusaders and Safavids threatens that he and his angels of destruction are advancing towards Al-Anbar, Al-Qaim, Rawatha and Samarra. To him we say that the mujahedeen have prepared for you and for your soldiers, by Allah's virtues, a slashing sword and lethal poison. Allah willing, you will be given to drink from the various goblets of death, and the lands of the Sunnis will contain your rotting corpses. Come, if you want, now or later.

...whoever is proven to belong to the Pagan [National] Guard, to the police, or to the army, or whoever is proven to be a Crusader collaborator or spy-he shall be killed. Furthermore, his house shall either be

destroyed or burned down, after the women and children are taken out of it. This is his reward for betraying his religion and his nation, so that he shall serve as a clear lesson and a preventive warning to others.

...any tribe, party, or association that has been proven to collaborate with the Crusaders and their apostate lackeys-by God, we will target them just like we target the Crusaders, we will eradicate them and disperse them to the winds.

### *The Zarqawi "War" Against Shi'ites*

Zarqawi is scarcely the only Sunni Islamist extremist to denounce Shi'ites for betraying Iraq and fighting "dirty wars," and the previous chapters have traced a broad pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines and provoke a more intense civil war. Most Sunni Islamist groups have, however, generally avoided open attacks on Shi'ites and other sects.

Zarqawi has gone further in ways that may have alienated as many Iraqis as it intimidated and produced a serious backlash among some of his supporters. His September 2005 statement ended with a declaration of "total war" against Iraq's Shi'ites:<sup>446</sup>

This is a call to all the Sunnis in Iraq: Awaken from your slumber, and arise from your apathy. You have slept for a long time. The wheels of the war to annihilate the Sunnis have not and will not halt. It will reach the homes of each and every one of you, unless Allah decides otherwise. If you do not join the mujahedeen to defend your religion and honor, by Allah, sorrow and regret will be your lot, but only after all is lost.

Based on all that I have mentioned, and after the world has come to know the truth about this battle and the identity of its true target, the Al-Qa'ida organization in the Land of the Two Rivers has decided: First, since the government of the descendant of Ibn Al-'Alqami and the servant of the Cross, Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari, has declared a total war against the Sunnis in Tel'afar, Ramadi, Al-Qaim, Samarra, and Al-Rawa, under the pretext of restoring rights and eliminating the terrorists, the organization has decided to declare a total war against the Rafidite Shi'ites throughout Iraq, wherever they may be....

This provoked a major reaction. Immediately following the release of the statement, Shi'ite leaders and journalists called upon Iraqi Sunnis to condemn Zarqawi's declaration. One of them, Abdulhadi al-Darraj, a representative of Muqtada al-Sadr, insisted that the Sunni Muslim Clerics Association "issue a fatwa (religious edict) forbidding Muslims from joining these groups that deem others infidels."<sup>447</sup>

Sunni responses to Zarqawi's declaration of war against the Shia were mixed, but largely negative. Some leaders did accept Darraj's call for a Sunni rejection of Zarqawi. The Association of Muslim Scholars [AMS] in Iraq called on Zarqawi to renounce violence against Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq who were involved in the political process, saying: "Al-Zarqawi must retract his threats because they hurt jihad and would cause the shedding of the blood of more innocent Iraqis."<sup>448</sup> The Muslim Clerics Association also urged Zarqawi to retract his statement. The most surprising response came from a gathering of members of the Salafi Higher Committee for Da'wah, Guidance, and Fatwa, who rejected Zarqawi's declaration as "unacceptable" and said the spilling of Muslim blood was religiously forbidden.<sup>449</sup>

Zarqawi reacted to these calls by retracting part of his earlier statement. On September 19, 2005, he issued another statement as a follow-up to his declaration of war, saying: "It has become known to our group that some sects, such as the Sadr group...and others, have not taken part in the massacres and not helped the occupier.... So we have decided not to hurt these groups in any way, as long as they do not strike us."<sup>450</sup> But Zarqawi accused six Shi'ite and Kurdish groups (Al-Dawa Party, The Higher Revolutionary Party, National Conference Party, Al-Wifaq Party, Kurdistan Democratic Party, and Kurdistan United National Party) of helping the US occupation forces and said attacks against them would continue.<sup>451</sup>



### ***“Overkill” Against Fellow Muslims and the “Iraqization” of Al Qa’ida***

Zarqawi’s retraction was seen by some as a sign of a rupture between his group and other insurgents. In the summer of 2005, a statement allegedly written by Zarqawi revealed a strained relationship with the militant Islamist preacher (and former cellmate of Zarqawi’s) Islam Mohammed al-Barqawi. Zarqawi had long been identified with Al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, and often referred to him as his ‘sheik’ and spiritual guide.<sup>452</sup>

In an interview with Al Jazeera television in July, Al-Barqawi admonished Zarqawi, saying suicide bombings in Iraq had resulted in the deaths of too many Iraqis and that the militants should not target Shi’ite Muslims.<sup>453</sup> Zarqawi’s statement was a direct response to al-Barqawi’s interview. In it, he questioned al-Barqawi’s statements and implored the preacher to not ‘turn against the Mujahedeen.’<sup>454</sup>

If authentic, the posting seems likely to confirm what Zarqawi’s letter to Bin Laden suggested: that the font of support Zarqawi expected to come forth in Iraq and the Middle East has yet to materialize on the scale he envisioned. Moreover, the posting against Barqawi and the partial retraction of the declaration of war against Shi’ites suggests that Al Qa’ida in Iraq’s leadership is sensitive to Muslim public opinion. New York University professor of Islamic Studies Bernard Haykel believes Zarqawi’s war on Shi’ites is deeply unpopular in some quarters of his own movement and is contributing to a schism within the jihadi movement.<sup>455</sup>

Further evidence appeared in October 2005 when the US government published a letter purported to be from Ayman Al Zawahiri to Zarqawi. In the letter, dated July 9, 2005, Zawahiri asks for news from Iraq and urges Zarqawi’s organization to think about their long-term strategic objectives. Calling the struggle in Iraq “the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era,” Zawahiri writes:<sup>456</sup>

...we must think for a long time about our next steps and how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals:

The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or amirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate-over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraq, i.e. in Sunni areas, is in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exist and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void, whether those whom the Americans will leave behind them, or those among the un-Islamic forces who will try to jump at taking power...

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.

After having outlined the four stages of the conflict, Zawahiri addressed the group’s level of popular support. Zawahiri said the organization’s goals “will not be accomplished by the mujahed movement while it is cut off from public support.” Moreover, maintaining and increasing public support was “a decisive factor between victory and defeat,” in the absence of which the Islamic mujahed movement would be “crushed in the shadows” and the struggle between the Jihadist elite and the authorities “confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day.” Zawahiri urged Zarqawi to avoid any action that Iraqis did not understand or approve and to involve them in his planning by “bring[ing] the mujahed movement to the masses and not conduct[ing] the struggle far from them.”<sup>457</sup>

Zawahiri also warned that the scenes of slaughter emerging from Iraq were having a damaging effect on the wider jihadi movement. He warned Zarqawi, “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...[W]e are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma.”<sup>458</sup>

He also said the following about targeting Shi'ites:

...many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques...My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.

Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahedeen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shia at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable? Or, is it something can be put off until the force of the mujahed movement in Iraq gets stronger? And if some of the operations were necessary for self-defense, were all of the operations necessary? Or, were there some operations that weren't called for? And is the opening of another front now in addition to the front against Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shia lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shia, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar? And if the attacks on Shia leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shia? Won't this lead to reinforcing false ideas in their minds, even as it is incumbent on us to preach the call of Islam to them and explain and communicate to guide them to the truth? And can the mujahedeen kill all of the Shia in Iraq? Has any Islamic state in history ever tried that? And why kill ordinary Shia considering that they are forgiven because of their ignorance? ....And do the brothers forget that both we and the Iranians need to refrain from harming each other at this time in which the Americans are targeting us?

Zawahiri's final theme in his thirteen-page letter was the issue of political versus military action. Zawahiri stressed the need for Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action” and suggests that in addition to force, “there be an appeasement of Muslims and a sharing with them in governance.” Once more, Zawahiri cautioned the Al Qa'ida in Iraq leader about the use of excessively violent acts saying they risked alienating the Muslim masses, whose enthusiasm is critical to the overall success of the enterprise.

The letter, which seems to reflect the strategic perspective of the broader Al Qa'ida leadership, was the clearest blueprint of Al Qa'ida's plans for Iraq yet. Less than a week after the US released the letter, however, Al Qa'ida in Iraq issued a statement on an Islamist website rejecting the letter's authenticity. Their statement read: “We in Al Qa'ida Organization announce that there is no truth to these claims, which are only based on the imagination of the politicians of the Black [i.e. White] House and their slaves.”<sup>459</sup>

As with most other Al Qa'ida statements though, US experts were divided over the authenticity of the letter. The Congressional Research Service's Kenneth Katzman said the letter contained elements that raised doubts about its authenticity: “The purported letter has Zawahiri admitting to certain things that it's not realistic for him to admit, because he would know there's a potential this letter might be intercepted.” Others, like Mike Scheuer, a retired CIA analyst, disagreed and said the letter was most likely authentic.<sup>460</sup>

Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia's media response following the November 9 bombings in Amman (discussed below) was unusual in that the group issued three statements relatively quickly. One frequent commentator to a jihadi website complained Al Qa'ida had been too hasty in issuing the statements, including the claim of responsibility, alerting Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Criticism of Zarqawi's attack was also apparent on other Internet jihadi websites. Postings on websites showed that the killing of "innocent Muslims" upset Zarqawi's traditional base of supporters and sympathizers. Many criticized the selection of the target, the timing of the attack as well as the means of the attack. Some even urged the Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia leader to abandon any future military operations that might harm Muslims. One such posting by a writer calling himself "Al-Murshid" or "the guide" read:<sup>461</sup>

This is both a (religious) task and a pragmatic tactic...Acts where many innocent Muslims lose their lives make us lose a lot of popular support...The death of the innocent Muslims in this attack...was a fact that lived with each Jordanian. Now people say al-Qaeda kills innocent Muslims.

The backlash against Zarqawi's group in the aftermath of the Amman bombings and the declaration of war against Shi'ites point to an on-going and not yet resolved internal dispute among the jihadists as to their tactics, specifically whether or not the group should target civilians and/or fellow Muslims. The end result so far seems to be that al-Qaeda in Iraq has had to downplay Zarqawi's role, put an Iraqi "Emir" in his place as at least the official leader, and seek to make al-Qaeda seem to be a more Iraqi and less Shi'ite organization. How real such efforts are is a different issue.

The Mujahedeen Shura, created in January 2006, which combined al-Qaeda in Iraq with five other insurgent groups, appointed an Iraqi named Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi as its head. In the months that followed, it curtailed its claims of attacks against Iraqi civilians and cooled its rhetoric against Shi'ites.<sup>462</sup>

Again, experts and analysts differed over whether to interpret this as a shift in tactics or a change in strategy. Some U.S. officials acknowledged that there was no way to tell whether this council, or its leaders such as al-Baghdadi, even exist. One intelligence analyst indicated that it was simply the latest piece of propaganda by al-Qaeda: "It's a shift in tactics, not a real change."<sup>463</sup>

Others, such as Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at RAND, suggested that the organization and its affiliates were real, but cast doubt on the assertion by Zarqawi that he had abdicated control of al-Qaeda in Iraq.<sup>464</sup>

### ***Zarqawi and Syria***

Experts differ in opinion as to how much of Zarqawi's operations have taken place in Syria and with Syrian backing. There are reports that Zarqawi and top lieutenants met in Syria in the spring of 2005, but these have yet to be confirmed by US officials. In fact, US intelligence assessments expressed doubt in June 2005 that Zarqawi had crossed into Syria earlier in the year, stating that such an event was inconsistent with Syria's, and Zarqawi's, pattern of behavior. US, British, and Iraqi experts do believe, however, that a substantial number of recruits pass through Syria, and with Syrian tolerance or deliberate indifference – if not active support.<sup>465</sup>

### ***Expanding the Battle: Operations Outside Iraq***

It is too early to generalize about Zarqawi's influence outside Iraq, but he has orchestrated a number of attacks in Jordan, and has discussed broadening his operations to include other Arab and Islamic countries.

In some ways, this may be more a matter of personal ambition and a pre-Iraq war agenda than a real effort to broaden the war. Zarqawi is a Jordanian who served a seven-year sentence for efforts to overthrow the Jordanian government, and began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. Attacks against Jordanian targets in recent years have included:<sup>466</sup>

- January 17, 1998: Masked men raid a dinner party at the hillside mansion of wealthy Iraqi businessmen in Amman, slitting the throats of a top Baghdad diplomat and seven other people.
- March 28, 1998: A crude bomb explodes in an elite English-language school in Amman in what one senior government official calls an apparent attempt to instigate attacks against Americans. The explosion shatters windows but causes no injuries.
- October 28, 2002: An American diplomat, Laurence Foley, is assassinated in front of his house in Amman, gunned down in the first such attack on a US diplomat in decades.
- August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, including two children. More than 50 people are wounded.
- August 19, 2005: Attackers fire at least three rockets from the hills above the Jordanian port city of Aqaba, with one narrowly missing a US Navy ship docked in the port and another hitting a taxis outside an airport in nearby Israel. A Jordanian soldier is killed.

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq. There are indications that Zarqawi's group began planning and attempting attacks outside Iraq in late 2003. It is clear that one major attempt did occur in the spring of 2004. Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004. Jordanian officials said they had halted an attack using three trucks loaded with 20 tons of explosives and chemicals. The three trucks were halted in Irbid, and Jordanian sources claimed they could have killed 80,000 people and wounded 160,000 others within a two square kilometer area. The cell was one of two cells in place, and its members had a variety of forged Jordanian, Syrian and other Arab passports

Zarqawi acknowledged the attempt in an audiotape circulated on April 30, 2004, but denied any effort to use chemical weapons. The tape made available on an Islamist website said his goal was to "totally destroy the building of the Jordanian intelligence services" with "raw materials which are sold on the market...The Jordanian security services have lied in claiming to have foiled a plan to kill innocent Muslims."<sup>467</sup>

He accused Jordan of "creating an outcry and presenting the Jordanian people as a victim targeted at the hands of terrorism ... in order to hide the sordid face of the Jordanian intelligence services..." and of the "evil Jordanian services" of "fabricating (the affair) of the chemical bomb." Zarqawi went on to say "If we had such a bomb -- and we ask God that we have such a bomb soon -- we would not hesitate for a moment to strike Israeli towns, such as Eilat, Tel Aviv and others...We have scores to settle with this (Jordanian) government which will turn children's hair white."

Some sources say Zarqawi halted further attack attempts after that time. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005.<sup>468</sup>

Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, however, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Jordan has for years been considered a safe place, nestled between the ongoing violence of the *intifida* in the Palestinian territories and, more recently, the insurgency in Iraq. In recent years,

however, this has begun to change. According to experts like Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group, "[Jordan] was always a fragile oasis...It was only a matter of time before somebody got through."

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi's organization struck three US owned hotels in Amman. Neither the attack nor the targets should have come as a surprise to Jordanian officials however. Zarqawi had previously attempted to blow up western hotels in Amman-including the Radisson SAS-as part of millennium celebrations in late 1999. That attack, however, was thwarted by Jordanian intelligence and Zarqawi later fled to Afghanistan.<sup>469</sup>

The November 9 bombings at the Radisson SAS, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels killed at least 60 people and wounded more than a hundred others. The bombers-all Iraqis-deliberately targeted Jordanians-including a Jordanian-Palestinian wedding party. Four Palestinian officials, including Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security, as well as other foreigners, were also among the casualties.

The first bombing occurred shortly before 9 p.m. inside the Philadelphia ballroom of the Radisson hotel. Right before detonating his 22-pound explosive packed belt, the bomber and the apparent leader of the cell, Ali Hussein Ali al-Shamari, jumped onto a table. The explosion brought parts of the ceiling down onto the more than 300 wedding guests assembled in the ballroom and sprayed ball bearings contained inside the vest across the room.

Moments after the first bombing, 23 year-old Rawad Jassem Mohammed detonated his bomb in the coffee shop of the Grand Hyatt. Seconds later, the third bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, also 23, detonated his explosives outside the Days Inn hotel. Jordanian officials believe that, like Mohammed, Ali planned to detonate the bomb inside the coffee shop. But after a suspicious waiter called security, Ali fled. Once outside the hotel, he knelt on the ground and detonated his explosives, killing three members of a nearby Chinese military delegation.<sup>470</sup>

Immediately following the attack, rumors began circulating that there had been a fourth bomber and that a husband and wife had carried out one of the attacks. On November 13, the alleged fourth bomber and wife of the ringleader-Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi appeared in a video confession on Jordanian television. Rishawi said her husband had pushed her out of the Radisson ballroom after her own bomb failed to detonate and that she had then fled the scene in a taxi. Her whereabouts for the three days between the attacks and her capture by Jordanian police have not yet been confirmed. Jordanian officials say she went to her sister's husband's family in the nearby city of Salt, but witnesses claim to have seen her in the Tlaa' Ali neighborhood of Amman where one of the cell's safe houses was located.<sup>471</sup>

From Rishawi's televised statement, we know that much of the attack was assembled outside of Jordan. Shamari and his wife, both natives of Anbar province, left Iraq on November 5. The couple were picked up by two men in a white car and driven across the border, apparently using fake passports under the name of Ali Hussein Ali and Sajida Abdel Kader Latef to enter Jordan. The explosive belts used in the bombings appear to have entered the country with them.

Two days later, on November 7, the group rented an apartment in the Tlaa' Ali neighborhood of Amman. The apartment, located in an area with a large Iraqi community, was one of at least two safe houses the cell used before the attack. On the evening of the 9 the bombers took taxis to their targets, which according to Rishawi, had been selected in advance.

There are clear links between Zarqawi's group and the attack in Jordan. At least two of the bombers - Ali Hussein Ali Shamari and his wife - seem to have been part of Zarqawi's operation

in Fallujah. Three of Rishawi's brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq.<sup>472</sup> One, Samir Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi was Zarqawi's top lieutenant in Anbar province and was killed by a US strike on his pickup truck during operations in Fallujah in 2004. According to the US military, another bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, may have been in their custody briefly in 2004. The US military said it detained an Iraqi with the same name as Ali in November 2004 but released him after two weeks because they lacked grounds to hold him. As of this writing, US officials are unsure if the Ali they had in their custody was the same one who struck the Days Inn hotel on November 9.

Although all four bombers were Iraqi nationals, it is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the November 9 attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to Salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan.

Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis. Perhaps the strongest evidence of a Jordanian connection comes from the city of Salt, 17 miles northeast of Amman. As already mentioned, many reports say Rishawi fled to the home of her brother-in-law's family there after the bombings.

Sometime in 2002 or 2003, Rishawi's sister Fatima married Nidal Arabiyat, a 30-year-old unemployed Jordanian from Salt who had joined the Salafi jihadi network several years earlier. Arabiyat had joined Raed Khreisat, a religious leader, in the late 1990s and gone to train with the Kurdish Islamic group, Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq. After American forces invaded Iraq in 2003, Arabiyat joined forces with Zarqawi.

When Arabiyat was killed fighting US forces in Iraq, it was Rishawi's husband, Shamari, who called Arabiyat's family in Salt to tell them he had become a martyr.<sup>473</sup> The Rishawi-Arabyat link, although fascinating is hardly unusual. Strong tribal and family ties exist between Jordanians and Iraqis. Locals say at least 30 men from Salt have died in Iraq fighting the Americans.<sup>474</sup> Many are connected by more than family ties or loyalty to their clan; they are motivated by a shared belief in Salafi Jihadism.

The Jordanian reaction to the November 9 bombings was notably different from past reactions to Zarqawi attacks. In the days following the triple bombing, tens of thousands of Jordanians marched against Zarqawi and pledged their allegiance to King Abdullah. Jordanians seem to have been shocked by the knowledge that Zarqawi, a fellow Jordanian, deliberately sought out Jordanian targets and Jordanian victims. Even Zarqawi's own Khalayleh clan joined the public backlash, taking out ads in the country's leading newspapers denouncing their infamous relative and pledging to remove any tribal protection he may have been benefiting from.<sup>475</sup> For his part, Zarqawi responded to the public backlash by releasing an audiotape on November 18. Earlier statements from Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia had alerted Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Zarqawi's 26-minute November 18 statement began:<sup>476</sup>

All the world has heard the noise made by the Jordanian Government that the Jordanians are the victims of terrorism and that those terrorists like to shed blood, all this came after three lions have left their lair in Baghdad making their way to the center of Amman to target three hideouts of the crusaders and the Jews.

The Qa'ida has made the blessed step for the coming reasons:

1. The Jordanian government has announced its infidelity and clearly battled against God.

2. The Jordanian army has become the guard of the borders of the Israeli borders, they have banned the Mujahedeen from breaking into the depth of the blessed lands to fight the (brothers of the monkeys and the pigs). How many of the Mujahedeen [have been] killed by a bullet in the back from the Jordanian soldiers securing the borders?
3. The Jordanian government has spread vice and corruption. The state has become like a swamp of pornography-the hotels and the refreshment resorts are widely spread on Aqaba and the Dead Sea-we feel pity [for] the harm caused by this corrupted family of both its men and women.
4. This state has permitted the Zionist enemy to infiltrate in the Jordanian society socially, economically, and politically. The best ever example given is the Hassan industrial city, where all the capitals are in the hands of the Jews.
5. The American's secret prisons in Jordan, working under the supervision of the American intelligence itself, said that there are tens of Mujahedeen in them, going under all different colors of torture done [at] the hands of the Jordanian intelligence members. The Los Angeles Times newspaper has mentioned earlier that the best ally for the CIA in the region now is the Jordanian intelligence, and that part of the CIA budget goes to train the members of the Jordanian intelligence members in Amman.
6. Concerning Iraq, Jordan has become the rear base for the Americans in their war against the Islamic nation, the American airplanes flies from the Jordanian lands to attack the Mujahedeen, and lest we forget the army of translators (the Infidels). The fleet of vehicles that supplies the American army with food supplies were all driven by the Jordanians.

A message to the Moslem people in Jordan, we assure you that we are the earnest ones about your safety, we know that you were the prey of the criminal regime, they have lied when they say that you become the victims of the Mujahedeen, it is a lie.

Zarqawi continued:

We have targeted these hotels after two months of surveillance and basing on information collected from inside and outside the hotels from our trusty sources.

The Radisson Hotel was the gathering point of the Israeli tourists and intelligence members, also the Day's Inn hotel. It is also the residence of all the Israeli embassy employees.

The Hayat Amman [sic. Grand Hyatt] is the centre of the American, Israeli and the Iraqi intelligence. The Israeli spy Azzam Azzam was meeting the Mosad members in the Hayat Amman hotel...it is a lie that the martyr has blown up himself in the middle of the wedding crowds...

The government that was able all these years to double cross people that they are enemies of the Zionists can convert the truth easily, we ask God's mercy for all Moslems killed in this operation, as they were not the target, the martyrs have targeted the hall that had the meeting of the intelligence officers, the killing was due to collapsing of the secondary ceiling, it was not done with intention.

...the brother of the groom has said according to the Quds press, it was unlikely that the blast was due to a suicide attack, as there were no signs of something wrong going [on].

He also added that the ceiling has fallen with all components, cement, iron bars and the decoration, on the heads of the wedding attendees, the dust has covered all over the place ... he think[s] the cause was a bomb planted in the ceiling as there was no fire.

The two other hotels were embracing [a] number of American and Jewish figures. The brothers have succeeded in knowing the place and time of their meeting, after frequent surveillance for the place, so the brothers knew for sure their targets.

Zarqawi justified the attack by claiming that Israeli and American secret agents had been meeting at the three hotels. Zarqawi also repeatedly asserted that Jordanians had not been the targets. Near the end of his statement, he threatened King Abdullah, stating: "Your star is fading.

You will not escape your fate, you descendant of traitors. We will be able to reach your head and chop it off...”<sup>477</sup>

Some experts believe the November 9 triple bombings in Amman may have been the first example of Zarqawi coming through on his pledge to spread jihad outside Iraq. In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning more out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt—against foreigners and Americans.

Jabr also claimed that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. As proof, he offered several passports the ministry had seized in recent months. Among the nationalities represented were the countries most often associated with foreign fighters in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Algeria. But also seized were passports from France, South Africa, Azerbaijan, India and Pakistan.<sup>478</sup>

It is too early to say whether the Amman bombings signal Zarqawi is widening the jihad and taking the Iraqi insurgency abroad. Rather than see Iraq as spilling over into other countries, or as some kind of magnet for terrorism, it is wise to consider Zarqawi's history, and the fact his attacks on Jordan may be more a logical extension of his personal history and connection to that country.

### ***Zarqawi and “Weapons of Mass Media”***

The various Islamist extremist groups have been highly effective at striking at targets in ways that achieve high media and political impact, particularly in the form of suicide bombings and beheadings.<sup>479</sup> These attacks have been “weapons of mass media” when they have struck against Coalition targets, and this has led some to see such militant groups as successful manipulators of Arab and Western media outlets, able to tailor their attacks for maximum media coverage and psychological effect. As work by the Crisis Group has shown, they have also made effective use of the Internet, showing a steadily increasing sophistication in using it as a method of communicating and seeking Iraqi and outside support.<sup>480</sup>

At the same time, Zarqawi's extremism has sometimes backfired when directed against fellow Muslims, just as it did in declaring war on Shi'ites. In the summer of 2005, for example, Zarqawi's group attacked several Muslim diplomats in an effort to stymie relations between the new Iraqi government and foreign governments. Egypt's Ihab Sherif, tapped to become the first Arab ambassador to Iraq, was kidnapped and then killed by the Jordanian terrorist's Al Qaeda movement.

An Internet statement released by the group suggested that he might have been beheaded and stated that he had been killed for Egypt's recognition of the Iraqi government, for the country's fostering of disbelief in Islam, for ‘waging war against Muslims’ by cracking down on Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, and by sending an ambassador to Iraq at US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's bidding.<sup>481</sup>

Soon afterwards, Zarqawi's group targeted Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Younis Khan and Bahraini charges d'affaires Hassan Malallah Ansari. In separate attacks, both Khan's and Ansari's convoys were hit with gunfire in what were described as attempted kidnappings. Ansari suffered a minor gunshot wound and Pakistan quickly relocated Khan to Jordan. Not long after, two of Algeria's diplomats to the new Iraqi government was kidnapped in Baghdad and later killed.



The resulting coverage in Iraqi and Arab media was anything but favorable, and may help explain why jihadist websites often list complaints detailing a lack of press coverage for some of their attacks, and about media criticism.<sup>482</sup>

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Iraq group severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station in June 2005 for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had "sided" with the US over Iraq. Similarly, in January of 2006, Zarqawi posted an audio clip on an Islamist website denouncing those countries that had met at an Arab League summit in November to address Iraqi political reconciliation as "agents" of the U.S. and guilty of "destroying Iraq."<sup>483</sup>

Zarqawi has also had to issue "retractions" or "clarifications" after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of "total war" on Shi'ites (discussed above) received a very cool response from the larger jihadi community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Many Sunnis rejected Zarqawi's declaration and Al Qa'ida's Zawahiri warned attacks on Shi'ites would hurt the group's level of popular support. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman (also discussed above).

The backlash to this declaration from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Instead, Zarqawi claimed Israeli and American intelligence officials meeting in the hotels were the real targets. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may be on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.

Such developments may have helped lead Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia group to start an online Internet magazine entitled *Zurwat al Sanam*, in an effort to wage a more effective propaganda and recruiting campaign. Other insurgent groups on the Web have mirrored this effort, and some analysts believe that it is a defensive tactic to counter the perceived inroads made by the January 30<sup>th</sup> elections and the capture of important terrorist lieutenants in the months that followed.<sup>484</sup>

### ***Other Sunni Arab Insurgent Groups: The "Nationalists?"***

At the beginning of the insurgency, Coalition forces tended to refer to Iraq's more mainstream insurgents as "former regime loyalists" (FRLs), or "former regime elements (FREs). As the insurgency has evolved, so did the terminology used to describe it, and these terms fell out of favor with analysts as time progressed. At the same time, Iraq's Arab Sunnis are only beginning to forge new political identities out of the power vacuum left by Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and a number of analysts feel that they have either tended to become more Islamist or to move towards possible accommodation with the new government.

While most of Iraq's ruling elite during Saddam Hussein's decades of dictatorship was Sunni, the top elite came from a small portion of Sunnis, many with family backgrounds in what were originally rural military families. The top elite had strong ties not only to Saddam's extended family, but to Tikritis in general, and the al-Bu Nasir tribe and its Bejat clan and Majid family.<sup>485</sup> The vast majority of Sunnis got little special benefit from Saddam's rule, and many Sunnis suffered from his oppression in the same way as other Iraqis.

### ***Planning Before, During, and Immediately After the War?***

It is uncertain if Saddam's regime took effective action to create such groups before, during, or immediately after the war. There has been little unclassified intelligence on what the Coalition

and Iraqi government has learned about such groups since the insurgency gathered momentum in 2003. However, the bulk of the evidence seems to indicate that any such planning was largely ineffective, except for the creation of large weapons caches designed to support the largely non-existent Popular Army and service operations by the Fedayeen. These efforts may have eased the rise of the insurgency after the war, but the remnants of Saddam's regime were slow to organize, many leaders were quickly captured, and many of those who joined the insurgency were more pro-Sunni and/or pro-Ba'ath than pro-Saddam.

An analyst with the Crisis Group conducted interviews with Ba'athists and officers of the former security apparatus (including Special security) in Baghdad, Tikrit, Bayji and Mosul and found that,<sup>486</sup>

There is no evidence that Saddam designed a guerrilla strategy in anticipation of military defeat. Indeed, the period immediately following the overthrow of the Baathist regime was remarkably calm; U.S. forces, in effect, suddenly found themselves without an enemy... The fallen regime's power structures collapsed almost instantaneously, laying bare the extent to which Saddam Hussein's authority – including over his own security apparatus – relied on coercion rather than loyalty. Senior Baath party members as well as army and intelligence officers initially were at a loss, facing both an uncertain future and a population that, in its vast majority, appeared willing to give the United States a chance. Far from preparing a collective comeback, these so-called Saddamists above all were preoccupied with personal survival.

...Elements of the former regime, some Shi'ites included...soon helped set up small cells of fighters. But this was not planned ahead of time and reflected neither a desire to restore the past nor ideological attachment to Baathism; rather, these cells developed gradually, initially drawing individuals angered by dim prospects, resentful of the occupation and its indignities, and building on pre-existing party, professional, tribal, familial or geographic—including neighbourhood—networks.

...Former regime officials were, of course, ideal candidates and soon became the vanguard of the armed opposition, combining as they did idleness, relevant military and intelligence skills as well as knowledge of the whereabouts of vast weapons stockpiles and relatively scarcer cash reserves concealed by the regime in anticipation of the projected defence of Baghdad...Former hierarchical structures in the Baath party or the army helped structure what initially were amorphous cells...But for the most part this had little to do with Baathist loyalty; from the outset, the armed opposition's discourse build on patriotic and religious themes at the expense of a largely discredited ideology.

Even at an early stage, when foreign fighters in all likelihood played a negligible part in day-to-day operations, the upsurge in attacks during the month of Ramadan in 2003 (27 October-25 November) illustrates the extent to which the struggle was framed as a religious duty...A handful of groups claimed to be acting on behalf of the Baath, but they quickly were put on the defensive, having to account for the former regime's perversion of Baathism...its crimes...and the 2003 debacle...While some fighters probably still looked upon Saddam Hussein as a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance...virtually all armed groups dissociated themselves from the former president...and some openly denounced him.

...Nor is there persuasive backing for the view that the current battle is but the extension of a global *jihadi* war. Most analysts now concur that the Baathist regime did not entertain relations with al-Qa'ida and foreign volunteers invited by Saddam to die in his defence had nothing to do with Osama bin Laden's organization.

...The impact of foreign *jihadis* grew over time, but during the early stages of the insurgency it appears to have been negligible and al-Qa'ida in particular remained absent, claiming none of the spectacular attacks orchestrated in 2003...Suicide missions only appeared well into the occupation.

...In short, resort to static explanations of the insurgency tends both to misjudge what in fact has been a dynamic, evolving phenomenon and, importantly, to downplay the role played in its emergence and subsequent development by specific U.S. policies and practices.

Such reports may, however, understate the level of organization involved. Some US intelligence experts did say on background before the invasion that Saddam's regime and intelligence and security services were organizing for a post invasion resistance. The broad dispersal of weapons

and arms in much of Iraq may have been designed to support such activities, and a relatively sophisticated operation did develop by mid to late-2003 that included individuals with ties to senior Ba'athists who were operating in Syria as well as Iraq.

### ***The Motives of the More “Nationalist” Insurgents***

What is clear is that the insurgent elements with ties to the former regime, and/or which are more secular or nationalist in character, have become less active than the more religious and extremist insurgents, and have done much less to seek publicity through tools like the Internet. Yet, such insurgents may have considerably more support and sympathy from Iraqi Sunnis as a whole than the Islamists.

Public opinion polls and other sources about Iraqi Sunni attitudes, give several indications about those Sunnis who say they support attacks on Coalition forces. Most Sunni Arabs clearly do want rights and privileges for Sunnis, but they also tend to be nationalists in the sense they consistently favor a strong, unified Iraqi state.

This has been clear from public opinion polls in Sunni areas since mid-2003, and Arab Sunnis have opposed the idea of splitting Iraq into federations since it became an issue in mid-2005. Like Iraq's Arab Shi'ites, polls also show that Iraqi Sunnis are generally religious and see Islam as a key aspect of their lives, but do not favor a theocratic state.

At the same time, Arab Sunnis show far more general support for violence against the Coalition. Surveys in mid-2003 found that some 37% of Sunnis supported violence against Coalition forces. A poll conducted by the Coalition in summer 2005 indicated that nearly 45 percent of the population supported the insurgent attacks.<sup>487</sup>

The overall motives of Arab Sunnis are complex, however, and it seems almost certain that this is true of many who participate in the insurgency or support it. While polling efforts in Iraq face many obstacles and their results remain uncertain, a poll conducted in January 2006 provides results that tracked closely with other major polls and can provide useful insights. The poll found that 83% of Arab Sunnis did not feel Saddam should have been ousted, and 93% of Iraqi Arab Sunnis thought that Iraq was moving in the wrong direction.<sup>488</sup> Some 88% of Arab Sunnis approved of attacks on US led forces.<sup>489</sup> A total of 83% wanted the US to leave Iraq in six months.

At the same time, only 7% of Iraqis approved attacks on Iraqi forces and 93% disapproved. Even among Sunnis, only 24% “approved somewhat,” and 76% disapproved, of which 24% disapproved strongly. When it came to attacks on Iraqi civilians, 99% disapproved. So few Sunnis approved that the results were not meaningful; nearly 100% disapproved, of which 95% disapproved strongly.<sup>490</sup>

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

US analysts acknowledge that Ba'athist and ex-regime loyalists represent only a part of the insurgency – but some feel they have played a key role in leadership, organization, and financing and feel they remain a key force among newly radicalized Iraqi Sunnis.

According to the CIA reports, the Sunni loss of power, prestige, and economic influence has been a key motivating factor, as is unemployment and a loss of personal status -- direct and disguised unemployment among young Sunni men has been 40-60% in many areas ever since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Many insurgents are motivated by tribal or family grievances, nationalism and religious duty. Others are motivated by the U.S. occupation – particularly those

who have lost a loved one fighting U.S. forces – and the political and economic turmoil that accompanied the occupation.<sup>491</sup>

This does not mean that ex-Ba'athists do not play a role. The Ba'ath Party did not dissolve when the CPA formally abolished it in May 2003. It reorganized with a new structure, established a new politburo in 2004, and at least some elements operated from a de facto sanctuary in Syria.<sup>492</sup> At the same time, many full-time and part-time Iraqi groups associated with the Ba'ath are linked more by tribe, family, and locality than any sense of Ba'ath political identity.

It is unclear how much influence various “Ba'athist” groups now have. However, US and Iraqi Interim Government officials – such as the MNF commander General Casey and Iraqi Defense Minister Hazan Shaalan – have said they believe that Ba'ath leaders in Syria coordinate with at least some of the Ba'ath sympathizers in Iraq. The office of the Iraqi Prime Minister called for the arrest of six senior members of the former regime in March 2005.<sup>493</sup>

- Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri: Believed to be the leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party. (He died on November 10, 2005.)
- Muhammed Younis al-Ahmad: financial facilitator and operational leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party.
- Rashid Ta'an Kazim: Central Ba'ath Party Regional Chairman in Al Anbar Province.
- Abd Al-Baqi Abd Al-Karim Al-Abdallah Al-Sa'adun: Recruiter and financier of terrorist activity in eastern and central Iraq.
- Aham Hasan Kaka al-Ubaydi: A former intelligence officer, and now associated with Ansar Al Islam.
- Fadhi Ibrahim Mahmud Mashadani (aka Abu Huda): Top member of the New Ba'ath Party and a key financier of insurgent and terrorist activity.

Field leaders reportedly include Mohammed Younis al-Ahmad, a former aide to Saddam Hussein, and Ibrahim Sabawi, Hussein's half brother and a former security director. They also benefit from the fact that some elements of the leadership of the Iraqi 5<sup>th</sup> Corps are still in Mosul, and Syria has provided a covert sanctuary for at least some Iraq Ba'athist leaders.<sup>494</sup>

It seems likely that the remaining Ba'athist elements in the insurgency can benefit from the fact that they still have access to some of the former regime's money. They do seem to have since steadily tightened their organization and purged suspect members. According to one report, they held a major meeting at Al Hasaka in April or May of 2004 to tighten their structure. This does not mean, however, that they would not be greatly overshadowed by Islamist groups if Iraq were driven into full-scale civil war. It is the Islamists who get the publicity, drive the more visible fighting and have developed the best propaganda efforts.

### ***Other “Nationalist” Sunni Insurgents***

Furthermore, it seems likely that most of the less extreme or “nationalist” Iraqi-dominated Sunni insurgent groups now have a significant degree of independence from the former Ba'ath leadership. Despite this, it is clear that many cooperate in at least some operations, and that many of the elements with some ties to ex-supporters of Saddam's regime have some degree of central leadership and coordination.

US experts talk of informal networks that, using tools like the Internet, coordinate operations and exchange data on tactics, targets, and operations. There is evidence of such exchanges between cells in Iraq and outside groups including those in Syria and Afghanistan. Insurgent groups also

use the media to get near-real-time information on what other groups and cells are doing and to find out what tactics produce the maximum political and media impact.

Nevertheless, many of the Sunni insurgent groups or cells that do not have ties to extremist groups or former Ba'ath rulers can get money or some degree of leadership from the Ba'athist structures that have emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein. It is generally misleading to call them "former regime loyalists (FRLs)" or "former regime" elements (FREs). They are rather Sunni nationalists involved in a struggle for current power. This has allowed the insurgency to broaden its base and establish ties to Islamic groups as well.

### ***The Search for Power and the Possibility of Dialogue***

The relative impact of the "nationalist" Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups and the smaller Islamic extremist groups is uncertain. In some cases, MNF-I and US officials see evidence that secular Sunni groups, and even Hussein loyalists, were cooperating with extreme Islamists. In Mosul, Ba'athists worked with Salafists to attack American troops and derail the election process.<sup>495</sup>

While the two groups have conflicting visions and aspirations for Iraq's future – and sometimes feud or even kill each other -- their short-term goals are largely the same: instability and insecurity, breaking up the new Iraqi government and depriving it of popular legitimacy, keeping Iraqi forces from becoming effective, and driving the US and MNF-I forces out of Iraq.

In September of 2005, Army Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner acknowledged that the Ba'athist insurgency had been surpassed by a terrorist campaign led by Zarqawi's group. Speaking to the Washington Post, Zahner said: "You'll see some of the old regime elements [out] there, mainly just to maintain pressure and, frankly, accountability...But when you look at those individuals central the inflicting of huge amounts of violence, it really is not those folks. The Saddamists, the former regime guys, they're riding this."<sup>496</sup> The view that Al Qaeda in Iraq, not Iraqis loyal to Saddam Hussein (known as "Saddamists"), were becoming the driving element behind the insurgency in the summer and fall of 2005 is, however, controversial.

The "nationalist" Sunni insurgents have also been far more willing and able to acquire leverage in the Iraqi political process. For example, some Sunni Arab nationalist insurgents groups saw the December 15<sup>th</sup> elections as an opportunity to gain power, and called upon their followers to forgo violence on election day while Al Qaeda and its allies called for attacks. This seems to have led to outright clashes between elements of Al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni nationalists in the months leading up to the election, particularly in cities within the Sunni Triangle such as Qaim, Taji, Ramadi, and Yusefiya.

### ***Tensions and Clashes Between Sunni "Nationalists" versus Sunni "Islamic Extremists?"***

Opinions differ as to just how much the different Sunni elements that make up the insurgency are dividing or coalescing. Some analysts suggested in late 2004 and early 2005 that Ba'athists and their former adversaries, such as the Salafists and the Kurds, were finding common cause with foreign fighters.<sup>497</sup> Yet, there were also growing reports of fighting between the more secular and moderate nationalist Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremists.

This fighting has sometimes occurred at the local level where it seemed more a matter of "turf" than ideology. It has also been driven by attacks by fundamentalist groups on local Sheiks and leaders.

As has been discussed earlier, Islamist extremists have increasingly provoked broader resentments. The more moderate and nationalist Sunni groups generally do not approve of mass attacks on civilians and on Iraqi Shi'ites. Many do not approve of attempts to provoke a civil war, or to turn the Iraqi insurgency from a struggle for national power to a broader war for control of Islam. These problems have been compounded by the split over whether Iraqi Sunnis should participate in the government and Iraqi forces, if only to act as a counterweight to the Shi'ites and Kurds and without real support for the new Iraqi political process.

### ***Divisions Over Playing a Role in the Political Process***

Sunni Islamist extremist movements made Iraq's political process a primary target before and after the January 30, 2005 elections. Such insurgents feared that a relatively secure and successful election would cement Shi'ite dominance in Iraq and would signal the demise of both the Islamist and Ba'athist visions for the future of Iraq.

On December 29, 2004, Ansar al-Sunna declared, "All polling stations and those in them will be targets for our brave soldiers."<sup>498</sup> Similarly, the Islamic Army in Iraq warned in mid-January 2005, "Do not allow polling stations in your neighborhood because they put your lives in danger. Do not also interfere with the employees who work in these voting centers, as they will be killed. Keep away from these places as they will be attacked." On January 23, 2005, Zarqawi released an audiotape saying, "We have declared an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology."<sup>499</sup>

The more mainstream Sunni groups, however, seem to have recognized that failing to play a political role effectively deprived the Sunnis of power, provided a "blank" check to other political factions, and meant they had little leverage to block developments they opposed. This experience was reinforced by the debates over the new constitution and the obvious cost to Sunnis of not previously participating in the political process.

Sunni efforts to create a new political identity included both the minority that has participated in the new government and political process, some who had boycotted it, and political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and Iraq Islamic Party. They also included clerical bodies like the Association of Islamic Scholars, which is headed by Dr. Muthanna Harith al-Dhari – an Egyptian educated Islamic scholar—and claims to represent some 6,000 mosques, or 80% of the total.<sup>500</sup>

Iraq's new president and prime minister encouraged their efforts. The search for a Sunni Minister of Defense, a key factor delaying the creation of a new government, examined some 10 candidates before choosing Sadoon al-Dulaimi in early May 2003. The new leaders also resisted the calls of other Shi'ites and Kurds for the systematic purging of all Sunnis with ties to the Ba'ath, including many in the Iraqi forces.<sup>501</sup>

While the details are unclear, the new Iraqi government and the US also attempted to hold a dialogue with the more moderate insurgents. At least one such effort became public. In summer 2005, a former Iraqi electricity minister, Iyham al-Samarri, announced that he had established a sort of communication organization through which the various insurgent groups could convey their views and concerns to both the elected Iraqi government and the Coalition.<sup>502</sup> Al-Samarri had a questionable past and a controversial tenure as electricity minister. Furthermore, it could not be substantiated that al-Samarri had any contact with any insurgents as he claimed. Not long after he asserted this ability to speak on behalf of the insurgents, militant groups criticized him via the Web saying that he did not speak for them and that he was 'spreading lies.'

Nevertheless, an Internet statement appeared a week later stating that the Army of the Mujahedeen and the Islamic Army in Iraq had appointed a spokesman, Ibrahim Youssef al-Shammari, to speak on behalf of the two insurgent groups. His identity was confirmed on websites linked to the two militant organizations.<sup>503</sup> This suggests some of the militants were moving to form political wings.<sup>504</sup> It remained unclear whether such wings would seek to formally run in the elections to come or whether they would seek to simply put forward cogent demands and expectations.

This participation of Sunni insurgents in the Iraqi political process marked a profound shift in their thinking and tactics, and led to a growing rift between such insurgents and al-Qa'ida forces in Iraq. This rift became more evident in the fall of 2005, with clashes erupting between al-Qa'ida fighters and Sunni insurgents.<sup>505</sup>

There were also growing reports of Iraqi Sunni executions of foreign Sunni Islamic extremists since the first such reports surfaced in November 2004.<sup>506</sup> One such case took place on August 13, 2005, when Sunni Iraqis in Ramadi took up arms against Abu Musab Zarqawi's forces in defense of their Shi'ite neighbors.

The fighting came on the heels of a proclamation by Zarqawi that Ramadi's 3,000 Shi'ites leave the city of some 200,000 residents. The order was given in retaliation for supposed expulsions of Sunni minorities by Shi'ite militias in the mostly Shi'ite south of Iraq. Yet in Ramadi, members of the Sunni Dulaimi tribe, formed security cordons around Shi'ite homes and fought Zarqawi's men with grenade launchers and automatic weapons. All told, five foreign fighters and two local tribal fighters were killed.<sup>507</sup>

Similar to insurgent use of the media, in March 2006 a group known as the Anbar Revenge Brigade posted an Internet statement claiming that it killed five top members of al-Qa'ida during a campaign to drive them out of Ramadi. Of these fighters four were claimed to be al-Qa'ida and the fifth a member of Ansar al-Sunnah.<sup>508</sup>

Many Sunnis participated in the debate over the constitution and the referendum that followed. During the summer and fall of 2005. Sunni leaders threatened that a constitution forced through without the consent and consideration of the Sunni population would result in a stepped-up insurgency. Nevertheless, many Sunni leaders and voters, including those from a number of insurgent-dominated or influenced areas, participated in the October 15, 2005 constitutional referendum.

In the weeks prior to the referendum, Abu Theeb, the commander of a cell of Sunni insurgents north of Baghdad known as the Anger Brigade, traveled the countryside visiting Sunni villages. The message was the same at each stop: Sunnis should register to vote but vote no in the referendum.

Abu Theeb, who has been fighting coalition troops for more than two years, described the boycott of the January election as a mistake. "It is a new jihad...There is a time for fighting, and a time for politics."<sup>509</sup> Theeb was so determined to ensure a Sunni turnout that he supplied a local polling station with his own guards on the day of the vote. Despite an Al-Qa'ida vow to kill anyone, including Sunnis, who participated in the referendum, Theeb ordered his followers to protect the local school to ensure that Sunni voters would be safe. Theeb even reprimanded a young follower for planning an IED attack the night before the election, saying: "I thought we agreed that nothing will happen for the next few days."<sup>510</sup>

Sunnis turned out in far greater numbers for the October referendum than the January 30, 2005 election, giving momentum to Sunni participation in the December 15, 2005 elections for the national assembly. Although no exact figures have been published, Sunni turnout in the October 15, 2005 referendum was much heavier than expected. Overall turnout in the referendum was 63 per cent, up from 58 per cent in January. Moreover, turnout in many Shi'ite and Kurdish-dominated provinces fell below January's figures, indicating the increase in overall turnout had come from Sunni Arab voters.<sup>511</sup>

This did not mean Sunnis supported the constitution. In Salahuddin Province, a Sunni stronghold and home to Saddam Hussein's family, 81 per cent rejected the constitution. Elsewhere in the country, voting was largely divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Voting in the mixed province of Diyala, home to both Sunnis and Shi'ites, was illustrative of this split with 51.76 per cent voting yes and 48.24 per cent voting no.<sup>512</sup> It did mean that Sunnis had engaged politically, and not through violence.

This engagement was even more active in the run up to the elections for the national assembly. Even in Tikrit, there were more than two-dozen political groups with offices in Tikrit by November 2005, and young men could be found hanging campaign posters. Some posters even reached out to former members of Saddam's party. One such poster read, "Vote for us and we promise we will end de-Ba'athification."<sup>513</sup>

The end result was that numerous Sunni candidates ran, and numerous Sunnis voted. Voter turnout figures released by the Iraqi Electoral Commission put turnout in the December 15 election at 70 percent, the highest in any post-Saddam era election held to date. A total 10.9 of Iraq's 15.6 million registered voters voted in the election, and Sunnis voted heavily in every area where insurgents who opposed political action could not threaten them.<sup>514</sup>

The tensions over these different approaches to the political process were compounded by the fact that many Iraqi Sunnis, even those who sympathized with the insurgency, strongly opposed attacks on Sunni recruits to the Iraqi forces, and the killings of Sunnis in local governments.

### ***Iraqi Government Negotiations with "Nationalist" Insurgents***

The December 15<sup>th</sup> election did have a mixed impact. The Sunnis only received about 20% of the seats. Many complained about "fraud" and that they were being allotted fewer seats than their Shi'ite counterparts. Some Sunni insurgents and anti-government leaders also made it clear that they could both participate in many aspects of the political process *and* support the insurgency.

Nevertheless, a number of reports in early January 2006 indicated that enough progress was taking place so that that US and Iraqi government officials were able to hold much more productive dialogues with groups the insurgency.

These talks involved Sunni Arab nationalists who resented the occupation and were fearful of being marginalized under a Shi'ite dominated government. Both sets of officials stressed that no commitments were made to this group, and that they would not enter into talks with foreign terrorists and pro-Saddam elements. Furthermore, officials were adamant that they would not talk with figures that the intelligence services identified as having been implicated in lethal attacks on US and Iraqi forces.<sup>515</sup>

Though the identities of the insurgent groups and figures involved in the talks are unknown, the *New York Times* listed Muhammad's Army and the Islamic Army in Iraq as the likely groups because they are allegedly nationalist and are comprised of former Ba'athists.<sup>516</sup> Despite the



talks, US officials did not believe that a lasting ceasefire or demobilization of insurgent bands was imminent largely because such groups wanted the US to establish a timeline for withdrawal.

The US effort to reach out to part of Sunni nationalist insurgency appears to have had two levels. On the political level, US officials hoped to bring the nationalist insurgents into the political process, which would encourage them to give up violence. On another level, the US appeared to want to turn the nationalists against the foreign fighters and Al Qaeda affiliates by focusing on the differences between the insurgent groups.

As one Western diplomat stated, "According to Islamic doctrine, as well as democratic principles, there cannot be a legitimate resistance against a legitimate government. If we can reach an understanding with each other, meaning the resistance, as they call it, and the coalition, then they in turn will take care of Zarqawi and the terrorists."<sup>517</sup> In the talks, US representatives repeatedly asked the location of Al Qaeda elements and whether the nationalist elements would be willing to help root them out.

Other US efforts had already been made public in December 2005. The US released 20 prominent Sunni detainees along with Satam Quaoood, a former Saddam supporter. Though US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad stressed that the move was not an attempt to mollify Sunni insurgents, they reportedly took the release as a sign of good will and became more open to talks.<sup>518</sup> While such prisoner releases may inadvertently soften aspects of the Sunni insurgency, it provoked an outburst of protests by Shi'ites against Ambassador Khalilzad and Iraqi Sunni leaders.

A tape attributed to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was released on an Islamist website in early January that seemed to be an apparent response to such efforts by Iraqi and US officials, as well as Arab states. Zarqawi sharply criticized Iraqi Sunnis and Arab countries for working for the formation of a unifying coalition government in Iraq.

The speaker attacked the Arab League summit in November that brought the various Iraqi factions together in Egypt. Reuters quoted the speaker as saying; "The countries that met in Cairo ... were involved in destroying Iraq and cooperated with America by opening their land, air space and waters and offering intelligence to it."<sup>519</sup> The speaker explained that they had not attacked polling stations during the election so as not to hurt Sunnis while denouncing the Sunni Iraqi Islamist Party for supporting the Iraqi constitution.

This effort may have backfired to the point that it forced the Zarqawi group to change tactics. An announcement on a website frequently used by al-Qaeda in early 2006 indicated that Zarqawi had abdicated his position as "emir" on the Mujahedeen Council, a group composed of six radical organizations in Iraq including al-Qaeda, in favor of an Iraqi.<sup>520</sup> In a video broadcast on the Internet, Zarqawi appealed to Muslim clerics in Iraq and asked for their support in his movement.<sup>521</sup> Although this may be an attempt by Al-Qaeda in Iraq to put an "Iraqi face" on what is seen by many as a foreign-led Islamist extremist movement, the levels of communication, cooperation and conflict between the various insurgent movements remains unclear.

The Iraqi government attempted to take advantage of this cleavage, reaching an agreement with six Sunni nationalist insurgent groups. In exchange for reconciliation talks, these groups pledged to denounce Zarqawi's al-Qaeda movement.<sup>522</sup> Despite the scattered nature of the evidence indicating a split in insurgent movements, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak Rubaie

indicated that he believed such incidents were on the rise and reflected an increasing intolerance among Iraqis of foreign-led groups operating in their country.

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, A U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad echoed these sentiments and emphasized that six “major leaders” had been killed by other indigenous insurgent groups since September 2005, and suggested that the “local insurgents had become part of the solution.”

Other reports indicated that members of the Albu Mahal tribe, who had formerly clashed with Coalition forces, began directing U.S. troops to locations of al-Qa’ida hideouts in the Syrian border area. In Ramadi, Abu Khatab, a high-ranking al-Qa’ida member, was run out by insurgents loyal to local tribes.<sup>523</sup> In Samarra, local leaders launched a campaign to hunt down al-Qa’ida members in a response to the assassination of Hikmat Mumtaz, the leader of the Albu-Baz tribe.<sup>524</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the shifts in Sunni “nationalist positions, and their infighting with Islamist extremists, did not have a discernable effect on the overall level of violence in Iraq. In a ten-day period in January, insurgents attacked U.S. forces 113 times in Ramadi, the supposed primary area of this division among foreign and domestic led groups.<sup>525</sup> Jeffrey White, a former U.S. intelligence officer, suggested that, “even if we can exploit this rift” between insurgent groups, “it doesn’t mean they stop fighting us.”<sup>526</sup>

Moreover, any splits between the insurgent groups are highly dependent on the actions of the Shi’ites and Kurds in the new government. Both Sunni insurgents, and Sunnis in general, have expressed growing fears of Shi’ite and Kurdish attacks and abuses since the summer of 2005.

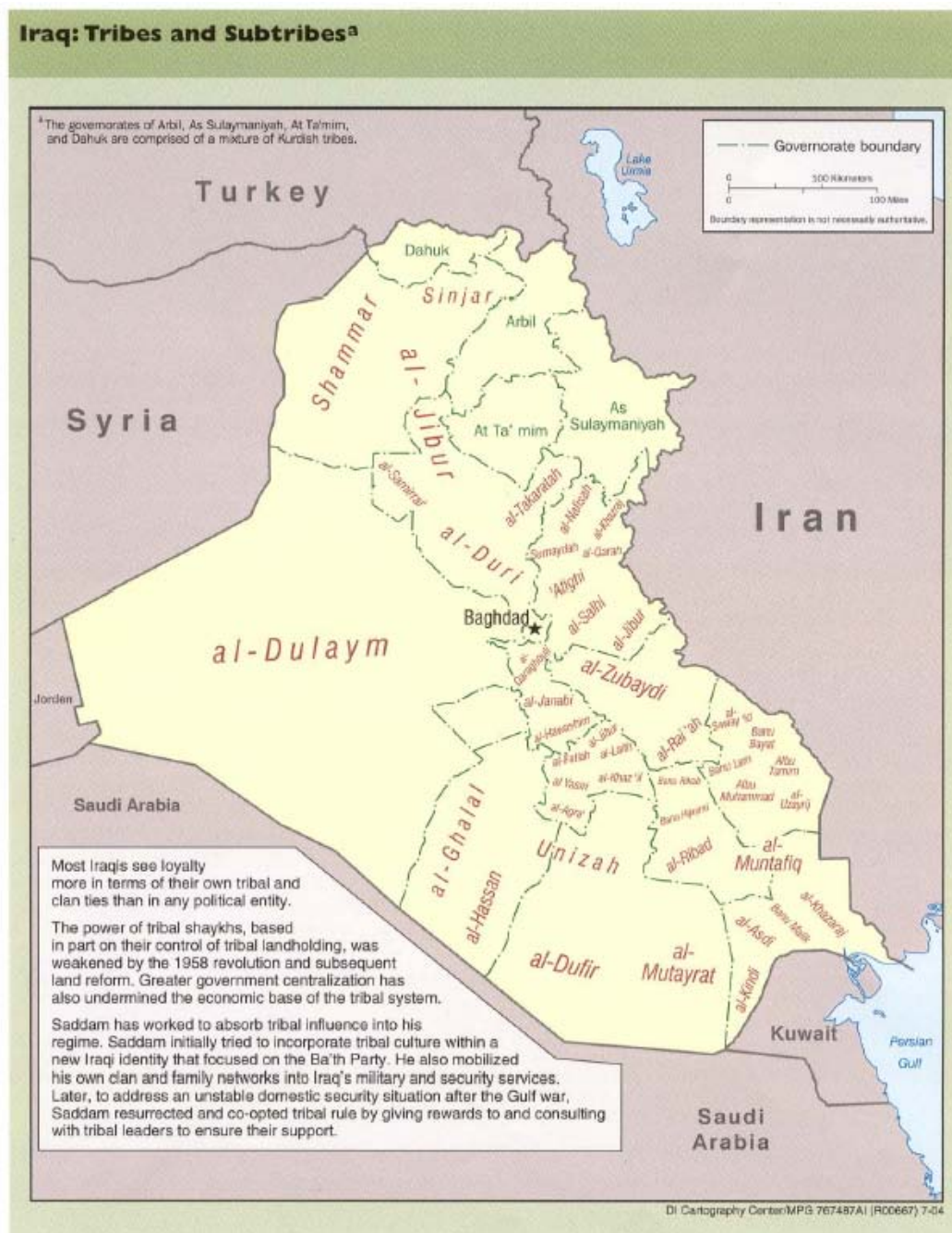
They pointed to well-documented abuses by some of the Shi’ite-dominated units in the special security forces and in prisons controlled by the Ministry of Interior that became public in the fall and winter of 2005. They also charge that Shi’ite organizations like the Badr Organization have run the equivalent of death squads, that the Shi’ites are pushing Sunnis out of Basra and Shi’ite neighborhoods in other cities, and Kurdish groups are seeking to push Sunnis out of Kirkuk and other mixed cities and towns in the north.

### ***The Role of Sunni Arab Militias***

This pressure on Arab Sunnis from the Arab Shi’ites and Kurds sometimes helped fuel the insurgency, but it also led those Sunnis willing to cooperate with the Coalition and new Iraqi government to develop their own forces. These efforts have also been stimulated by the rising tensions between those Sunnis that do not want to participate in the insurgency and the insurgents, and between the more moderate and nationalist insurgents and the more extreme Islamist movements.

Most of the Sunni forces that emerged by early 2006 were local and informal, operating at the tribal and neighborhood level. In some cases, the end result was a force that was not loyal to either the insurgency or supportive of the Coalition and new Iraqi government. Some forces were part of the insurgency, and others were formed to deal with the threat posed by the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgents, such as the Zarqawi movement. Map VI.1 below shows the tribal and subtribal divisions in Iraq.

Map VI.1: Tribes and Subtribes of Iraq



### ***The Positive Side of the Militia Story***

In some cases, the Coalition and new Iraqi government either helped create such militias or supported them. In the border area and part of Western Iraq, for example, MNF-I and the Iraqi government found it was cheaper and more effective to buy the loyalty of local tribal militias than fight the insurgents – particularly in those areas where outside insurgents had alienated the local residents. These developments led US Army Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch to go so far as to say that "The local insurgents have become part of the solution and not part of the problem."<sup>527</sup>

The Iraqi Minister of Defense, Saadoun Dulaymi, encouraged these developments, and MNF-I provided funds, weapons, and some training. US officers and Ambassador Khalilzad met with key leaders. In some Sunni urban areas and towns, police forces were created that came close to being local militias, at least in terms of their recruiting base. In other areas, Sunnis were organized at the tribal or local level in an effort to protect key facilities and projects, like oil pipelines. These efforts were given further incentive when a bombing by Zarqawi forces killed some 70 Arab Sunnis at a recruiting station in Ramadi in January 2006.<sup>528</sup>

Mithal Alusi, a Sunni Arab parliamentarian, was quoted as saying that, "There is a change...After these attacks, and after the elections, we find the people are eager to be rid of the terrorists." Sheikh Osama al-Jadaan, of the Karabila tribe in Anbar province was quoted as saying that, "They claim to be striking at the US occupation, but the reality is they are killing innocent Iraqis in the markets, in mosques, in churches, and in our schools," although he also noted that, "We are caught in the middle between the terrorists coming to destroy us with their suicide belts, their TNT, and their car bombs, and the American Army that destroys our homes, takes our weapons, and doesn't allow us to defend ourselves against the terrorists."<sup>529</sup>

These efforts continued in February.<sup>530</sup> Iraqi and US officials issued offers and discussed deals for prisoner release, additional aid, and senior positions in the army and police for the support of Sunni "nationalist insurgents." These efforts included a meeting between General George W. Casey, Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and high-ranking members of Iraq's security and intelligence agencies with some Iraq's largest Sunni Muslim Arab tribes.

Mowaffak Rubaie, the Iraqi government's national security advisor, said that al-Jaafari promised to recruit more Sunni Arabs into the army and police forces and to send more economic aid to Al Anbar. Rubaie and Sunni tribal leaders at the meeting also said that al-Jaafari pledged to release at least 140 prisoners in coming weeks, and that more releases would be forthcoming.

The meeting also showed, however, that some tribal leaders wanted to create their own militias to police their cities – a move opposed by the central government. For example, Sheikh Osama Jadan said his Al Anbar community had already formed an armed group, similar to the Shi'ite militias, to fight insurgents. "We started our operations three weeks ago, and they have been fruitful," he said. "We caught one of [guerrilla leader Abu Musab] Zarqawi's assistants, and after an investigation of him ... we handed him over to the Iraqi army and joint intelligence."

Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad explained that, "We are engaged with leaders, including tribal leaders and others, to encourage them to suspend their military operations with the aim of ending the insurgency and working together with us against the terrorists...I think it is critical that the security ministries be given to people who are broadly accepted across sectarian and ethnic lines and that they are not people who are sectarian or divisive and that they are not people with ties to militias or armed groups."

### ***The Negative Side***

At the same time, other Sunni voices gave a different message. Sheikh Abdel Salaam al-Qubaysi, a leader of the Muslim Scholars Association, a hard-line Sunni group with much of its base in Anbar stated that, "These are just a few sheikhs who want to get political power by claiming to be fighting the terrorists, and to be speaking for the resistance...They are slaves in the pockets of the occupation. They have no weight in the streets." He also blamed the attacks in Anbar on foreign Shi'ites, "We know that 40,000 militants from Iran have come to Iraq," he says. "I don't rule out that they did this to prevent Sunni Arabs from joining the Iraqi Army."<sup>531</sup>

Some groups became involved in the equivalent of an auction between the Coalition and new Iraqi government and the insurgents. Some took the money and continued to support the insurgency. In a number of areas, however, the results were positive. Success varied by individual case.

What was more threatening was that some Sunni Arabs sought to form their own militia at the national level to counter Shi'ite and Kurdish forces. In early February, a force called the "Anbar Revolutionaries" emerged which opposed the more extreme elements of the insurgency like Al Qa'ida, but also was created to help secure Arab Sunnis against Arab Shi'ite and Kurdish pressure and attacks. According to press reports, this force was composed largely of former Ba'ath loyalists, Saddam supporters, moderate Iraqi Sunni Islamists and other Arab Sunni nationalists. It was organized partly to resist pressure from Arab Sunni Islamist extremists, but its main purpose was to deal with the threat from the Shi'ite Badr Brigades.

One Sunni Arab official involved was quoted as saying that, "The Anbar Revolutionaries are here to stay, we need them to protect the people...Sunnis do not have the Shi'ite Badr (Brigades) or the Kurdish Peshmerga. In these times when sectarian tension is high, such a force is needed." Another was quoted as saying, "It is our right to defend ourselves."

Hazem Naimi, a political science professor, was quoted as saying that, "Tribal leaders and political figures found that al Qa'ida's program is harming the political efforts and progress the Sunni political leaders are making, because al Qa'ida rejects all politics...Sunnis feel that the Shi'ites have taken over the government and now it is their state...The Badr Brigades are in the interior ministry and under the interior ministry's name they go to towns, kill and arrest."

It is clear that Sunni participation in the government, Iraqi forces, and the role of the Sunni militia(s) is dependent on the ability of the new Iraqi government to reassure Sunnis about their day-to-day security. It is also dependent on the government's ability to compromise with Sunni's on issues like the control of oil and other revenues, the nature of central versus local power, the nature of any federation, allowing Ba'ath leaders to return to the government, the role of religion in law and governance, and the other key aspects that will shape Iraq's character as a state.

It is also clear that further purges of Sunnis from the government, military, and security services can only make things worse. Such mistakes are exemplified by the implementation without warning of a six-month-old order from the Iraqi Debaathification Commission that led to the dismissal of 18 Iraqi generals, colonels, and majors -- most Sunni Arabs from Anbar.<sup>532</sup>

### ***Assessing the Future Potential of the Sunni Insurgency***

The future of the Sunni insurgency now seems dependent on two factors. First, whether the Iraqi political process succeeds in becoming truly inclusive or whether it heightens the sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflicts that divide Iraq and creates a more intense state of civil war.

Second, how soon and how well the full range of Iraqi security forces can come on-line and be effective.

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

### ***The “Nationalist” Need for Compromise***

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

Regardless of who is doing the counting, the total for active and passive native Iraqi Sunni insurgents still leaves them a small minority of Iraq's population. Unless the Iraqi government divides or collapses, they cannot bring back Arab Sunni minority rule or the Ba'ath; they cannot regain the level of power, wealth, and influence they once had. They cannot reestablish the form of largely secular rule that existed under Saddam, or reestablish Iraq as a country that most Arabs see as “Sunni.”

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

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

Richard Armitage, the former US Deputy Secretary of State, commented on the insurgency and its lack of realistic political goals as follows: “In Algeria, the so-called insurgents, or in Vietnam, the so-called insurgents, they had ... a program and a positive view...In Iraq that's lacking ... they only have fear to offer. They only have terror to offer. This is why they're so brutal in their intimidation.”<sup>533</sup>

### ***The “Islamist” Need for Civil War***

The risk also exists that the Sunni Islamist extremists have become better trained and organized to the point where they are now able to establish themselves as *the* dominant political and military force within the Sunni community—particularly if Iraq's Arab Shi'ites and Kurds mishandle the situation or react to the growing provocation of bloody suicide attacks and other killings by Neo-Salafi extremists.<sup>534</sup>

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

Much will depend on just how willing Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds are to forget the past, not overreact to Sunni Islamist and other attacks designed to divide and splinter the country, and continue to offer Iraqi Sunnis a fair share of wealth and power. The US position is clear. The US consistently supported a unified nation and inclusive government. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, stated in an interview that the Ministries of Defense and Interior must be headed by those who have broad based support: "The security ministries have to be run by people who are not associated with militias and who are not regarded as sectarian."<sup>535</sup> Later, Ambassador Khalilzad went further and directly tied the future of U.S. economic and military support to the ability of Iraqi leaders to form an inclusive government saying, "We [the U.S.] are not going to invest the resources of the American people and build forces that are run by people who are sectarian."<sup>536</sup>

## VII. The Issue of Foreign Volunteers<sup>537</sup>

The fact that young men are being recruited from countries in North Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries does not mean that foreign fighters dominate Iraqi Islamist extremist organizations. Recruiting smaller numbers of outsiders as cannon fodder, sacrifice pawns, or "martyrs" has become all too easy in a region where religious extremists have learned how to exploit religious feelings. This does not, however, mean that those directing the efforts of such groups, carrying out the support activity, or doing much of the day-to-day fighting are foreign fighters.

There is limited evidence that Iraq is a unique magnet for foreign volunteers. Iraq is scarcely the only center of such activity, and foreign volunteers also operate in the West, in North Africa and the Levant, in the Gulf, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia. Nations as diverse as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Indonesia, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the Sudan also have training centers, staging and support facilities, or internal conflicts involving neo-Salafi extremists. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict does as much to fuel Arab and Islamic anger as the Iraq conflict, and such extremists capitalize on political, economic, and social problems and tensions throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Nevertheless, Iraq has become a critical center for Sunni Islamist extremist activity, and currently presents the greatest threat that such extremists could destabilize a state, and drive it towards a major civil war. They have at least partially displaced the struggle between Iraqis, and they certainly drive it towards violence and away from political competition and accommodation. They are fighting a war to create a civil war in Iraq: one that would make an effective secular or moderate government impossible and trigger a conflict between Sunni and Shi'ite that could spread to divide Islam and the Arab world. More broadly, they seek to make Islam a captive to a kind of violent, intolerant, and ruthlessly exclusive ideological movement that would deprive it of a future by driving it back towards an imaginary and perverted vision of the past.

In June 2005, U.S. Lt-Gen John Vines, commanding general of coalition forces in Iraq, identified the foreign fighters as the most violent group in Iraq's ongoing insurgency. According to Vines, insurgent activity among Iraqis was being driven by money, not ideology, and foreign jihadists were using their financial resources to get Iraqis to attack other Iraqis.<sup>538</sup>

It is unlikely, however, that foreign volunteers make up even 10% of the insurgent force, and they may make up less than 5%. While the number of foreign volunteers increased through the spring of 2005, US experts feel they have since declined, largely as a result of US and Iraqi government military operations in Western Iraq and improvements in security in the Syrian-Iraqi border area. While some estimates of the total number of such volunteers have gone as high as 3,000, others go from the high hundreds to over 1,000.<sup>539</sup> The fact is that there is no basis for even a credible guesstimate, and the numbers keep fluctuating over time.

### *The Uncertain Number, Source, and Role of Foreign Volunteers*

Foreigners made up less than 600 out of some 14,000 detainees as of June 2005. Coalition experts estimated that they had made up less than 5% of insurgent casualties and detainees to date.<sup>540</sup> US experts and top level Iraqi officials estimated in November 2005 that at least 90% of the Sunni fighters were Iraqi and the total might be closer to 94% to 96%. Coalition sources reported that only 3.8% of some 13,300 detainees held in November 2005 were foreign. These



percentages of foreigners were lower than estimates made in the early winter of 2005, and marked a sharp contrast to claims that the insurgency was being driven by large numbers of foreign volunteers. The percentage had not changed significantly as of March 2006, when the total number of detainees was reported as approaching 14,000.

The reliance given insurgent organizations place on foreign volunteers is uncertain. While Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia has become virtually synonymous with foreign volunteers, its membership may well be largely Iraqi. US authorities believed Zarqawi commanded as many as 1,000 fighters and a much larger group of sympathizers, as of November 2005, but did not believe foreign volunteers came close to being a majority.<sup>541</sup> The US-Iraqi operations in Tal Afar focused on attacking Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia in September 2005. Although this operation led to the capture of 1,000 suspected insurgents, none proved to be foreigners.<sup>542</sup>

There also are foreign volunteers in other Sunni Islamist extremist groups like Ansar al-Islam (also known as Ansar al-Sunnah), and the Islamic Army of Iraq. At least six other smaller terrorist groups are operating in Iraq that may rely on foreign volunteers, and many of the groups supporting the "Ba'ath" seem to have foreign volunteers as well.

Intelligence analysis – corroborated by information from Internet chat rooms and web sites run by Islamists – indicates that such groups have established terrorist training camps for both foreign volunteers and Iraqi volunteers in the mountains of northern Iraq and in the country's western desert along its 450-mile border with Syria. There are also reports of staging facilities and indoctrination centers inside of Syria.

In any case, foreign volunteers have had a special impact on the insurgency because they have been used in extreme attacks to try to provoke a civil war between Iraq's Arab Sunnis and its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities. Foreign Sunni Islamist extremist volunteers do seem to have carried out most of the suicide car and pedestrian bombings since 2003. These are among some of the bloodiest and most-publicized insurgent attacks.

One US defense official estimated that as of July 2005, Iraqis had directly carried out less than 10% of more than 500 suicide bombings.<sup>543</sup> Other experts put the number at well above 30%. What is clear is that the number of such attacks accelerated sharply in the spring and summer of 2005; the Associated Press counted at least 213 suicide attacks as of July.

US Air Force General, and MNF-I spokesperson, Don Alston stated, "The foreign fighters are the ones most often behind the wheel of suicide car bombs, or most often behind any suicide situation," and Gen. Abizaid stated that the Coalition had seen a rise in suicide bombers coming from North Africa; particularly Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.<sup>544</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, agreed adding that foreign fighters present a "larger challenge" to the security of the country than Iraqi insurgent groups.<sup>545</sup>

### ***Number and National Origin of Foreign Volunteers***

No one knows where most of the foreign volunteers present in Iraq at any given time have come from. The mix seems to vary constantly, and estimates differ from source to source. For example, the US military reported that 375 foreigners so far had been detained in Iraq in 2005 as of late October. The percentage of foreign detainees was only a little over 4% in early 2005, and had actually dropped by the end of 2005. Among those detained were: 78 Egyptians; 66 Syrians; 41 Sudanese; 32 Saudis; 17 Jordanians; 13 Iranians; 2 Britons; and one each from France, Israel, Ireland and the United States.<sup>546</sup>

Reuvan Paz, a respected Israeli analyst attempted to calculate the composition of foreign volunteers in Jihadi-Salafi insurgent groups by examining the national origin of 154 insurgents killed in the fighting from the battle of Fallujah through March 2005. He estimated that 94 (61%) were Saudi, 16 (10.4%) were Syrian, 13% (8.4%) were Iraqi, 11 (7.1%) were Kuwaiti, 4 came from Jordan, 3 from Lebanon, 2 from Libya, 2 from Algeria, 2 from Morocco, 2 from Yemen, 2 from Tunisia, 1 from Palestine, 1 from Dubai, and one from the Sudan. He estimated that 33 of the 154 were killed in suicide attacks: 23 Saudis, 5 Syrian, 2 Kuwaiti, 1 Libyan, 1 Iraqi, and 1 Moroccan. These figures are drawn from a very small sample, and are highly uncertain, but they do illustrate the diversity of backgrounds.<sup>547</sup>

The Saudi National Security Assessment Project estimated that there were approximately 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq in the spring of 2005 (See Figure VI.1). These figures, and a breakdown by nationality, were rounded "best estimates," based on reports of Saudi and other intelligence services. They drew upon the interrogations of hundreds of captured militants and a comprehensive analysis of militant activities. This included interviews and analysis of activities by both Saudi and non-Saudi militants. Intelligence reports prepared by regional governments were also consulted, which provided not only names of militants, but also valuable information on the networks that they relied upon to enter Iraq and conduct their activities.

The conclusion of the Saudi investigation was that the number of Saudi volunteers in August 2005 was around 12% of the foreign contingent (approximately 350), or 1.2% of the total insurgency of approximately 30,000. Algerians constitute the largest contingent at 20%, followed closely by Syrians (18%), Yemenis (17%), Sudanese (15%), Egyptians (13%) and those from other states (5%). Discussions with US and Iraqi experts indicated that they felt that Saudi estimates were roughly correct, although they cautioned that they did not have reliable numbers for either the total number of volunteers or their origin by country. A Brookings Institution's analysis of the numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and their countries of origin concurred with the Saudi assessment.<sup>548</sup>

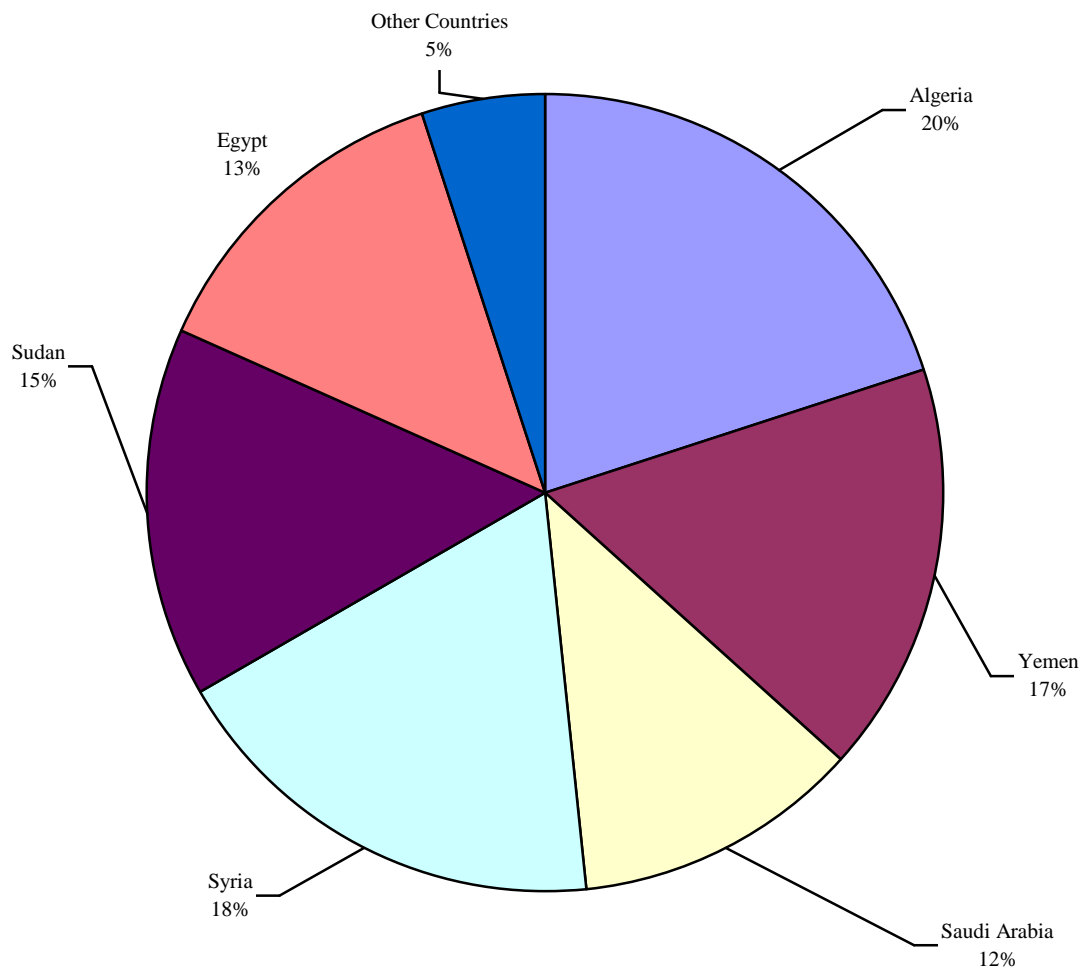
Anything like 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq would pose a serious threat, but the numbers would be largely irrelevant. All it would take is enough volunteers to continue to support suicide attacks and violent bombings, and seek to drive Iraqi Sunnis towards a major and intense civil war. They also pose a threat because their actions gave Bin Laden and other neo-Salafi extremist movements publicity and credibility among the angry and alienated in the Islamic world, and because many were likely to survive and be the source of violence and extremism in other countries.

Nevertheless, even the highest estimate of foreign volunteers pales beside the estimates of Iraqi insurgents. US experts still put the total number of full time insurgents at around 20,000-30,000 in December 2005. Virtually all reports indicate the insurgency remained largely homegrown. Moreover, if the number of foreign detainees is any measure of how important foreign militants are, it indicates that it is their fanaticism and willingness to use extreme violence that is the key issue.

Much of the flow of people and supplies across Iraq's borders is a factor of general border permeability. No country on Iraq's borders prevents all forms of infiltration. Anyone with a convincing set of papers can cross at legal border crossings, and minor bribes are often enough to gain permission to enter. Smuggling and "fees" simply to jump the inspection line are common, and inspection is often minimal.

Jordan does offer some security along its border, although it is scarcely “sealed.” The same is true of Turkey. The Saudi government had some success in its efforts to seal the border between the Kingdom and Iraq. However, it admits that traffic still crosses the border in both directions, with Iraqi smugglers going into Saudi Arabia and some infiltrators moving in the opposite direction. Iran now has a flood of pilgrims entering Iraq, border checks are often inadequate,. Neither Iran nor Iraq could totally halt smuggling and infiltration even during the worst days of the Iran-Iraq War.

**Figure VI.2: Foreign Militants in Iraq**  
(3,000 Total)



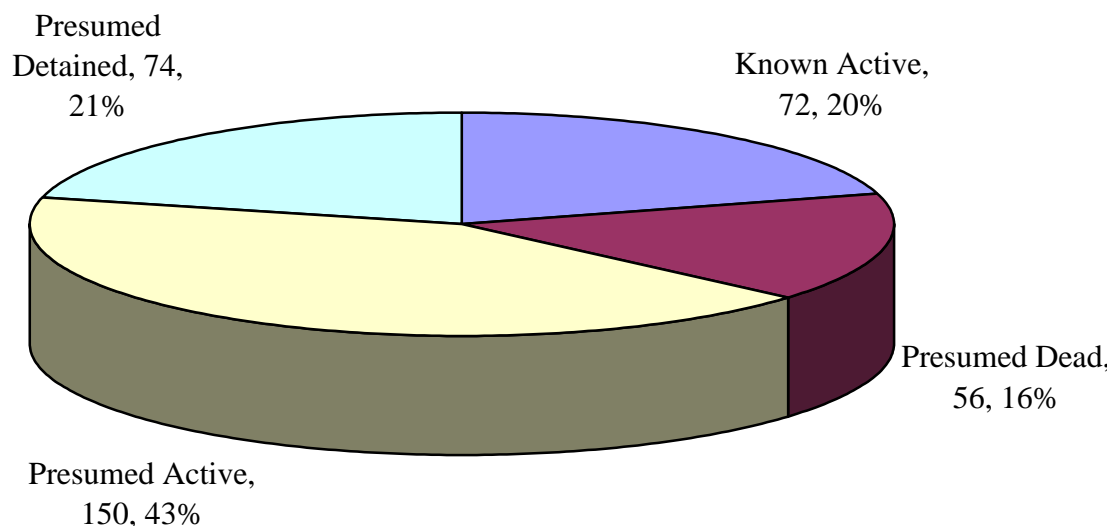
### ***Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study***

The Coalition and Iraqi government have not released any significant details on their estimates of the number of foreign volunteers, their origin, or their motives. The Saudi intelligence services have, however, made a major effort to estimate the number of Saudi infiltrators that move across the Saudi border – or far more often transit through third states like Syria.

As of August 2005, approximately 352 Saudis were thought to have successfully entered Iraq (and an additional 63 had been stopped at the border by Saudi security services). Of these, 150 were thought to be active, 72 were known from al-Qa'ida compiled lists to be active in Iraq,<sup>549</sup> 74 were presumed in detention (a maximum of 20 in US custody and 3 in Kurdish), and 56 were presumed dead (See Figure VI.2).

Interrogations and other Saudi intelligence gathering operations revealed that these individuals did not come exclusively from a single geographical region in Saudi Arabia, but from various areas in the Kingdom, especially from the South, Hijaz, and Najd. They were usually affiliated with the most prominent conservative tribes and were generally middle class. Most were employed, many were educated, and all were Sunni.<sup>550</sup>

**Figure VI.3: Saudi Militants in Iraq as of September 2005**



As part of a massive crackdown on Saudi militants attempting to enter Iraq, the Saudi government has interrogated dozens of nationals either returning from Iraq or caught at the border. The average age of these fighters was 17-25, but a few were older. Some had families and young children. In contrast, other fighters from across the Middle East and North Africa tended to be in their late 20s or 30s.

The Saudi infiltrators were also questioned by the intelligence services about their motives for joining the insurgency. One important point was the number who insisted that they were not militants before the Iraq war. Of those who were interrogated, a full 85% were not on any government watch list (which comprised most of the recognized extremists and militants), nor were they known members of al-Qa'ida.

The names of those who died fighting in Iraq generally appear on militant websites as martyrs, and Saudi investigators also approached the families of these individuals for information regarding the background and motivation of the ones who died. According to these interviews as well, the bulk of the Saudi fighters in Iraq were driven to extremism by the war itself.

Most of the Saudi militants in Iraq were motivated by revulsion at the idea of an Arab land being occupied by a non-Arab country. These feelings were intensified by the images of the occupation they saw on television and the Internet – many of which came from sources intensely hostile to the US and the war in Iraq, and which repeated or manipulated “worst case” images.

The catalyst most often cited was Abu Ghraib, though images from Guantanamo Bay were mentioned. Some recognized the name of a relative or friend posted on a website and felt compelled to join the cause. These factors, combined with the agitation regularly provided by militant clerics in Friday prayers, helped lead them to volunteer.

In one case, a 24-year-old student from a prominent Saudi tribe -- who had no previous affiliation with militants -- explained that he was motivated after the US invasion to join the militants by stories he saw in the press, and through the forceful rhetoric of a mid-level cleric sympathetic to al-Qa'ida. The cleric introduced him and three others to a Yemeni, who unbeknownst to them was an al-Qa'ida member.

After undergoing several weeks of indoctrination, the group made its way to Syria, and then was escorted across the border to Iraq where they met their Iraqi handlers. There they were assigned to a battalion, comprised mostly of Saudis (though those planning the attacks were exclusively Iraqi). After being appointed to carry out a suicide attack, the young man had second thoughts and returned home to Saudi Arabia where he was arrested in January 2004. The cleric who had instigated the whole affair was also brought up on terrorism charges and is expected to face a long jail term. The Yemeni al-Qa'ida member was killed in December 2004 following a failed attack on the Ministry of Interior.

There are other similar stories regarding young men who were enticed by rogue clerics into taking up arms in Iraq. Many were instructed to engage in suicide attacks and as a result, never return home. Interrogations of nearly 150 Saudis suspected of planning to join the Iraqi insurgency indicate that they were heeding the calls of clerics and activists to “drive the infidels out of Arab land.”

Like Jordan and most Arab countries, the Saudi government has sought to limit such calls for action, which inevitably feed neo-Salafi extremist as the expense of legitimate interpretations of Islam. King Abdullah has issued a strong new directive that holds those who conceal knowledge of terrorist activities as guilty as the terrorists themselves. However, many religious leaders and figures in Arab nations have issued fatwas stating that waging jihad in Iraq is justified by the Koran due to its “defensive” nature. To illustrate, in October 2004, several clerics in Saudi Arabia said that, “it was the duty of every Muslim to go and fight in Iraq.”<sup>551</sup>

On June 20, 2005, the Saudi government released a new list of 36 known al-Qa'ida operatives in the Kingdom (all but one of those released on previous lists had been killed by Saudi security forces, so these individuals represented the foot soldiers of al-Qa'ida, and they were considered far less dangerous). After a major crackdown in the Kingdom, as many as 21 of these low-level al-Qa'ida members fled to Iraq.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef commented that when they return, they could be even “tougher” than those who fought in Afghanistan. “We expect the worse from those who went to Iraq,” he

said. "They will be worse and we will be ready for them." According to Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former Saudi Intelligence Chief and the new Ambassador to the US, approximately 150 Saudis are currently operating in Iraq.<sup>552</sup>

In mid-November 2005, Iraq's national security adviser, Mowaffaq al-Rubaie told reporters that most of the suicide bombers in Iraq were Saudi citizens:

We do not have the least doubt that nine out of 10 of the suicide bombers who carry out suicide bombing operations among Iraqi citizens...are Arabs who have crossed the border with Syria.

Most of those that blow themselves up in Iraq are Saudi nationals.

But al-Rubaie's comments appeared to conflict with findings released the previous month by Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch who said some 312 foreign nationals, including 32 Saudis, had been captured while taking part in the insurgency since April. With 78 and 66 respectively, two countries-Egypt and Syria-made up the largest foreign contingents, accounting for almost half of all captured foreign insurgents.<sup>553</sup>

Unlike the foreign fighters from poor countries such as Yemen and Egypt, Saudis entering Iraq often brought in money to support the cause, arriving with personal funds between \$10,000-\$15,000. Saudis are the most sought after militants; not only because of their cash contributions, but also because of the media attention their deaths as "martyrs" bring to the cause. This is a powerful recruiting tool. Because of the wealth of Saudi Arabia, and its well-developed press, there also tends to be much more coverage of Saudi deaths in Iraq than of those from poorer countries.

In contrast, if an Algerian or Egyptian militant dies in Iraq, it is unlikely that anyone in his home country will ever know. For instance, interrogations revealed that when an Algerian conducts a suicide bombing, the insurgency rarely has a means of contacting their next of kin. Saudis, however, always provide a contact number and a well-developed system is in place for recording and disseminating any "martyrdom operations" by Saudis.

## ***Syria and Foreign Volunteers***

Syria's role in the Iraqi insurgency has been a key problem. It has allowed Iraqi insurgent groups to operate and stage in Syria, with the clear tolerance of Syrian intelligence and security officials. Insurgent safe houses, small training and indoctrination facilities, and funding raising activities have existed long enough to make it clear that Syria is at best deliberately turning a blind eye, and border controls have been loose and erratic.

Such tolerance can be important even when it does little more than allow volunteers to be "trained" in Syria for a few weeks. Many insurgents required only the most minimal training. Wearing a suicide vest or driving a suicide VBIED does not take skill, it takes motivation. Being able to indoctrinate young men or women intensively in a closed facility is often the key to providing that motivation. Debriefs of infiltrators indicated it worked best if new recruits are secure and do not mix with actual insurgents while they are being indoctrinated.

Iraqi, Jordanian, Saudi, and US officials have all repeatedly identified Syria as a serious problem. An April 2003 report by Italian investigators described Syria as a "hub" for the relocation of Zarqawi's group to Iraq. According to the report, "transcripts of wiretapped conversations among the arrested suspects and others paint a detailed picture of overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money between Europe and Iraq."<sup>554</sup> Large numbers of former Ba'athists and supporters of more nationalist insurgent groups also operate in the country.

Syria has shown in the past that it can crackdown on such insurgent activities and infiltration when it wants to -- usually when it has come under intensive pressure from the US or its neighbors. Preventing militants from crossing its 380-mile border with Iraq does, however, present problems even for a regime as notoriously security conscious and repressive as Syria. Even if Syria had the political will to completely and forcefully seal its border, it may lack sufficient resources to fund such an effort (Saudi Arabia has spent over \$1.2 billion in the past two years alone to Secure its border).

Syria has, however, had considerable success simply by heavily screening those who enter the country. This method does present problems in establishing proof of residency in Syria as well as the difficulties with verifying hotel reservations. According to the Minister of Tourism, roughly 3.1 million tourists visited the country in 2004; the number of Saudis alone that arrived in the first seven months of 2005 increased to 270,000 from 230,000 in the same period in 2004.<sup>555</sup>

Syria does seem to be able to act when it wants to. There are even those who claim the Syrian authorities are being *too* forceful in their crackdown on foreigners in the country. There have been reports that Syria has engaged in the systematic abuse, beating and robbery of Saudi tourists, a charge that Syria denies. According to semi-official reports published in *al-Watan*, released prisoners alleged that Syrian authorities arbitrarily arrested Saudis on the grounds that they were attempting to infiltrate Iraq to carry out terrorist attacks.

The former detainees maintained that they were “targeted for arrest in Syria without any charges.” They went on to say that, “if they had intended to sneak into Iraq, Saudi authorities would have kept them in custody when they were handed over to that country.” According to the Syrian Minister of Tourism, Saadallah Agha Kalaa, “no Saudi tourists have been harassed in Syria...Those who are spreading these rumors are seeking to harm Syria, which is a safe tourist destination.” In the murky world of the Syrian security services, it is difficult to discern the truth. Suffice it to say that the problem of successfully halting the traffic of Saudis through Syria into Iraq is overwhelmingly difficult, politically charged, and operationally challenging.

There is no visa requirement for Arabs from some countries to enter Syria. Syria does, however, maintain a database of suspected militants, and several dozen Saudis have been arrested at the border. However, pressuring the Syrians additionally to tighten security could be both unrealistic and politically sensitive.

As for the movement of fighters out of Syria, most militants leaving Syria to enter Iraq have done so at a point just south of the mountainous Kurdish areas of the north, which is sparsely inhabited by nomadic Sunni Arab tribes, or due east from Dair al-Zawr into Iraq's Anbar province. Crossing near the southern portion of the border, which is mainly desert and is heavily occupied by Syrian and U.S. forces, is seldom done.

The crossing from Dair Al-Zawr province was the preferred route through the summer of 2005 because the majority of the inhabitants on both sides of the border were sympathetic to the insurgency, the scattering of villages along the border provides ample opportunity for covert movement, and constant insurgent attacks in the area are thought to keep the U.S. forces otherwise occupied. According to intelligence estimates, the key transit point here – for both Saudis and other Arabs – is the Bab al-Waleed crossing.

## ***Iran and Foreign Volunteers***

Iraq also shares a long and relatively unguarded border with Iran, a non-Sunni non-Arab country. Few Saudi and other Sunni extremists seem to use it as a point of entry. Saudi authorities have,



however, captured a handful of militants who have gone through Iran and four were apprehended after passing from Iran to the United Arab Emirates.

Iran is also a major source of funding and logistics for militant Shi'ite groups in Iraq, mainly SCIRI. According to regional intelligence reports, Iran is suspected of arming and training some 40,000 Iraqi fighters with a goal of fomenting an Islamic revolution in Iraq. While most of these Iraqi Shi'ites are former prisoners of war captured during the Iran-Iraq war, there were also reports of young Iraqi's being recruited by Shi'ite clerics to go into Iran for religious and political indoctrination and militia training.<sup>556</sup>

Britain has reported that Iran has supplied insurgents with more modern triggering devices and other forms of assistance to help make better, more lethal IEDs. This aid seems to be going to both some Sunni insurgent groups and Shi'ite anti-British hardliners in the Basra area.

## VIII. The Uncertain Status of the Shi'ites

While domestic and foreign Sunni Islamists now dominate the insurgency, if the conflict escalates to a major civil war, it will almost certainly include far more fighters and movements from other ethnic and sectarian groups. As the previous chapters have shown, the tensions between religious Iraqi Arab Shi'ites and Sunni Islamist extremist groups are particularly dangerous and there are growing indicators that Shi'ites are taking revenge for Sunni insurgent attacks.

A major civil war in Iraq still seems avoidable, but the risk is all too real and Iraq faces major political and security challenges that virtually ensure this risk will be serious for at least the next year. It is also much more likely that Shi'ite movements will become involved in civil conflict than turn against the Coalition. Iraqi Arab Shi'ites resent the US presence, but most seem to realize that the fact that they are 60% of the population will give them political dominance *if* Iraq is secure enough so that its new political system divides up power according to the size of given factions.

The good news is that past public opinion polls have shown that most Arab Shi'ites, like Arab Sunnis, favor a unified Iraq and a strong central government. Such polls also have shown that Iraqi Shi'ites tend to be more religious in terms of support for an "Islamic state" in Iraq than Sunnis. However, the differences are limited and leading Iraqi clerics have not supported anything approaching Iran's concept of a supreme leader, and key figures like the Grand Ayatollah Sistani have strongly opposed direct clerical participation in the government or politics.

Key Shi'ite political parties like Al Dawa and SCIRI do have a strong religious character, but have so far been largely secular in their stated goals and actions. Although Al Dawa and SCIRI operated in Iran from 1980 onwards, they remain Iraqi nationalists, and their "gratitude" to Iran is often limited – particularly because of Iran's history of treating them on an opportunistic basis before the fall of Saddam Hussein. Members of Al Dawa can privately be sharply critical of Iran, and members of both parties resent past pressure to recognize the authority of Iran's supreme leader.

The bad news is that Shi'ite are increasingly willing to take revenge against Sunnis for the actions of Islamist extremist insurgents. Many Shi'ites have reacted to the debate over federalism during the drafting of the constitution by coming to support a Shi'ite federation in the south. The Shi'ite coalition that participated in the December 15, 2005 election is divided on this issue, but many Shi'ites clearly want some form of separatism or autonomy. This seems to be particularly true of the oil rich areas in the far south and around Basra.

Shi'ite support for a "unified" Iraq in no way means that Shi'ites do not feel it is "their turn" to have control over Iraqi politics, power, and wealth. Many Shi'ites feel that former Ba'athists should be punished for their actions in the previous regime. Most important, an increasing number seem to support revenge or "payback" for attacks by the Sunni insurgents.

### *Shi'ite Factions and the Various Militias*

The years following Saddam's fall have led to growing tensions between Shi'ite and Sunni. The seriousness of these tensions has grown since late 2003 because of repeated Sunni insurgent attacks on Shi'ite targets. They have also been a reaction to Sunni politics. For example, both Iraq's Sunni interim president, Ghazi al-Yahwar, and King Abdullah of Jordan, sounded

warnings about the risks of Shi'ite dominance and possible Iranian influence before the January 30, 2005 elections.<sup>557</sup>

Arab Shi'ites, in contrast, have been increasingly polarized by the Sunni suicide attacks on Shi'ite targets, kidnappings, over killings and disappearances described in previous chapters, which have intensified since the January 2005 elections. They are all too aware that figures like Zarqawi have threatened jihad against Shi'ites and have said they are not legitimate followers of Islam.

The main Shi'ite leaders in the government have continued to seek an inclusive political solution and reach out to the Sunnis, but many of their followers have increasingly reacted to Sunni attacks by taking revenge or seeking to exclude Sunnis from their neighborhoods, government jobs, contracts, and the security services.

Although the CPA tried to establish legal barriers to maintaining militias by issuing Order 91 in April 2004, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the faction of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim still have large militia elements. These are forces that Sunni groups have increasingly accused of committing atrocities against them since the spring of 2005. Al Dawa, the Badr Organization, and the Iraqi Hezbollah remain potential security problems Sunnis feel particularly threatened by the Badr Organization, many of whom have been incorporated into the special security forces.

The Bush Administration summarized the risks posed by Shi'ite militias as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:"

More than a dozen militias have been documented in Iraq, varying in size from less than a hundred to tens of thousands of members. Some were organized in loose cellular structures, while others had a more conventional military organization. Some were concentrated around a single locale, while others had a more regional footprint. Some of them were wholly indigenous, while others received support such as training, equipment, and money from outside Iraq.

Typically, the militias were armed with light weapons and operated as cells or small units. Even if they do not take up arms against the government, militias can pose a long-term challenge to the authority and sovereignty of the central government. This was the driving force behind the creation of Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 and the Transition and Re-Integration Committee. For the same reason, Article 27 of the Transitional Administrative Law and Article 9 of the draft Iraqi Constitution prohibit armed forces or militias that are not part of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

The realities of Iraq's political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term. Provided the constitution is ratified in October, the government elected in December will have a four-year term of office, and it will have the task of executing the militia-control provisions of the constitution. Although it is often referred to as an Iraqi militia, the Jaysh al Mahdi (or "Mahdi Army") of radical Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr fought Coalition Forces and Iraqi forces in April and August of 2004. The Peshmerga and the Badr Organization are viewed as militias by the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces, while the Mahdi Army is viewed as a potentially insurgent organization.

- Badr Organization. Officially known as the Badr Organization for the Reconstruction and Development, it is the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iran (SCIRI), the largest Shi'ite party in Iraq. It is reported to have links with both Iranian and Iraqi intelligence services and provides protective security for many Shi'ite religious sites as well as religious and secular leaders. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is protected by the Badr militia. The Badr Organization has been implicated in the revenge killings of Ba'athists and has also been involved in combat and street fighting with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.
- Jaysh al Mahdi. The Mahdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr engaged in open combat with Coalition and Iraqi forces in April and August of last year, most notably in the battles in and around Najaf. The

Mahdi Army has continued to exist after an October 2004 ceasefire agreement, although the Iraqi government has made repeated calls for its disbandment. The exact size of the organization is unknown. There is evidence that they are supplied from sources outside of Iraq, most notably Iran.

This report was updated and reissued to Congress in February of 2006. The section devoted to Iraqi militias differed from the earlier assessment. Specifically, its tone was less ambiguous as it declared that the “presence of militias is a continuing threat to the rule of law and a potentially destabilizing influence on both security and governance.” The Department of Defense's concerns over the “integration” of these militias into ISF units differed substantially as well. In the October report, it was assessed that, “The realities of Iraq’s political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term.” In the February report however, the self-integration of the militias into government security forces caused U.S. government concern that while “not inconsistent with the official policy,” it may result “in security forces that may be more loyal to their political support organization than to the central Iraqi government of constitution.”<sup>558</sup>

### ***Uncertain Links Between the Shi'ite Militias and the Government***

These militias were supposed to have been abolished under the guidelines set out by the CPA in the interim government. Iraqi officials state that they now are nominally under the control of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior. However, Iraq's leaders have been ambiguous about the role the militias actually play. In early June 2005, Prime Minister Jaafari held a press conference in which he lauded the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Badr Organization, formerly the Badr Brigade. Iraqi President, and Kurd, Jalal Talibani joined the prime minister as well as the founder of the Badr Organization and SCIRI head, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, at Hakim's headquarters to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Badr group.<sup>559</sup>

The president applauded what he, and presumably al-Jaafari, viewed as the militias' positive contributions to Iraq. Talibani stated, “[The Badr Organization] and the Pesh Merga are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq.”<sup>560</sup> Addressing a variety of allegations against the two militias, Talibani remarked, “It [Badr Organization] is a patriotic group that works for Iraq’s interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of struggle.”<sup>561</sup> Jaafari went on to dub the Badr Organization a “shield” protecting Iraq.

Shi'ites and Kurds see the militias as an important aid in fighting the insurgency. In contrast, Sunnis accuse the militias – particularly the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army, and police and elements of the special security forces dominated by these militias -- of killings, intimidation and a host of other crimes. In contrast, this has led to steadily rising tension, and divisions between Sunni and Shi'ite, over the roles the Shi'ite militias and government forces with large numbers of former militia are playing in any revenge killings.

### ***The Role of the Badr Organization***

Many Sunnis have vehemently condemned the Badr Organization. The Badr Organization, and its precursor the Badr Brigade, was created by SCIRI and trained by the Iranian military. What influence the Iranians may have over the Badr is unclear. Once more, Sunnis assert that the Badr are the ones responsible for the targeting and assassination of a number of senior Sunni clerics, many from the Muslim Scholars' Board. Such charges are virtually impossible to disprove.

While it is far from clear how much the Badr Corps or other Shi'ites are to blame, some Sunnis feel that the Badr Corps has been responsible for targeting Sunni leaders and figures, killing

them and dumping their bodies. Baghdad's central morgue began to detect such killings shortly after the new government was formed on April 28, 2005, and claimed that at least 30 cases had been found by late June.

The killers were said to have worn police uniforms, available at a cheap price throughout Iraq, while seizing some victims. They also had Toyotas and Glock pistols, which are more difficult to obtain. There have also been mass abductions and killings of ordinary Sunnis, like 14 Sunni farmers who were taken from a Baghdad vegetable market on May 5, 2005. It was possible that insurgents have done this to try to foment sectarian tension, but the frequency and location of many revenge killings and acts of intimidation raises questions about whether this is a credible explanation for many incidents.<sup>562</sup>

Many Sunnis opposed the appointment of Bayan Jabr as Minister of the Interior in April 2005, claiming that, as a member of SCIRI, he was a pawn of the Iranians. They also alleged that the ministry's Wolf Brigade, led by Abdul Waleed, was responsible for some of the assassinations of Sunni figures.<sup>563</sup> By the fall of 2005, many Iraqis saw Iraq's Interior Ministry and the police as predominantly Shi'ite in orientation and the ranks of the Badr Brigade as having been incorporated into MOI police forces. The Army, meanwhile, was seen as being predominantly Sunni in makeup.<sup>564</sup>

### *Death Squads and Mystery Killings*

There were more and more reports of revenge killing and anti-Sunni strikes by both the Shi'ite militias and Shi'ite elements in the security forces and police during the rest of 2005, and stronger indications that Shi'ite militias were playing a growing role in Iraq's low-level civil war.<sup>565</sup> There are credible reports that hundred of Sunni bodies have been found in locations like rivers, desert roads, open desert, sewage disposal facilities, and garbage dumps since the new government was formed that April.

The Baghdad morgue reported growing numbers of corpses with their hands bound by police handcuffs, and that it processed 7,553 corpses between January and September 2005, versus only 5,239 for the same period in 2004. Sunni groups like the Moslem Scholars Association have published pictures of such corpses and lists of the dead, and have claimed there are Shi'ite death squadrons. The Inspector General of the Ministry of the Interior, General Nori Nori said that, "There are such groups operating -- yes this is correct." In November, a raid on a secret MOI detention facility in southeastern Baghdad, which was operated by former members of the Badr Brigade, was linked to the death of 18 detainees reported to have died under torture. Some 220 men were held in filthy conditions within this prison and many were subjected to torture.<sup>566</sup>

Minister of Interior Jabr denied any government involvement, and claimed that if MOI security forces and police uniforms and cars have been seen, they were stolen. Other sources, however, confirmed that some of the killings of an estimated 700 Sunnis between August and November 2005 involved men who identified themselves as Ministry of Interior forces.<sup>567</sup> This increased the risk that Iraqi forces could be divided by factions, decreasing their effectiveness and leading to the disintegration of Iraqi forces if Iraq were to descend into full-scale civil war.

The killing of at least 14 Sunnis could be clearly traced to MOI arrest records several weeks earlier.<sup>568</sup> US sources also noted that a large number of members of the Badr Organization had joined the MOI forces, including the police and commando units, since the new government was formed in April 2003. The lines between some MOI units and the Badr Organization were becoming increasingly blurred.

### ***Links to the Iraqi Police and Special Security Forces***

The police expanded from some 31,000 men in July 2004 to nearly 95,000 in July 2005, sometimes with only limited background checks. In the process, substantial numbers of men from both the Badr Organization and the Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army joined the force. In the case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of MOI and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Bader Organization generally tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police. While both the Iraqi government and Coalition claimed the situation was improving, a September 2005 report by the ICG suggested that the process of drafting a constitution had helped exacerbate the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions between Iraqis.<sup>569</sup>

By late 2005, US officials and military sources were complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations and privately acknowledged that they had observed prisoner abuse. Commenting on the futility of filing reports against the incidents, one U.S. official equated it with "trying to put out a forest fire with a bucket of water."<sup>570</sup> They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units, and that they were carrying out illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Since the new government was formed in April 2005 however, it had recruited larger numbers of new Shi'ite members. Its commander, General Rashid Flaih Mohammed was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brigadier General Mohammed Ezzawi Hussein Alwann, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.<sup>571</sup>

As mentioned above, the discovery of some 200 Sunnis held in horrible conditions in a bunker in Baghdad in November 2005 raised further issues. Many were tortured, and the Special Investigative Unit carrying out the detentions was an MOI unit run by an MOI brigadier general and colonel. The colonel was an intelligence officer said to be reporting directly to Jabr.

While the revelations of large-scale abuses draw the greatest attention, less severe, day-to-day incidents are no less important and can be illustrative of the underlying sectarian tension in Iraq. For example, when several policemen arrived at an Iraqi police station with three suspected insurgents in plastic cuffs, U.S. Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Joel Perez had to cut the cuffs because they were too tight and causing the prisoners' hands to swell and turn blue. Later, one of the Iraqi policeman involved confided in a reporter, "They [the insurgents] need to be beaten up. The Americans wont let us...I want to have two cars and tie each hand to a different car and break them in half."<sup>572</sup>

This and previous incidents drew comments by both U.S. and Iraqi officials. U.S. military procedure and policy was clarified in a back-and-forth between Secretary Rumsfeld and Joint Chief of Staff Peter Pace when Pace declared, "it's absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member if they see inhumane treatment being conducted to intervene to stop it." Secretary Rumsfeld countered, "I don't think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it; it's to report it." Pace respectfully reiterated, "If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, sir, they have an obligation to stop it." Putting prisoner abuse in perspective, former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi commented to a British newspaper that "people are doing the same as Saddam's time and worse."<sup>573</sup>

In a February 2006 Department of Defense report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," police, military and justice detention facilities were singled out as being "typically maintained at higher standards than those of the Ministry of Interior facilities." The report also suggested that to correct the "imbalance", joint U.S.-Iraqi "teams will continue to inspect Iraqi detention facilities, with appropriate remediation through Iraqi-led triage and follow-up logistical, security, public relations, and political support."<sup>574</sup>

At the same time, Sunni Islamic insurgents and some Sunni politic figures had every reason to try to implicate the security services. Some of the killings in late November involved key Sunni politicians like Ayad Alizi and Al Hussein, leading members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a member of the Sunni coalition competing in the December 15th elections. Shi'ites seemed to have little reason to strike at such targets.<sup>575</sup>

At the beginning of 2006 it was clear that accusations of "retaliation killings," and the implication of Shi'ite-dominated MOI and security forces in acts of violence perpetrated largely against Sunni Arabs, increased sectarian tensions and moved the country closer toward civil war. This had become a prime concern for U.S. Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., who stated during a press briefing that one of the most important focuses of the U.S. military in Iraq in the coming months would be to train Iraqi forces to operate within the rule of law and with respect for human rights. In addition, he called for efforts to promote "a greater ethnic and sectarian balance within those forces" and a "spirit of national service."<sup>576</sup> In an attempt to address these concerns, the U.S. has tripled the number of training teams being attached to Iraqi police forces.

Shi'ite and Sunni tensions had an impact on U.S. efforts to develop Iraqi forces as well. In December 2006 the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, deployed to Baghdad, had to threaten to demote the readiness rating of an Iraqi Army division scheduled to take over part of the Green Zone and to suspend the transfer of authority indefinitely when Iraq's Defense Ministry refused to confirm the appointment of Col. Muhammed Wasif Taha, a Sunni. U.S. Col. Ed Cardon, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry's fourth brigade, defended the decision saying, "The hand-over was contingent upon their leadership remaining where it was." Although the Defense Ministry eventually capitulated and confirmed Taha as the commander of the brigade, a spokesman for the ministry indicated that it still had the right to replace Taha at a later date.<sup>577</sup>

Abuse of power by Shi'ite dominated security forces also presented new problems in the south. In the predominately Shi'ite city of Basra, British troops arrested 14 Iraqi law enforcement officials, including two senior police intelligence officers, in late January 2006. While several were released, the British claimed those that remained in custody, including the deputy chief of intelligence for Basra, had been involved in political corruption, assassinations and bomb-making.

Local Iraqi officials denounced what they viewed as excessively "random arrests" and threatened to suspend relations with British forces until the men were released. Maj. Peter Cripps, a British military spokesman in Basra, defended the arrests saying that those arrested "were all part of the former internal affairs department that was disbanded by the Ministry of Interior and are now in the criminal intelligence unit and the serious crimes unit. They are alleged to be following their own agenda including, corruption, assassinations and persecutions of citizens."<sup>578</sup>

The British cited the role of militias in the security forces as one of the factors that contributed to the decline of the security situation in Basra, where murder rates doubled to more than one per day between November 2005 and February 2006. The Basra police chief stated that more than half of the 12,000 member forces were militia members and that he could only trust a quarter of

his officers. British efforts to instill humane treatment techniques in local police and teach them forensic investigative methods were frustrated by the release of a video showing British soldiers beating a group of young, unarmed Iraqi boys.<sup>579</sup>

In the early months of 2006, these allegations led to investigations. In February, enough evidence and outcry had accumulated to force the MOI to launch an investigation into allegations it was supporting death squads. This investigation however focused only on one incident in which 22 Iraqi police were briefly detained by U.S. authorities on their way to kill a Sunni prisoner in their custody.<sup>580</sup>

This event led to the first public acknowledgement by the MOI that death squads operated within its own department and the ministry of defense. During a press conference in March, Bayan Jabr, Minister of the Interior said, "The death squads that we have captured are in the defense and interior ministries...There are people who have infiltrated the army and the interior."<sup>581</sup>

In what may have been the largest incident at the time involving MOI security forces, in early March gunmen wearing MOI uniforms allegedly stormed a Sunni owned security firm and abducted 50 of its employees.<sup>582</sup> The Interior Ministry denied its involvement in the event. Later in the same month, investigators discovered and broke up a group of police who ran a kidnapping and extortion ring. Allegedly led by an Iraqi police major general, this group kidnapped individuals, sometimes killing them, and forced their families to pay ransoms that they then pocketed.<sup>583</sup>

Although the MOI continued to deny that it had any role in the increased sectarian violence since the February shrine bombing, accusations mounted and the accumulation of incidents made this denial more difficult. The consistency and continuation of "body dumps", the corpses often exhibiting signs of torture and shot execution style, and strings of abductions in which the gunmen wore ISF uniforms, furthered tension between al-Jaafari and the U.S. who had been pressuring the Prime Minister to rein in the militias.

In late March, the U.S. administration openly voiced its disapproval of al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Ambassador Khalilzad added that due to his lack of leadership, Shi'ite-led militias were now killing more Iraqis than the Sunni insurgency.<sup>584</sup>

Al-Jaafari's response, which warned the U.S. not to interfere with the democratic process in Iraq, addressed the issue of Shi'ite militias being incorporated in the security forces and his political alliance with al-Sadr, whose support put him in office. He stated that he favored engaging with Sadr and his followers instead of isolating him and that he viewed the militias as part of Iraq's "de facto reality." He continued to voice support for a government that looks past sectarian differences and to work toward integrating the militias into the police and army.<sup>585</sup>

### ***The Role of Moqtada al-Sadr***

Unlike most Iraqi religious leaders who are "quietists," and believe the clergy should only play a limited role in politics, Moqtada al-Sadr is an activist who has played a controversial yet powerful role since the fall of Saddam Hussein. He is related to Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Al-Sad and Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr: two of Iraq's greatest activist clerics, both of whom were killed by Saddam Hussein.

Al-Sadr has been accused of having a hand in the murder of rival Shi'ite clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid al-Khoi on April 10, 2003. He attacked the US presence in Iraq almost



immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein and denounced the members of the Iraqi interim government as puppets in a sermon in Najaf as early as July 18, 2003.

### ***The Rise and Temporary Fall of the Mahdi Militia***

Sadr's militia began playing a role in the intra-sect Shi'ite power struggle as early as October 13, 2003, when al-Sadr's men attacked supporters of moderate Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani near the Imam Hussein shrine.<sup>586</sup> His Mahdi Army presented a serious threat to Coalition and government forces in Najaf, in Sadr City in Baghdad, and in other Shi'ite areas in the south during much of the summer and early fall of 2004. Muqtada al-Sadr called on his followers in Iraq to rise up and attack US forces on August 5th, and subsequent fights broke out in three cities between his supporters and US and Iraqi security forces, especially in Najaf and Sadr City in Baghdad. US officials indicated that US forces faced up to 160 attacks per week in Sadr City between August and September 2004 of varying severity.

The defeat of Sadr's forces, and a series of political compromises, led Sadr to turn away from armed struggle in the late fall and early winter of 2004. US officials indicated that the number of attacks dropped significantly to between zero and five a week in early 2005, and they remained at or below this level through November 2005.

General John Abizaid remarked in March 2005, however, "we have not seen the end of Muqtada Sadr's challenge."<sup>587</sup> Although Iraqi government forces have been able to move in to the area, Sadr's movement still plays a major political role in Sadr City in Baghdad, and remains active in poorer Shi'ite areas throughout the country.

Sadr's supporters sponsored demonstrations calling for US forces to leave Iraq in April 2005, and top Sadr aides in his Independent National Bloc issued warnings to Ibrahim Jaafari, then the prime minister designate, that he must pay more attention to these demands or that the Sadr faction might leave the United Iraqi Alliance and become an active part of the opposition. The group also demanded the release of some 200 Sadr activists arrested during earlier fighting and that all criminal charges against Sadr be dropped.<sup>588</sup>

### ***Resurgence in 2005***

Sadr was able to exploit the political weakness and divisions of other Shi'ite movements in the south and their lack of ability to govern, as well as the fact other hard-line Islamist movements won significant numbers of seats in local governments in key areas like Basra.<sup>589</sup>

In summer 2005, Sadr attempted to collect one million signatures on a petition that asked the Coalition to leave Iraq in what appeared to be his burgeoning attempts to recast himself as a major political force within Iraq. Sadr revived the Mahdi Army, which began to be openly active in parts of Southern Iraq such as Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah, and still had cells in Najaf and Qut as well. While some US official sources stated the army was relatively weak, it began to hold parades again. While only limited numbers of arms were displayed, it was clear that such weapons were still available in the places where they had been hidden during the fighting the previous year.<sup>590</sup>

By the late spring of 2005, the Mahdi Army seemed to be the largest independent force in Basra, played a major role in policing Amarah, and had effectively struck a bargain with the government police in Nasiriyah that allowed it to operate in part of the city. By the late fall of 2005, some sources estimated that some 90% of the 35,000 police in Northeast Baghdad had ties

to Sadr and the Mahdi forces. They were reported to be playing a major role in pushing Sunnis out of Shi'ite neighborhoods.<sup>591</sup>

Unlike most militias, the Mahdi Army had the active participation of Shi'ite clergy, mostly "activists" who strongly supported Sadr. One reason for their rebirth was the lack of effective action by the government. For example, the government police in Nasiriyah had 5,500 men, but was 2,500 men short of its goal.<sup>592</sup> In August 2005, Basra police Chief Hassam Sawadi said that he had lost control over three-quarters of his police force, and that men in his ranks were using their power to assassinate opponents.<sup>593</sup>

Sadr has remained publicly supportive of the political process in Iraq, and has urged Shi'ites to avoid sectarian fighting with the Sunni population. At the same time, his organization was accused of a rash of political assassinations and kidnappings in the Shi'ite south in the summer of 2005. On August 24, 2005, an attack on Sadr's office in Najaf led to unrest among Shi'ite populations there and in other cities. Sadr's movement also began to publicly reassert itself in late summer of 2005, capitalizing on the release of Hazem Araji and other Sadr leaders from prison.

Sadr did, however, continue to call for calm and continued his public support of non-reprisal. He sided with anti-federalist Sunni leaders during the drafting and review of the Iraqi constitution<sup>594</sup> He also supported continued Shi'ite political involvement in the new government, although many fear that he eventually wants to see a more fundamentalist government in control of Iraq.

His organization staged several large demonstrations as a show of strength. In mid-September, militiamen from the Mahdi Army in Basra directly engaged in battles against US and British troops. Shootouts between supporters of Sadr and Coalition forces also erupted in Sadr City during the last week in September. On October 27, members of the Mahdi army clashed with Sunni gunmen outside of Baghdad. The fighting, which occurred in the village of Bismaya in the Nahrawan area south of Baghdad, claimed more than thirty lives.<sup>595</sup> The militia battles in October proved to be the deadliest in months.

### ***Sadr, the December 2005 Elections, and the New Government***

Sadr has pursued both military and political strategies. He entered into a new political alliance with the two largest Shi'ite parties in the country on the very same day his forces battled militias in Bismaya. The alliance brought together Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and Sadr's supporters. The move made Moqtada Sadr an even larger player in Iraqi politics. Because of the deal, Sadr-backed candidates would appear on the same ticket alongside members of the Shi'ite-led government in the December elections. This was a reversal from Sadr's earlier pledged to support the elections but said he would not be supporting any particular list of candidates.

Although US officials were encouraged by Sadr's pledge to support the December 15 elections, Sadr continued to refuse to disband his militia, which continued to grow in power and influence in the fall of 2005. There were also reports that many Mahdi members have joined the police and other government security forces, contributing to the already fragmented nature of the Iraqi security forces.

After the fall of 2005, his organization and other Shi'ite groups with similar beliefs were increasingly accused of political assassinations and kidnappings, as have Kurdish forces in the North. Sadr's Mahdi Army maintains control over certain areas in cities like Basra and Sadr City, and creates an environment of fear according to local accounts.<sup>596</sup>

After the December 15 elections, Sadr's group was awarded more than 30 seats in the parliament. These seats kept Sadr in the Shi'ite Coalition, but they were also instrumental in determining the appointment of al-Jaafari as the next Prime Minister of Iraq. Al-Jaafari's opponent, defeated by only one vote, was a member of SCIRI, an organization that rivaled Sadr's al-Dawa party.<sup>597</sup> Despite the fact that Sadr was not himself an elected official, he and his followers were able to play the role of "king maker" within the Shi'ite coalition.

This de facto political alliance between al-Jaafari and al-Sadr created tensions between these two figures, the U.S. and other members of parliament. As the U.S. sought to pressure al-Jaafari to maintain control of the militias, the Prime Minister increasingly met with disapproval from the Sunni and Kurdish coalitions, and even from some within his own party. Al-Jaafari's relationship with al-Sadr and the al-Dawa party, while the source of American frustration with the Prime Minister, was also al-Jaafari's primary base of support.

### ***Sadr, Iran, and Iraq***

After the December elections, and continuing into 2006, the young cleric visited several of Iraq's neighboring countries in the region. Although not an elected official, during these visits Sadr frequently met with heads of state and often made statements in which he appeared to be speaking on behalf of the Iraqi people or government. In Saudi Arabia, Sadr asked King Abdullah to press the U.S. to commit for a date of withdrawal from Iraq. In late January, amidst international tensions over Iran's nuclear program, Sadr made a statement of solidarity with Tehran during a visit, pledging to come to the defense of the country from an attack by an outside aggressor.<sup>598</sup> Although he did not elaborate, this statement, it was made amid ongoing negotiations to form a coalition government, and exacerbated Sunni fears of a "Shi'ite crescent" based on a Shi'ite dominated Iraqi government aligned with Iran.

In February, Sadr visited President Assad of Syria. This was followed by a trip to Jordan where Sadr said in an interview with al-Jazeera that there was "nothing good" in Iraq's new constitution. In Lebanon, Sadr professed that he had come to promote peace and "to improve relations between the Syrian people and the Lebanese people."<sup>599</sup>

### ***Sadr and the Attack on the Askariya Shrine***

The influence of Sadr and his Mahdi Army was evident in the violence that followed the February attack on the Askariya shrine. Almost immediately after the bombing, al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Army to protect Shi'ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the U.S. and Iraqi government for failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, "If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened."

In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqis: "We got rid of the evil Saddam and now we have a new dictatorship, the dictatorship of Britain, the US and Israel...I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi'ites, to be brothers...Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms." He also ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, "There is no Sunni mosques and Shi'ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims...it is one Islam and one Iraq." He also called for "a united peaceful demonstration in Baghdad" and labeled "Baathists and extremists" as "the enemy."<sup>600</sup>

There were numerous accusations that despite these calls for restraint and unity, the Mahdi Army was conducting attacks against Sunni individuals and destroying and occupying Sunni mosques across Iraq.

Despite a series of coordinated retaliatory attacks carried out in a Shi'ite slum and Sadr-stronghold in Baghdad on March 13, al-Sadr publicly called for restraint again. After numerous car bombs and mortar attacks killed over 50 and wounded nearly 200, Sadr avoided blaming Iraqi Sunnis and instead held the U.S. and al-Qa'ida culpable.<sup>601</sup>

The clerics of both Shi'ite and Sunni factions played a role in instigating and limiting the violence and were able to escalate or deescalate by controlling their followers during this time. This activist role of clerics was in contrast to the secular rule that had been the norm in Iraq both before and during Saddam's era.<sup>602</sup> "The clerics are the kingmakers, the peacemakers and the war-makers," said Ismael Zayer, editor of an Iraqi newspaper. A political scientist at Baghdad University, Hassan Bazzaz concurred: "If the religious leaders decided to go all the way to a civil war they could, in no time."

### ***Sadr, Civil War, the US, and the Coalition***

Al-Sadr would present additional problems in any more intense civil conflict. Sadr also has a unique ability to employ "gun and ballot alike" and his transformation "from obscure rebel-rouser to hunted rebel to statesman." He controls the Mahdi Militia, a small army, as well as the weapons and equipment that go with it and has been willing to use violence in the past. Yet his followers have also dominated the new Iraqi parliament as well as the Ministries of Transportation and Health.<sup>603</sup> Both of these qualities add to the perception among those loyal to Sadr that he is a provider and protector for the Iraqi people.

Sadr has also consistently taken a hard line stance against the presence of U.S. and Coalition forces while exploiting a unique ability to exploit the Shi'ite poor. Sadr has won support among Iraq's poor and dissatisfied Shi'ites in Baghdad and central and southern Iraq.<sup>604</sup> For example, although residents of Baghdad and other middle and upper-class areas have long referred to those that reside in Sadr City slums as "shuruqi," or easties, Sadr followers have turned this derogatory word into a label of pride and defiance.<sup>605</sup>

In an interview, one Sadr aide used terms such as "charity" and "public defense" when describing the duties of the Mahdi Army. Dr. Yousif al-Nasry stated that the army is not only helping Sadr City, but all of Iraq's poor and weak citizens and has helped to build schools and clean city streets in the absence of government services.<sup>606</sup> Yet the extent of these activities remains unclear, to the degree that they occur at all. Additionally, these statements do not indicate whether Sadr and the Mahdi Army genuinely see themselves in this manner, or are simply trying to portray their organization as a servant and protector of the people rather than a threat to Iraqi security. Regardless, Sadr and the Mahdi Army's aid to displaced Shi'ite families arriving in Sadr City, furthered their image as a benevolent force in the Shi'ite community. Those families, which fled the sectarian violence occurring in their home cities, were greeted by a network of Sadr followers already in place to give them shelter in mosques and community centers.<sup>607</sup>

One key question, if the civil fighting does escalate to serious levels, is whether Sadr would seek to dominate the Shi'ite side, actively reject a continued US presence, and turn to Iran. SCIRI might do the same thing under some circumstances, but seems considerably less likely to do so than Sadr.

## ***Internal Shi'ite Divisions***

Shi'ite splits are possible, as are sectarian and ethnic splits. Moreover, few Shi'ites can forget that Sadr is believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Al Khoi right after the fall of Saddam Hussein and for the killing of Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim's brother, in August 2003.

Shi'ite divisions could occur along regional and local lines as well. Basra was effectively taken over by a local government after the January 30, 2005 election that was much more of a Shi'ite fundamentalist government than the mainstream of al Dawa or SCIRI. The local police were intimidated or pushed aside by such elements in May, and Shi'ite militia joined the police and dominated its ranks.

While some of those accused of being involved -- such as police Chief Lt. Colonel Salam Badran -- were affiliated with SCIRI in the past, most such "Islamists" seem more fundamentalist than SCIRI's leadership. There have been reports of threats, beatings, and killings affecting liquor stores, male doctors who treat women, and even barbers cutting hair in "non-Islamic" ways. Individuals in plain clothes have also made threats and put pressure on local businesses.

Sadr's Council for Vice and Virtue launched at least one attack on secular students in Basra for having a mixed picnic.<sup>608</sup> Even if such cases do not divide Iraq's Arab Shi'ites -- and serious issues do exist about how "Islamic" the future government should be in Shi'ite terms and who should rule -- they may well cause even greater fear among Sunnis and increase the risk of civil conflict.<sup>609</sup>

Divisions among Shi'ite groups could put new burdens on Iraq's forces, and/or potentially paralyze or divide key elements of the government. It is not clear if Sadr and other Shi'ite elements will hold together, or if splits will occur. The risk also exists that the Kurds and Shi'ites might split in ways that could lead to civil conflict or that Shi'ite politics may begin to react far more violently to Sunni insurgent bombings and attacks, striking back at the Sunnis rather than seeking to include them.

## ***Insurgent Pressure on the Shi'ites to Move Toward Civil War***

Since the January 30, 2005 election, much of the Sunni insurgent activity has been directly targeted at Shi'ite clergy and political leaders, Shi'ite civilians, and Shi'ite institutions. Attacks have also been targeted for key Shi'ite holidays like the February 19<sup>th</sup> Ashura holiday and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

While most Shi'ite leaders have continued to resist calls for reprisals against Sunnis, other Shi'ites have called for such action, and Shi'ite killings of Sunni clergy and civilians have increased.<sup>610</sup> The resistance of Shi'ite leaders' to this pressure to attack Sunnis caused one US military observer -- Brig. Gen. John Custer -- to state in July 2005 that, "The incredible violence that the Shi'a community has endured over last year leads me to believe that they are smart enough and understanding of the big picture enough to back away from civil war at all costs. The specter of the dark cloud of civil war has moved away. It is much less evident than it was last year."<sup>611</sup>

## ***Accelerating Violence in 2005***

Events, however, have put more and more pressure on Shi'ite restraint. The single deadliest day for Iraqi Shi'ites was August 31 when almost 1,000 Shi'ite pilgrims were killed in a stampede in

Baghdad. The pilgrims were crossing the al-Aima bridge en route to the shrine of Moussa al-Kadhim when rumors began to spread that there were Sunni suicide bombers in their midst. The resulting panic ended in 953 Shi'ites dead, according to the Iraqi interior ministry. Moqtada al-Sadr vowed vengeance against Sunnis, who he believed organized the pandemonium. Later in a sermon, Sadr spoke out against the Coalition's presence in Iraq, as it hampered a sectarian war, which he asserted had already begun.<sup>612</sup> Prior to the stampede, Moqtada al-Sadr had publicly opposed Shi'ite participation in sectarian warfare.

As already mentioned, on September 14, 2005, Iraq's Al-Qa'ida leader and Sunni insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi declared war on Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq. According to the recording posted on the Internet, the declaration came in response to the recent joint U.S.-Iraqi offensive in the town of Tal Afar, a Sunni insurgent stronghold. Zarqawi referred to the assault as an "organized sectarian war." Earlier that day, al Qa'ida said in an Internet posting it was waging a nationwide suicide bombing campaign to avenge the military offensive against Sunni rebels in Tal Afar.

Following Zarqawi's declaration, Baghdad erupted in violence:

- September 14, 2005:
  - At least 167 people die and more than 570 injured as more than a dozen bombs explode throughout Baghdad. Marks the single worst day of killing to hit the capital since the US-led invasion of March 2003.
  - A suicide bomber in a car blew himself up in Baghdad, killing 11 people who lined up to refill gas canisters, police said. The blast in northern Baghdad, which also wounded 14, came hours after what appeared to be a series of coordinated blasts, including one that killed at least 114 people.
  - Gunmen wearing military uniforms surrounded the village of Taaji north of Baghdad and executed 17 men, police said. The dead were members of the Tameem tribe, al-Hayali said. The gunmen looted the village before leaving.
  - A Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded in the Uruba Square in the Zahra district of northwest Baghdad. The terrorist attack killed at least 75 Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 130. The wounded were evacuated to the Al-Shulla Hospital in central Baghdad where another suicide VBIED detonated, causing more civilian casualties.
  - A Suicide Car bomb attack in occurred in a Kadimiya market area north of Baghdad. At least 80 were killed and 150 injured.
  - Task Force Baghdad unit reported striking a VBIED in west Baghdad. The Soldiers established a cordon and began searching the area for triggermen. Several Iraqi civilians were wounded in the attack. There were no U.S. casualties.
  - A VBIED detonated on a U.S. convoy in east Baghdad. The suicide bomber was reportedly driving against traffic before detonating on the convoy. Two U.S. Soldiers received non-life-threatening wounds in the attack. Ten minutes later, a suicide VBIED detonated near a U.S. convoy in southeast Baghdad with no injuries to U.S. personnel or damage to equipment.
  - A VBIED attack against U.S. forces in central Baghdad failed when the terrorist struck an M1 Abrams tank but did not detonate his explosives. The tank crew reported the driver was still alive and trapped inside the vehicle with a 155-millimeter round. The Task Force Baghdad unit secured the site and called for assistance from an explosive ordnance disposal team.
- September 15, 2005:
  - Suicide bombers continued to strike Baghdad, killing at least 31 people, 23 of them Iraqi police and Interior Ministry commandos.

- A suicide bomber killed 15 police commandoes in the Dora district of Baghdad, police said. Five civilians were also killed. The blast wounded 21 people. Hours later, two more bombs detonated in the same area. Ten more policemen died in the explosion and ensuing gun battle with insurgents.
- Two police officers were killed and two wounded in Kirkuk.
- Three civilians were killed in an attack on a Ministry of Defense bus east of Baghdad.
- Three bodies of people who had been shot dead were found in the Shula district of Baghdad, police said.
- Three bodies were found in the New Baghdad district. Police said they had been shot dead.
- Gunmen in northern Baghdad killed three Shi'ite pilgrims on route to Karbala for a religious festival.
- Three workers were killed and a dozen wounded in east Baghdad in a drive-by shooting by unidentified gunmen. The attack occurred in an area where laborers gather each day for work.

Violence continued to escalate throughout September, with insurgents killing more than 100 Iraqi civilians on the last two days of the month alone in the predominantly Shi'ite town of Balad, in the Sunni region of Salah ad Din, north of Baghdad.<sup>613</sup> September 2005 was the bloodiest month yet in terms of multiple-fatality insurgent bombings, with 481 Iraqis killed and 1,074 wounded.<sup>614</sup>

The wave of deadly attacks launched by Zarqawi continued into October, and President Bush warned that the violence would further intensify in the run-up to the October 15 referendum and December elections.<sup>615</sup> As violence in Iraq increased in the fall of 2005 so too did the number of sectarian incidents. In one six-week period, more than 30 Iraqis died as part of sectarian attacks in the Ghazaliya neighborhood of Baghdad. Sectarian violence in Baghdad's mixed neighborhoods began accelerating sharply in the summer of 2005 and continued to do so throughout the fall. According to Iraqi government statistics, the number of sectarian targeted killings almost doubled in 2005, in spite of the increased presence of Iraqi security forces on the streets.<sup>616</sup>

In many cases, such as the Ghazaliya murders, the victims were randomly selected based on their religion and had little if any involvement in politics. The ongoing violence also caused many Iraqis to relocate to areas where they constitute the majority. According to Edward Joseph of the Woodrow Wilson Center, "Once displacement starts, it is a never-ending cycle." Joseph believes the key question will be how the minority community reacts after the murder of one of its own: "If they don't flee, if they just hang around and then order up some reprisal killing a little later...it's probably less likely to be civil war." But, Joseph also notes that the current pattern of displacement in Iraq today loosely resembles the departure of Bosnian Muslims in the mid-1990s following attacks by Serbian militias, a development that ended up increasing, not decreasing, the level of violence in that region.

As in 2004, Shi'ite-Sunni violence continued during the holy month of Ramadan in 2005. On the first day of the month-long holiday, a suicide car bomber targeting an Interior Ministry official blew himself up outside Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding several civilians.<sup>617</sup> That same day, an Internet message posted by Al Qa'ida in Iraq called for additional attacks during the holy month as well as a boycott of the October 15 referendum. The following day, October 5, a suicide car bomb exploded outside the Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama Mosque in Hillah as Shi'ite worshippers gathered to pray, killing at least 24 and wounding several dozen.<sup>618</sup>

## ***Violence in 2006***

In early January 2006, violence spiked again, killing nearly 200 people in two days. One suicide attack occurred at a Shi'ite shrine in Karbala killing 63 and wounding 120. As political groups attempted to construct a governing coalition, protests broke out in Sadr City where over 5,000 Shi'ites condemned the violence and chastised Sunni leaders. SCIRI issued a warning to the Sunni insurgents that its patience was wearing thin and that it may use the Badr Brigade to conduct retaliation attacks. Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi'ite-dominated government was acting as an "accomplice" in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening militias.<sup>619</sup>

According to Aya Abu Jihad, the owner of a store in Baghdad, "People are being killed because they are Shi'ites, and others are killed because they are Sunnis." Some senior Iraqi government officials believed that the wave of sectarian violence posed a greater threat to stability than did the possible rejection of the draft constitution by a majority of Iraqis: "The government now is so inefficient at controlling the situation that the security situation has deteriorated, and so the political situation has deteriorated...They have to get security under control, otherwise [the constitution] is not going to matter." A former general in the Iraqi army known as Abu Arab echoed that sentiment, saying, "People don't want a constitution-they want security."<sup>620</sup>

At the same time, senior Shi'ite and Kurdish politicians still pressed for a peaceful political solution and for an inclusive unity government. Even relative hard line Shi'ite politicians like Abdelaziz Hakim pressed for more care on the part of Shi'ite forces in dealing with Sunnis. On February 8, 2006, he called for Iraq's security forces "to continue strongly confronting terrorists but with more consideration to human rights."

The Shi'ite holiday of Ashoura passed in early February 2006 without any major incidents or attacks. In the two years previous however, insurgents killed over 230 Shi'ites.

Despite acts of sectarian violence, the Pentagon maintained in February 2006 that the overall number of incidents remained low when compared with total attacks. However it did not rule out the possibility that this would remain the case in the future. Additionally, it stated that sectarian violence is "frequently a matter of perception" and that it was difficult to distinguish between attacks on citizens in general and those intentionally aimed at a particular sect.<sup>621</sup>

The bombing of the Askariya Shrine, revered by Shi'ites, caused a dramatic upsurge in sectarian violence in late February, resulting in the deaths of well over 300 Iraqis in five days. Shi'ite demonstrations in the streets of Iraq were numerous. Peaceful demonstrations were held across the Shi'ite dominated south and in ethnically mixed cities such as Kirkuk.<sup>622</sup> Statements by participants and average civilians gave indications that Shi'ite resistance to sectarian conflict may have worn out. A Shi'ite employee of the Trade Ministry stated this much to a reporter: "You have a TV, you follow the news...Who is most often killed? Whose mosques are exploded? Whose society was destroyed?" The same individual appeared to emphasize the advantage that sheer size would bring the Shi'ites in any civil conflict saying, "If they have 100 people, we have millions...Look at these people [motioning towards the demonstrators] I'm just a drop in this ocean."<sup>623</sup>

Amid demonstrations and condemnations from both Sunni and Shi'ite political leaders, Shi'ite militias such as al-Sadr's Mahdi Army sought revenge against Sunnis and carried out numerous killings and attacks on Sunni mosques. Sunni groups reciprocated.



By noon on the day of the bombing, attacks on Sunni's and Sunni mosques, allegedly by the Mahdi Army, were already being reported. One such attack on a Sunni mosque that occurred in a mixed neighborhood near Sadr City was recounted in a New York Times article the following day:

“ Ahmed al-Samarai, who lives in front of the mosque, said he saw about seven cars full of men wearing black, the signature Mahdi dress, fire machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades at the mosque, gouging a large hole in a side wall.

They entered the building and led away a man who performs the call to prayer, Abu Abdullah, telling his wife and three children to leave the building, Mr. Samarai said. They returned later, poured gasoline in the mosque, and set it on fire. Neighbors are still looking for Mr. Abdullah.”<sup>624</sup>

By Thursday morning, one Iraqi described the environment: “We didn't know how to behave. Chaos was everywhere.” Even the more moderate Shi'ite newspaper, *Al Bayyna al Jadidah*, urged Shi'ites to assert themselves in the face of Sunni violence. Its editorial stated that it was “time to declare war against anyone who tries to conspire against us, who slaughters us every day. It is time to go to the streets and fight those outlaws.”<sup>625</sup>

Al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Militia to protect Shi'ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the U.S. and Iraqi government for not failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, “If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened.” In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqi's: “We got rid of the evil Saddam and now we have a new dictatorship, the dictatorship of Britain, the US and Israel...I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi'ites, to be brothers...Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms.” He also ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, “There is no Sunni mosques and Shi'ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims...it is one Islam and one Iraq.” He also called for “ a united peaceful demonstration in Baghdad” and labeled “Baathists and extremists” as “the enemy.”<sup>626</sup>

The Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also hinted towards a more active posture by Shi'ites saying, “If the security systems are unable to secure necessary protection, the believers are able to do so with the might of God.”<sup>627</sup>

Sunni politicians alleged that Sunni mosques in Baghdad and some southern cities were either attacked or actively occupied by the Mahdi Army in the days following the attacks.<sup>628</sup> The Association of Muslim Scholars, a hard line Sunni clerical organization, alleged on Thursday that 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted.<sup>629</sup> Other, more objective estimates however put the number of mosques attacked at around 30.<sup>630</sup> The association also made direct appeals to al-Sadr to intervene and stop the violence, apparently suspecting he was a primary coordinator of the Shi'ite attacks. Using a title of respect Abdul Salam al-Kubaisi of the group said, “I call on Sayyid Moqtada Sadr and remind him what happened to the blood of both of us in Fallujah, Karbala and Najaf.”<sup>631</sup>

In some Sunni areas, residents, fearing attacks on their mosques, erected barricades and stood watch. In Al Moalimin district, armed men patrolled the roof of the Sunni mosque Malik bin Anas.<sup>632</sup>

## **IX. The Kurds and Other Minorities**

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

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

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

Others noted the increase in dissatisfaction with the central government and the idea of remaining in Iraq among Kurdish populations. Riots and demonstrations protesting the shortages of gas, fuel and power have become more common in Kurdish cities.<sup>633</sup> Some Kurds may also have felt let down by a Constitution that did not specifically address the status of Kirkuk or lay out a clear path to secession.<sup>634</sup>

### ***Kurdish Parties and the Kurdish Militias***

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

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

### ***Tensions Between the Kurds and Other Iraqis***

There are serious tensions between the Kurds, the Turcomans, and Assyrian Christians, as well as between Kurds and Arabs. At a local level, there are many small tribal elements as well as numerous “bodyguards,” and long histories of tensions and feuds. Even if Iraq never divides along national fracture lines, some form of regional or local violence is all too possible.

Insurgent activity in the Kurdish areas was particularly intense in the city of Irbil, which has been the site of several suicide bombings. In summer 2005, Kurdish security officials and the

KDP intelligence service announced the arrest of approximately six insurgent suspects who, the authorities believe, came from six separate and previously unheard of militant organizations. The head of the Irbil security police, Abdulla Ali, stated that there was evidence that the groups had links to international terror groups, established jihadi groups in Iraq like Ansar al-Sunna, and even had links to intelligence services from nearby countries.<sup>635</sup> This evidence was not made public, but the Kurdish authorities stated that it appeared as though various groups were working together and that, to the anger and disappointment of the Kurdish authorities, that local Kurds were assisting them.

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

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

There has been armed violence between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans, as well as struggles over "soft" ethnic cleansing in the North, and there may well be more violence in the future. Many experts feel that the only reason Kirkuk has been relatively peaceful, and still has something approaching a representative government, is that the Kurds have not been strong enough relative to the other factions in the city to impose their will by intimidation or force.

Reports in August 2005 indicated that government police and military forces in the Kurdish north were using their power to intimidate Arabs through abductions and assassinations. Such activity poses the threat of deepening regional fissures. Likewise, the misuse of power by Coalition-sponsored forces could deepen resentment toward Coalition forces, particularly among the Sunni population.<sup>636</sup>

Other Kurdish actions have exacerbated ethnic tension in a struggle for the control of Kirkuk. There are reports that the KDP and PUK systematically kidnapped hundreds of Arabs and Turcomans from the city and transported them to prisons in established Kurdish territory in an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority.<sup>637</sup> This activity allegedly spread to Mosul as well. While some of the abductions had occurred in 2004, reports indicated that there was a renewed effort following the January 30<sup>th</sup> elections that solidified the two parties' primacy in the Kurdish areas.

According to a leaked State Department cable in mid-June 2005, the abducted were taken to KDP and PUK intelligence-run prisons in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah without the knowledge of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of the Interior, but sometimes with US knowledge. In fact, the Emergency Services Unit, a special Kirkuk force within the police, was both closely tied to the US military and implicated in many of the abductions, along with the Asayesh Kurdish intelligence service.<sup>638</sup> It should be noted that the head of the Emergency Services Unit is a former PUK fighter.

Kirkuk province's Kurdish governor, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, stated that the allegations were false. However, the State Department cable indicated that the US 116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team had known about the activity and had asked the Kurdish parties to stop.<sup>639</sup> According to Kirkuk's chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40% of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions, disobeying his orders and following the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, "The main problem is that the loyalty of the police is to the parties and not the police force. They'll obey the parties' orders and disobey us."<sup>640</sup> According to Abdel-Rahman, the provincial police director, Sherko Shakir Hakim, refused to retire as ordered by the government in Baghdad once he was assured that the KDP and PUK would continue to pay him if he stayed on. The various factions in Kirkuk seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continues to present a serious risk of future conflict.

The issue of Kirkuk took on a new importance after the December 2005 elections. In the months prior, thousands of Kurds erected settlements in the city, often with financing from the two main Kurdish parties. In addition, violence began to rise, with 30 assassination-style killings from October through December. Kurdish political groups were increasingly open about their intent to incorporate Kirkuk into Iraqi Kurdistan and continue to repatriate Kurds into the city in an effort to tip the ethnic balance in their favor. They stated they sought to accomplish this by the time of the popular referendum in 2007, which is to determine whether the Tamim province will be governed by the Kurdish regional government, or from Baghdad.<sup>641</sup> The future of Kirkuk will be a central factor for Kurdish political groups as they work to form a governing coalition.

The reelection of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister further frustrated the Kurdish politicians. They accused him of being slow to implement Article 58 of the constitution that stipulates that the question of the "normalization" of Kirkuk must take place by the end of 2007.<sup>642</sup> In fact, the political alliance between Kurds and Shi'ites, once considered natural given their common grievances against the Sunni-dominated Ba'ath party, was opening up to question.<sup>643</sup>

Kurdish views of the increased sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs differed. One perspective has its roots in the historical animosity between Kurds and Arabs. A sectarian civil war could bring benefits to the Kurds if, as one individual said, "our enemies [are] killing each other."<sup>644</sup> According to this theory, if civil war breaks out in Iraq, the Kurds will then be justified in breaking away to form an independent Kurdistan. In this situation, the international community would be forced to acquiesce to such a move.<sup>645</sup>

The opposite view is more hesitant and less optimistic. These individuals worry that although civil war may initially begin in central and southern Iraq, it could spread northward, threatening the stability and relative security they have attained since the 2003 invasion. If this occurs, some believe Iraqi Arabs, as well as Turkey, Syria and Iran would object to Kurdish separation and that countries such as Turkey that have sizeable Kurdish populations, may intervene militarily to prevent an independent Kurdish nation.<sup>646</sup>

### ***Uncertain Kurdish Unity***

Kurdish unity is always problematic. The Kurds have a saying that, "the Kurds have no friends." History shows that this saying should be, "the Kurds have no friends including the Kurds." The Barzani and Talibani factions have fought on several occasions, and there was a state of civil war between them during 1993-1995. PUK forces were able to take control of Irbil in 1994, and put an end to the first attempt to create a unified and elected government that began in 1992.

Barzani's KDP collaborated with Saddam Hussein in 1995, when Hussein sent a full corps of troops into Irbil and other parts of the area occupied by Talibani. Tens of thousands of Kurds and anti-Saddam activists fled the area, and the US did not succeed in brokering a settlement between the two factions until 1998.<sup>647</sup>

Despite past, and potential future tensions and divisions between the PUK and KDP, leaders from both parties signed an agreement in January 2006, which allotted eleven ministerial posts to each group. Minority parties were skeptical of KDP-PUK promises to give remaining posts to political factions who did not win a majority and worried that this further isolated them from any future role in the political process.<sup>648</sup>

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

Kurdish frustration with these political parties manifested itself in violent protests in 2006 during ceremonies marking the anniversary of the March 1988 poison gas attack by Hussein at Halabja. Protestors alleged that the PUK and KDP had misappropriated millions of dollars in foreign aid given to the survivors of the attack.<sup>649</sup> The protestors also complained about the shortage of water and electricity.<sup>650</sup>

The protests, which began at 9am, slowly grew in number and groups began setting fire to tires and throwing rocks at the monument and museum dedicated to those killed under Saddam's rule.<sup>651</sup>

The few PUK dozen guards in front of the monument, who attempted to disperse the crowd by firing into the air, were outnumbered and forced to retreat. The protestors destroyed museum exhibits with rocks and then attempted to set it on fire. At least one protestor was killed by the gunfire from the guards and six others were wounded.<sup>652</sup> A regional official, Shahu Mohammed Saed, who according to reports was one of the targets of the peoples' frustration, blamed the riots on Ansar al-Islam.<sup>653</sup>

## ***The Problem of Resources and Oil***

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

## ***The Turkish Question***

All these problems are still further compounded by the rebirth of Kurdish insurgency in Turkey, and acute Turkish pressure on the Iraqi government, Iraqi Kurds, and MNSTC-I to both deny Turkish Kurdish insurgents a sanctuary, and set any example that would encourage Kurdish separatism in Turkey. The Turkish Kurdish Worker Party (PKK) is a movement that has often used northern Iraq as a sanctuary, and which led to several major division-sized Turkish military

movements into the area under Saddam Hussein. While estimates are uncertain, some 6,000 PKK forces seemed to be in Iraq in the spring of 2005, with another 2,000 across the border.<sup>654</sup> These same factors help explain why Turkey has actively supported Iraq's small Turcoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq's Kurds.

The February 2006 visit to Turkey by Prime Minister al-Jaafari created concern among Kurdish politicians and accusations that the trip was carried out in secret.<sup>655</sup>

## X. The Role of Outsiders in the Insurgency

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

### *Creating a “Shi’ite Crescent”?*

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

Jordan's King Abdullah has claimed that that more than 1 million Iranians have moved into Iraq to influence the January 2005 Iraqi election. The Iranians, King Abdullah argued, have been trying to build pro-Iranian attitudes in Iraq by providing salaries to the unemployed. The King has also said that Iran’s Revolutionary Guards were helping the militant groups fighting the US in Iraq, and warned in an interview with the *Washington Post* of a “Shi’ite Crescent” forming between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>656</sup>

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

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

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

The same sentiment has been echoed by the former interim Iraqi President, Ghazi Al-Yawar, a Sunni and a pro-Saudi tribal leader. “Unfortunately, time is proving, and the situation is proving, beyond any doubt that Iran has very obvious interference in our business -- a lot of money, a lot of intelligence activities and almost interfering daily in business and many [provincial] governorates, especially in the southeast side of Iraq.” Mr. Al-Yawar asserted that Iraq should not go in the direction of Iran in creating a religious oriented government. He was quoted in a *Washington Post* interview as saying “We cannot have a sectarian or religious government... We really will not accept a religious state in Iraq. We haven't seen a model that succeeded.”<sup>657</sup>

Both Iranian and Iraqi Shi’ites rejected these comments. Iran called King Abdullah’s comment “an insult” to Iraq. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, also called on Ghazi Al-Yawar to retract his statement and accused King Abdullah II and Al-Yawar of wanting to influence the election against Iraqi Shi’ites. Asefi said “Unfortunately, some political currents in Iraq seek to tarnish the trend of election there and cause concern in the public opinion...We

expect that Mr. al-Yawar takes the existing sensitive situation into consideration and avoids repeating such comments."<sup>658</sup>

Iraqi Shi'ites also reacted to King Abdullah's comment about the fear of a "Shi'ite Crescent." Jordan's King Abdullah was asked to apologize by Shi'ites. The Najaf Theological Center issued a statement, in which they accused the King of meddling in Iraq's internal affairs.<sup>659</sup>

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

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

### ***The Views of the Arab Gulf States***

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

When a draft constitution did not acknowledge Iraq's Arab and Muslim identity, the General Secretary of the GCC called the Iraqi constitution "a catastrophe." The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also warned that if the constitution does not accommodate the Iraqi Sunni community, it would result in sectarian disputes that may threaten the unity of Iraq.<sup>660</sup>

Prince Saud al-Faisal later urged the US to pressure Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurdish government leaders to work to bring the Iraqi people together. He said, "[Americans] talk now about Sunnis as if they were separate entity from the Shi'ite." al-Faisal reiterated his fear of an Iraqi civil war saying, "If you allow civil war, Iraq is finished forever."<sup>661</sup>

Al-Faisal also predicted that a civil war in Iraq could have dire consequences in the region and indicated the Kingdom feared an Iran-Iraq alliance. The Saudi Foreign Minister asserted "We (US and Saudi Arabia) fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait." He added that the US policy in Iraq is "handing the whole country over to Iran without reason." Iranians have established their influence within Iraq, al-Faisal said, because they "pay money ... install their own people (and) even establish police forces and arm the militias that are there."<sup>662</sup>

### ***A Clash within a Civilization?***

One should not exaggerate Iraq's role in any clash within a civilization. The more dire predictions of a clash between Sunni and Shi'ite that polarizes the Gulf and Middle East may well be exaggerated. The fact remains, however, that this is what Bin Laden, Zarqawi, and other neo-Salafi extremists are seeking. The battle in Iraq is only part of the much broader struggle by neo-Salafi extremists to capture the Arab and Islamic world. The outcome in Iraq will be critical but only part of a much broader struggle.

Nonetheless, the possibility is there, should Iraq fall into civil war or a limited civil conflict, for countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia to increase support and funding for their respective



sectarian constituents in Iraq, Shi'ite and Sunni respectively. Although this would not be the type of "clash" envisioned by Islamist extremists, it could take the form of a power struggle between neighboring Shi'ite and Sunni countries that is played out in a weakened Iraqi state.<sup>663</sup>

### *The Problem of Syria*

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

General George Casey, the commander of the MNF, has been careful not to exaggerate the threat of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Casey has warned that Syria has allowed Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein to provide money, supplies, and direction to Sunni insurgents, and continues to be a serious source of infiltration by foreign volunteers.<sup>664</sup> General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2005:

There are former regime leaders who come and go from Syria, who operate out of Syria, and they do planning, and they provide resources to the insurgency in Iraq. I have no hard evidence that the Syrian government is actually complicit with those people, but we certainly have evidence that people at low levels with the Syrian government know that they're there and what they're up to.<sup>665</sup>

The US State Department spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:<sup>666</sup>

I think that what we've seen, again, are some efforts, but it certainly isn't enough. We do believe the Syrians can do more. We do believe there's more they can do along the border to tighten controls.

We do believe that there's more that they can do to deal with the regime elements that are operating out of Syria itself and are supporting or encouraging the insurgents there.

And so, again, it's not simply a matter of them not being able to take the actions, at least from our perspective. Part of it is an unwillingness to take the actions that we know are necessary and they know are necessary.

In late February 2005, the Baghdad television station al-Iraqiya aired taped confessions of insurgents captured in Iraq. Many of the men, from Sudan, Egypt and Iraq, claimed that they were trained in Syria – at least three said they had been trained, controlled and paid by Syrian intelligence officials. They were instructed to kidnap, behead and assassinate Iraqi security forces. The majority of the men expressed remorse for their actions and said they were driven almost exclusively by monetary rewards; there was almost no mention of religious or nationalistic motivation.

Syria has repeatedly and emphatically denied that it supports or harbors any persons involved in the insurgency in Iraq. After months of American pressure and accusations, however, Syrian authorities delivered a group suspected of supporting the insurgency from Syria to Iraqi officials in February 2005. Among the captives handed over was Sabawi Ibrahim Hassan, Saddam Hussein's half-brother and a leading financier for the insurgency. Syria's Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, stated that Syria was doing all that it could but that it needed equipment tailored to policing the borders, such as night vision goggles.<sup>667</sup>

There have also been reports that Zarqawi obtains most of his new young volunteers through Syria, and that they are recruited and transited in ways that have to be known to Syrian intelligence. There have also been media reports that Zarqawi's top lieutenants, and perhaps Zarqawi himself, have met in Syria for planning sessions.<sup>668</sup> These reports were called into question by US intelligence assessments in June 2005.

US officials and commanders, as well as Iraqi officials, acknowledge that Syria has made some efforts to improve its border security and reduce infiltration. In summer 2005, Syrian security forces fought suspected militants, possibly former bodyguards of Saddam Hussein, for two days near Qassioun Mountain, and a sweep of the border area with Lebanon led to the arrest of some 34 suspected militants. In a high profile case, Syria arrested a man and his brother's wife who they accused of facilitating militants' passage into Iraq. The woman admitted on Al Arabiya satellite television that the brothers had crossed into Iraq to join Saddam's Fedayeen prior to the Coalition invasion.<sup>669</sup>

US Central Command director of intelligence, Brigadier General John Custer acknowledged in July 2005 the moves that Syria had made as well as the problems in patrolling the border. Custer stated that Syria had bolstered the forces along the eastern border with units relocated from Lebanon. In comments that seemed to contradict what other intelligence officials had said, Custer stated:<sup>670</sup>

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

The British military attaché in Damascus, Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis, inspected the Syrian efforts at the border and agreed with Custer's assessment. Custer suggested that the security environment on the border was a combination of a tradition of lawlessness and lack of Syrian ability to police the area, creating a greater impression of Syrian complicity than there actually was. He stated, "It's not a question of intent—it's simply capacity and capability. You've got a 600-kilometer border there, some of the toughest desert, and you have a thousand-year-old culture of smuggling. Smuggling men now is no different than smuggling men a 1,000 years ago. It's all a smuggling economy."<sup>671</sup> Syria faces problems because its border forces are relatively weak, they lack training and equipment, and much of the border is only demarcated by an earthen beam. At the same time, they feel Syria deliberately turns a blind eye towards many operations, and the large number of Islamist extremist volunteers crossing the border.

Cash couriers bring unknown sums of cash across the border. Because Iraq's formal financial system is still maturing, and because porous borders allow for the easy transfer of money carried across by human mules, this is an effective and preferred method for financing the insurgency from abroad. Syria is a particular concern in this regard, as identified by Daniel L. Glaser. Through various sanctions programs, the Treasury Department has targeted Syrian individuals, entities, and officials for a range of issues, including harboring assets of the former Iraqi regime, interfering in Lebanon, inadequately policing the flow of cash across its borders, and failing to implement money laundering and terrorist financing controls.<sup>672</sup>

There have been conflicting reports over the extent of the financial ties between Syria and the insurgency in Iraq and the degree of Syrian government complicity. An Iraqi official claimed that Syria had agreed to turn over 3 billion dollars of money that originated with Hussein or his supporters. President Assad however reduced this number significantly to 200 million. In 2004,

The U.S. asserted that the state controlled Commercial Bank of Syria was laundering money on behalf of insurgent groups in Iraq. Another report suggests that efforts to stop the flow of money from Syria to Iraq have only accumulated one billion, and that much more is slipping by undetected.<sup>673</sup>

Some analysts have suggested that the regime in Damascus may view the insurgency in Iraq as a means to 'export' their own Islamist extremists who might otherwise take aim at Assad's secular regime (led by an Alawite minority). However, such a view, analysts say, is extremely near-sighted as it is quite possible that extremists in Iraq could cross back into Syria, bringing practical guerilla warfare experience with them much like the Mujahedeen who fought in the Afghan war brought back to their countries of origin. Such hardened and trained militants could then pose a very serious threat to the ruling regime. As one commentator stated, "They [militants and Syria] may have slept in the same bed to fight the Americans, but what's important for al Qa'ida is that it has entered the bedroom [Syria] and secured a foothold there."<sup>674</sup>

Indeed, such views were supported by classified CIA and US State Department studies in summer 2005. Analysts referred to the return of experienced and trained militants to their country of origin or third party country as "bleed out" or "terrorist dispersal."<sup>675</sup> The studies sought to compare the returning Mujahedeen from Afghanistan to those who fought in Iraq. Like Syria, those countries could be threatened by the fighters who return with advanced warfare skills.<sup>676</sup> A Marine Corps spokesman pointed out that if nothing else, certain techniques such as the use of IEDs had already been transferred from Iraq to combat zones like Afghanistan. Experts, however, point to the fact that while the Afghan war attracted thousands of foreign fighters, Iraq has yet to do so, meaning that the potential number of returning veterans would be much less.<sup>677</sup>

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef echoed the conclusions of the CIA and State Department studies, pointing out that many of the terrorists that operated in Saudi from May 2003 on were either veterans of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, or had trained in the camps that operated until Operation Enduring Freedom eliminated them. Nayef and other Saudi officials believe that the Saudis that return from the conflict in Iraq will have skills that are even more lethal than those exhibited by the Afghan war veterans. Nayef stated, "We expect the worst from those who went to Iraq. They will be worse, and we will be ready for them."<sup>678</sup>

In a speech before the UN Security Council in May 2005, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari asked that Iraq's neighboring states do more to prevent terrorists from crossing into Iraq. Syria figured prominently in his speech, in which he acknowledged the efforts by the government but implored the regime to make greater efforts. Zebari stated, "We have learned recently that Syria has stopped more than a thousand foreign fighters from entering Iraq from Syria. We welcome this action but note that it confirms our long-held view that Syria has been one of the main transit routes for foreign terrorists as well as for remnants of the previous regime."<sup>679</sup> Reportedly, another Iraqi official handed a list over to the Syrians that contained the names, addresses, and specific roles in planning attacks in Iraq of individuals living in Damascus. According to the Iraqi official, the Syrians ignored the list.<sup>680</sup>

One senior US intelligence official echoed the foreign minister, stating, "There's no question that Syrian territory plays a significant role with regard to how outside figures [move] into the insurgency in Iraq. The problems with the regime are a mixture of willingness and capability."<sup>681</sup>

In January of 2006, an AH-64 Apache was downed by a surface-to-air missile shot by an insurgent group led by Abu Ayman. The group reportedly had ties to Syrian intelligence and its

ranks were composed at least partly by Syrian fighters.<sup>682</sup> Although it is unknown if the SAM originated in Syria or Iraq, in the years before Operation Iraqi Freedom U.S. intelligence indicated that Syria had become an entry point for eastern European military equipment, such as anti-aircraft weapons and surface-to-air-missiles, on its way to Iraq.<sup>683</sup>

A Washington Post article that ran in early summer 2005 featured an interview with a proclaimed insurgent sympathizer/organizer within Syria. The man, Abu Ibrahim, made several claims about the insurgency and its relation to Syria. He dubbed Syria a “hub” for organizing insurgents, and claimed that when the US pressured the Syrian government in late 2004, Syrian agents took men like him into custody only to be released several days later.<sup>684</sup>

He openly admitted to ferrying men, weapons, and money into Iraq, as well as possibly fighting on one occasion, and stated that Syrian agents routinely tailed him but that they did not interfere with his activities. Ibrahim stated that in the early days of the war, Syrian border guards waved busloads of would-be insurgents through checkpoints and into Iraq.<sup>685</sup> He claimed that he had seen a rise in the number of Saudis coming to Syria to be transported to Iraq to join the insurgency. Purportedly, Ibrahim and others were inspired by a radical Syrian preacher named Abu Qaqa. When he asked a sheik why the Syrian government had not arrested them for their activities, “He would tell us it was because we weren’t saying anything against the government, that we were focusing on the common enemy, America and Israel, that beards and epaulets were in one trench together.”<sup>686</sup> Though it may be impossible to verify Abu Ibrahim’s claims, they do not appear to differ greatly from the public statements and assessments of the US military and intelligence community.

Iraq’s Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, repeated the prime minister’s call to neighboring countries in July 2005. Jabr met with the interior ministers from Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in Istanbul, and reiterated that the Iraqi government wanted the neighboring countries to do more to staunch the flow of weapons and insurgents into Iraq.<sup>687</sup> The ministers released a communiqué that condemned the murder of Egypt’s ambassador, pledged to prevent terrorists from using their territories as bases and recruitment centers for terrorists, and called for the rapid exchange of information on terror suspects and their movements. Jabr, commenting before meeting with the ministers, stated, “I will say clearly in my speech about the countries – maybe without names but they know themselves – the countries who support directly or indirectly the insurgents. I will talk to these countries to stop these activities and to cut short these terrorists.”<sup>688</sup>

In July 2005, the US Treasury Department announced that information obtained from Saddam Hussein’s half brother and former advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hasan al-Tikriti, (who had been captured in a raid in Tikrit four months earlier) indicated that the Tikriti family was responsible for supplying money, arms, explosives and other support to the insurgents in Iraq from bases in Syria. Shortly thereafter, the US Treasury Department announced it was blocking the assets of six of Saddam Hussein’s nephews, all sons of al-Tikriti.<sup>689</sup> Stuart Levey, the US Treasury’s Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence stated, “This action targets the money flows of former regime elements actively supporting attacks against Coalition forces and the Iraqi people.”<sup>690</sup> Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Danier Glaser asserted that cash couriers from the region, Syria in particular, were the primary method for funnelling money to insurgents. He stated that large sums belonging to former Iraqi officials who are now in Syria, or who are now controlled by Syria, are responsible for much of the financing.<sup>691</sup>

A number of al-Tikriti's sons have been particularly active in financing the Iraqi insurgency. One son, Ayman Sabawi was captured in Tikrit in May. In late September Iraqi authorities announced he had been sentenced to life in prison for his role in funding the Iraqi insurgency and for bomb making. Iraqi authorities had not announced the trial had begun and the verdict, the first against a family member of Saddam Hussein, took many by surprise.<sup>692</sup> Tareq Khalaf Mizal, an Iraqi militant arrested alongside Sabawi was sentenced to six years in prison for his role. Having allegedly confessed to other crimes while in detention, Sabawi is due to stand trial again in November.

A second son, Yasir Sabawi Ibrahim was arrested by Iraqi security officials in Baghdad on October 19, 2005. In a surprise twist, Damascus had "pushed" Sabawi out of Syria only a few days before. Although Syrian authorities did not hand Sabawi over to Iraqi authorities, they promptly informed US authorities about his presence in Baghdad. US officials passed the information onto the Iraqi Defense Ministry whose security forces then carried out the raid on Sabawi's apartment. Believed to be second-in-command of the Iraqi-led insurgency (behind Younis al-Ahmad), Yasir is accused of using money from the Ba'ath Party in Syria, Jordan and Yemen to fund the insurgency in Iraq.<sup>693</sup> A third son, Omar, is suspected of being behind several attacks against US forces in Mosul.<sup>694</sup>

Despite Damascus' role in the capture of Yasir (largely seen as a goodwill gesture towards Washington at a time of increased tensions between the two countries), a number of former Ba'ath Party leaders, including al-Ahmad, are believed to still be in Syria. But the capture of yet another nephew of the former Iraqi dictator confirmed the strong ties between members of the former President's family and the Iraqi insurgency.

US officials commented that as of summer 2005, some intelligence showed that Syrians were providing weapons, training, money, and perhaps even "barracks-like housing" for volunteers who had made their way from Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the intelligence indicated that the makeshift staging areas for militants preparing to cross the border into Iraq had become more complex.<sup>695</sup> A series of *Financial Times* interviews with would-be militants and their families in summer 2005 revealed the extent to which Syria might be aiding the insurgency. A mother of one fighter stated, "...you go to a mosque to make initial contact. Then you are sent to a private home and from there for a week's intensive training inside Syria."<sup>696</sup> The militants who were interviewed claimed that they were trained in remote Syrian territory, close to the Iraqi border, with a focus on how to use Kalashnikovs, RPGs, and remote detonators. The fighters claimed that some attacks were even planned from Syrian territory.<sup>697</sup>

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both made it clear in mid-2005 that they felt that Syria continued to allow both Iraqi Ba'athist and Islamist extremist elements to operate inside Syria and across the Syrian-Iraqi border.<sup>698</sup> US Lt. Gen. John Vines estimated in summer 2005 that about 150 fighters crossed into Iraq from Syria each month.<sup>699</sup> This presented problems for both Iraqi and Coalition forces because Iraq had comparatively few border posts, many of which were isolated and had been attacked, destroyed, or abandoned.<sup>700</sup> A major effort was underway to rebuild them and strengthen the Iraqi border forces, but it has made limited progress, and the morale and effectiveness of these border forces is often still low.

Washington's warnings to Damascus over border security intensified during the fall of 2005. On October 7, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Hayat*: "They (Americans) have no patrols at the border, not a single American or Iraqi on their side of the

border...We cannot control the border from one side.”<sup>701</sup> Assad's comments came a day after President Bush and Prime Minister Blair both issued renewed warnings against continued Syrian and Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, specifically their roles in giving shelter to Islamic extremists.

A senior US official also suggested that the war might have spread beyond Iraq's borders, telling the *Financial Times* “We are concerned that Syria is allowing its territory to be part of the Iraqi battlefield. That's a choice the Syrians made. We think that is an unwise choice.”<sup>702</sup> In his interview with Al Hayat, Assad said the absence of security along the border was hurting Syria and maintained “controlling it will help Syria because the chaos in Iraq affects us.” Assad said his country had arrested more than 1,300 infiltrators from Iraq since the war began.<sup>703</sup> The following day, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch responded by saying the US was “ask[ing] the Syrian government not to interfere in such matters.” Welch went on to say, “It appears that they are not listening and it seems this behavior is not changing.”<sup>704</sup> The rhetorical exchanges, however, did not prevent the Syrian Airlines Company from flying its inaugural post-Saddam era flight between Damascus and Baghdad on October 11. It was the first regular flight to operate between the two capitals in a quarter of a century.<sup>705</sup>

On September 12, 2005, in a State Department briefing, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said that Syria was the “number one offender” in the Middle East working to impede the success of Iraq. Khalilzad said Syria was knowingly allowing terrorists to use its territory for training exercises and permitting them to transit across Syria into Iraq and kill Iraqis.<sup>706</sup> This followed the September 10, 2005 announcement by Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr that Iraq would close its border with Syria at the Rabbiah crossing point near the city of Mosul, beginning the following day.

The border area around Huasaybah (Qusaybah) in Iraq has been a center for smuggling and criminal activity. Two Muslim tribes in the area – the Mahalowis and Salmanis – have long controlled illegal trade across the border and seem to permit insurgent activity with at least Syrian tolerance. The Iraqi government also proved unable to secure the area. A 400 man Iraqi unit sent in to try to secure Huasaybah in March 2000 virtually collapsed and was forced to hide out in a local phosphate plant.<sup>707</sup>

The route along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha to Ubaydi, Qaim, Kirbilah, Qusaybah, and Abu Kamal in Syria has been a center and partial sanctuary for insurgent forces and a conduit for volunteers and supplies coming in from Syria. By the spring of 2005 it became a location for some of the insurgents who fled from the fighting in Ramadi and Fallujah to regroup, prompting the US Marine Corps to launch its largest offensive since Fallujah against insurgent forces in the area. During the operations, US forces sometimes met stiff resistance from both Iraqi Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremist groups.<sup>708</sup>

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

This may help, but Iraq's border security forces have so far been some of its most ineffective units. Many of its new forts are abandoned, and other units that have remained exhibit minimal

activity. Yet, even if Iraq's border forces were ready and its neighbors actively helped, border security would still be a problem, in part because they are often vast, uninhabited areas.

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

Syria has an Alawite-led regime that is more Shi'ite than Sunni, and while it sees its support of Sunni insurgents as a way of weakening the potential threat from a US presence in Syria, it also maintains ties to Shi'ite factions as well. While it may tolerate and encourage former Iraqi Ba'athist operations in Syria, and transit by Islamist extremists, Syria also maintains ties to elements of formerly Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'ite groups like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da'wa and Al-Da'wa - Tanzim al-Iraq that it first developed during the Iran-Iraq War.

### ***The Problem of Iran***

The role Iran plays in the Iraqi insurgency is highly controversial. Citing Iranian sources, a Time Magazine article stated that the Supreme National Security Council of Iran concluded in September 2002, before the U.S. invasion, that "It is necessary to adopt an active policy in order to prevent long-term and short-term dangers to Iran."<sup>709</sup>

Iran certainly has active ties to several key Shi'ite political parties. These include key elements in the Shi'ite-based United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that emerged as Iraq's most important political coalition in the January and December 2005 elections: the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da'wa and Al-Da'wa - Tanzim al-Iraq. The Revolutionary Guard and Iranian intelligence have been active in southern Iraq, as well as other areas, since the early 1980s. They almost certainly have a network of active agents in Iraq at present. There are also some indications that Lebanese Hezbollah has established a presence in Iraq.<sup>710</sup>

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

Iraqi interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan claimed in July 2004 that Iran remained his country's "first enemy," supporting "terrorism and bringing enemies into Iraq...I've seen clear interference in Iraqi issues by Iran...Iran interferes in order to kill democracy." A few months later Sha'alan -- a secular Shi'ite who is one of Iran's most outspoken critics in Iraq -- added that the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy, and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq."<sup>711</sup> Sha'alan made several points in a briefing on September 22, 2004:

- Iranian intervention and support of Sadr pose major threats; and some infiltration has taken place across the Syria border.
- Iran is behind Sadr. It uses Iranian pilgrims and sends arms, money, and drugs across the border.
- Iraq must have strong border defence forces. "If doors and windows are empty, no amount of cleaning will ever get rid of the dust."

In a study of Iran's role in Iraq, the International Crisis Group noted that an Iranian cleric and close associate of Ayatollah Sistani warned in November 2004 that: "Iran's policy in Iraq is 100 per cent wrong. In trying to keep the Americans busy they have furthered the suffering of ordinary Iraqis...We are not asking them to help the Americans, but what they are doing is not in the interests of the Iraqi people; it is making things worse. We [Iranians] have lost the trust of the Iraqi people [*Mardom-e Aragh az dast dadeem*]."<sup>712</sup>

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

In an extraordinary interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein's "Army of Muhammad," claimed that his group regularly received arms and money from both Syria and Iran. "Many factions of the resistance are receiving aid from the neighboring countries," he said. "We got aid primarily from Iran."<sup>713</sup>

On October 13, the Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that Iraqi security forces had arrested 10 Iranian "infiltrators" trying to enter the country illegally. A total of 88 suspected insurgents were arrested in the raid, including one Somali citizen. Iraqi security forces also seized a number of weapons and ammunition caches.<sup>714</sup> In a similar incident in July 2005, Iraqi border guards exchanged fire with gunmen crossing into Iraq from Iran. The Iraqi security forces also uncovered a cache of explosives, timers and detonators.<sup>715</sup> Such incidents, in addition to growing allegations of Iranian involvement by Baghdad and Washington, suggest that Iran may have moved from having the ability to create unrest and violence in Iraq to actively supporting insurgents.

According to what several newspapers claim are classified intelligence reports, British intelligence officials suspect insurgents led by Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani are responsible for the deaths of at least 11 British soldiers in southern Iraq.<sup>716</sup> An investigation of Iranian involvement in Iraq in August of 2005 by *Time Magazine* identified al-Sheibani as the leader of the insurgency in the south. According to the magazine, the IRGC had been instrumental in creating the al-Sheibani group and providing it with weapons and training. US intelligence officials also believe the group, estimated to number almost 300 militants, is responsible for at least 37 bombs against US troops in 2005 alone.<sup>717</sup> British officials accused a second Tehran-backed militia group, the Mujahedeen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (MIRI), of having killed six British Royal Military Police in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.<sup>718</sup>

In early October 2005, the British government publicly blamed Iran for the deaths of eight British soldiers in southern Iraq. Although British officials had complained to Tehran about ongoing arms smuggling across the porous Iran-Iraq border earlier in the year, this marked the first time London officially implicated Tehran in the deaths of Coalition troops. British officials accused Iran's Revolutionary Guard of supplying advanced technology—"shaped charges" capable of penetrating even the toughest armor to insurgents in Iraq, and of trying to further destabilize the country.<sup>719</sup> Echoing British accusations, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated that some weapons found in Iraq have "clearly [and] unambiguously" originated from Iran.<sup>720</sup>

The *London Times* in September 2005 identified at least a dozen active Islamic groups with ties to Tehran. Eight were singled out as having considerable cross-border influence.<sup>721</sup>



- **Badr Brigades:** A Shi'ite militia force of 12,000 trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and blamed for a number of killings of Sunni Muslims. They are thought to control several cities in southern Iraq.
- **Islamic Dawaa Party:** A Shi'ite party that has strong links to Iran. Its leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the present Prime Minister, has vowed to improve ties between the two neighbours.
- **Mahdi Army:** Received arms and volunteers from Iran during its battle against US and British troops last year. The group's commander in Basra, Ahmed al-Fartusi, was arrested by British forces in mid-September 2005.
- **Mujahideen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq:** A Tehran-backed militia blamed for the murder of six British Royal Military Police soldiers in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.
- **Thar Allah (Vengeance of God):** An Iranian-backed terror group blamed for killing former members of the ruling Ba'ath party and enforcing strict Islamic law.
- **Jamaat al-Fudalah (Group of the Virtuous):** A Paramilitary group that imposes Islamic rules on Shi areas and has attacked shops selling alcohol and music.
- **Al-Fadilah (Morality):** A Secret political movement financed by Iran. It is thought to have many members among provincial officials.
- **Al-Quawaid al-Islamiya (Islamic Bases):** An Iranian-backed Islamic movement that uses force to impose Islamic law.

A number of experts believe that Tehran-backed militias have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. In September 2005, Iraq's National Security Adviser, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, admitted that insurgents had penetrated Iraqi police forces in many parts of the country, but refused to speculate about the extent of the infiltration.<sup>722</sup>

Some reports suggest that between 70 and 90 percent of Basra's police force has been infiltrated by religious and political factions. The Mahdi Army in particular, is believed to have almost de facto control over the police. Not surprisingly, corruption and violence is on the rise within the force. More than 1,300 murders were documented in Basra during the first nine months of 2005, many of them allegedly by men in police uniform.<sup>723</sup> A second Tehran-backed group, the Badr Brigades, controlled the city's bureau of internal affairs up until Spring 2005.<sup>724</sup> All in a city not considered an al-Sadr stronghold, an individual frequently associated with these groups.

There are also reports of Iranian backed-groups exerting influence over the lives of everyday Iraqis. Achieving a government job in Basra today is almost impossible without the sponsorship of one of these groups. Teaching posts in local schools and universities are increasingly filled only by those deemed ideologically loyal to Iran.<sup>725</sup> Iranian goods flood local markets and Farsi is becoming the area's second language.<sup>726</sup>

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

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

As General George Casey put it, "I don't see substantial Iranian influence on this particular government that will be elected in January. I see Iran as more of a longer-term threat to Iraqi security...a long-term threat to stability in Iraq. If you look on the other side, I think Syria is a short-term threat, because of the support they provide to Ba'athist leaders operating inside and outside of Iraq."<sup>727</sup>

The nature of Iranian involvement in Iraqi politics is multifaceted. Many of the Iraqi exile groups and militia members that lived in Iran before the fall of Saddam Hussein were never particularly grateful to Iran during the time they had to remain in exile and are not pro-Iranian now. The Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's pre-eminent Shi'ite religious leader -- as well as virtually all of the influential Iraqi clergy except Sadr -- is a quietest who opposes the idea that religious figures should play a direct role in politics.

Moreover, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani has rejected the religious legitimacy of a *velayat-e faqih* or supreme religious leader like Iran's Khameni. The major Iraqi Shi'ite parties that did operate in Iran before Saddam's fall did endorse the idea of a *velayat-e faqih* while they were dependent on Iran, but have since taken the position that Iraq should not be a theocratic state, much less under the control of an Ayatollah-like figure. Iran's aims in Iraq may not be to secure a religious theocracy akin to its own, but merely to assure a Shi'ite backed Baghdad government friendly to Tehran.

The analysis of the International Crisis Group, and of many US experts in and outside Iraq interviewed for this report do not support the existence of any major Iranian effort to destabilize or control Iraq through June 2005.<sup>728</sup> However, the present and future uncertainties surrounding Iran's role can scarcely be ignored. Iran does seem to have tolerated an Al Qa'ida presence in Iran, or at least its transit through the country, as a means of putting pressure on the US in spite of the organization's hostility toward Shi'ites. Iran may have been active in supporting groups like Al Ansar in the past, or at least turning a blind eye, and may allow cross border infiltration in Iraq's Kurdish region now.

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

Iran has not been, and never will be, passive in dealing with Iraq. For example, it sent a top-level official, Kamal Kharrazi, to Iraq on May 17, 2005 -- only 48 hours after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had left the country. Kharrazi met with Prime Minister al-Jaafari and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. He also met with other top officials and key members of the Shi'ite parties. His visit was at a minimum a demonstration of Iran's influence in an Iraq governed by a Shi'ite majority, even though some key Iraqi Shi'a parties like Al Dawa have scarcely been strong supporters of Iran. Kharrazi also gave an important message at his press conference, "...the party that will leave Iraq is the United States because it will eventually withdraw...But the party that will live with the Iraqis is Iran because it is a neighbor to Iraq."<sup>729</sup>

In summer 2005, the Iraqi and Iranian ministers of defense, Sadoun Dulaimi and Adm. Ali Shamkhani, met and concluded a five point military agreement. The meeting, however, produced conflicting statements as to what had been agreed upon. The Iranian minister, Shamkhani, asserted that as part of the deal Iran would train a number of Iraqi troops. His counterpart, Dulaimi, however, stated that the Iraqi government was satisfied with the Coalition

efforts and that Iran would not be training Iraqi troops. Iran would, however, be providing \$1 billion in aid that would go towards reconstruction. Dulaimi conceded that some would go to the Ministry of Defense.<sup>730</sup>

Several high level meetings between Iraqi and Iranian officials took place in the fall of 2005. Iraq's deputy minister, Ahmed Chalabi met with Iranian officials in Tehran only days before traveling to the United States to meet with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The timing was seen by many as odd given accusations in May 2004 by US officials that Chalabi gave Iran classified information.<sup>731</sup>

In mid-November, Iraq's National Security Adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie traveled to Tehran. While there, he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian government committing the two governments to cooperate on sensitive intelligence-sharing matters, counter-terrorism and cross-border infiltration of Qa'ida figures. The agreement took Washington by surprise: US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters he found out about the agreement only afterward.<sup>732</sup>

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani traveled to Iran in late November, becoming the first Iraqi head of state to do so in almost four decades. Talabani spent three days in Iran and met with both Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Rubaie, who accompanied Talabani on the trip, told reporters he asked the Iranians to use their influence with Damascus to secure Syrian cooperation in sealing off the Iraqi border to insurgents.<sup>733</sup> In their meeting, Khamenei told Talabani that foreign troops were to blame for the ongoing violence and urged the Iraqi president to tell the occupiers to go: "The presence of foreign troops is damaging for the Iraqis, and the Iraqi government should ask for their departure by proposing a timetable...the US and Britain will eventually have to leave Iraq with a bitter experience."<sup>734</sup>

According to Talabani, Khamenei promised to support the Iraqi president's efforts to end the insurgency. With regard to Iraq, Khamenei told the official IRNA news agency: "Your security is our own security and Iran honors Iraq's independence and power...We will extend assistance to you in those fields." But Khamenei made a point of denying any responsibility for the violence next door, saying: "Iran considers the United States to be responsible for all crimes and terrorist acts in Iraq and the suffering and misery of the Iraqi people."<sup>735</sup>

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

As mentioned above, Iran's influence in Iraq is not just of a political or military nature, but economic as well. In addition to Iranian government aid allotted for reconstruction, Iranian businessmen have reportedly invested heavily in restoring their neighbor's infrastructure. Nonprofit groups headquartered in Iran also helped to provide basic services to Iraqis during the chaos that followed the toppling of Saddam and dissolution of the Baathist government. One NGO established in Tehran with ties to the Iranian government, "Reconstruction of the Holy Shrines of Iraq," claims that it has completed more than 300 construction, cultural and religious projects in the country. Another group, the Organization of Ahl-ul-Bait, whose leadership is comprised of Iranian mullahs, has sent ambulances, doctors and teachers into Iraq.<sup>736</sup>

New complaints regarding Iranian interference in Iraq were leveled again in March by Secretary Rumsfeld, who accused Iran of deploying its Revolutionary Guard to Iraq. He said that Iran was “putting people into Iraq to do things that are harmful to the future of Iraq,” and that it was something that Tehran would “look back on as having been an error in judgment.”<sup>737</sup>

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad made similar allegations. He accused Iran of publicly supporting Iraq's political process while it clandestinely trained and aided Shi'ite militia groups as well as Sunni insurgent organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna. He stated that, “Our judgment is that training and supplying, direct or indirect, takes place, and that there is also provision of financial resources to people, to militias, and that there is a presence of people associated with the Revolutionary Guard and with MOIS.”<sup>738</sup>

Khalilzad comments came as the U.S. and Iran announced that they had agreed to hold direct talks for the first time on how to reduce the violence in Iraq. These talks, scheduled to take place in Iraq, were at the request of SCIRI leader, Abdul al-Hakim, who had solicited Iranian assistance in the past. Ambassador Khalilzad, who had also reached out to Tehran's leaders, was to receive the Iranian negotiators when they arrived.<sup>739</sup>

Both sides came to the talks with minimal expectations. In addition, U.S. officials remained adamant that the discussions would be narrowly focused on Iraqi security issues and would not include the Iranian nuclear program. In statements leading up to the talks, it appeared Tehran saw them as an opportunity to change Washington's behavior, while the U.S. indicated that Iran's desire to meet was an indication that it was realizing that its defiant posture was not working.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, made the announcement to the Iranian parliament saying “I think Iraq is a good testing ground for America to take a hard look at the way it acts...If there's a determination in America to take that hard look, then we're prepared to help.” He went on to indicate that Iran was willing to help the U.S. in Iraq, but only under the condition that the “United States should respect the vote of the people. Their Army must not provoke from behind the scenes.”<sup>740</sup>

Yet U.S. officials such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized that the negotiations would only focus on Iraq. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley added optimistically, however, that Iran was “finally beginning to listen.”<sup>741</sup>

The announcement of these negotiations drew a strong condemnation from The Iraqi Consensus Front, Iraq's dominant Sunni political party. In a statement it called the negotiations “an obvious unjustified interference,” and added “It's not up to the American ambassador to talk to Iran about Iraq.”<sup>742</sup>

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

### ***The Problem of Turkey***

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

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

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

In July 2005, the Turkish Prime Minister threatened cross-border action against the rebels if the attacks did not stop, though such action is generally regarded as extremely provocative and even illegal. Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, however, that "There are certain things that international law allows. When necessary, one can carry out cross border operations. I hope that such a need will not emerge."<sup>743</sup>

Exacerbating the debate about cross border operations were the conflicting reports that the US, who considers the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the Turkish military to capture the organization's leaders. A member of the Turkish military claimed that the US had agreed to seize the leaders while US military spokesmen were unaware of such an agreement.

The official US position seemed to be that the US opposed any cross-border action as an infringement on sovereignty and likely to incite further violence between the Kurds and the various sects opposed to their independence or autonomy. Furthermore, the US made it clear that any discussion over the PKK should center on the Iraqi government. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated, "I think the difference now is that they [Turkey] are dealing with a sovereign Iraqi government, and a lot of these discussions will have to occur between Turkey and Iraq, not between Turkey and the United States."<sup>744</sup>

Despite the present tension in U.S. and Turkish ties, and Turkey's relations with Iraq, Turkey is significantly involved in post war reconstruction in Iraq. Turkey also offered to assist with the training of Iraqi police forces. The most recent example of Turkish effort to help the creation of a stable and unified Iraq was the meeting held in April 2005 in Istanbul where all Iraq's neighbors, Egypt and Bahrain convened to address issues related with cross border insurgency and terrorist infiltration.

### ***The Problem of Jordan***

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

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

The Jordanian government has trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces and is very much concerned with extreme Islamist elements within its own territory. King Abdullah has pledged to train over 30,000 Iraqi military and police within Jordan and on January 13, 2005, the 12<sup>th</sup> class graduated its training bringing the total to almost 10,000 Iraqi security forces trained in Jordan since efforts began.<sup>745</sup> There have, however, been incidents involving insurgents and terrorists within Jordan's borders. In spring 2004, a plot to create a massive chemical-laced explosion over Amman by radical Islamists was uncovered and disrupted by the Jordanian security forces.

On August 19, 2005, Katyusha rockets were fired at two U.S. warships in Jordan's Red Sea Aqaba port. None of the rockets struck the ship. One hit a warehouse, killing a Jordanian soldier; another exploded near a Jordanian hospital, resulting in no casualties; and the third landed outside of Eilat airport in neighboring Israel, but failed to explode. The Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda, linked to Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack. Four days later, Jordanian officials arrested a Syrian man, Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly, who they accused of carrying out the attack. Police said three accomplices slipped across the border into Iraq.<sup>746</sup> Jordanian Interior Minister Awni Yirfas confirmed his government was working with Iraqi authorities in order to capture the militants.<sup>747</sup>

In summer 2005, Jordanian forces broke up an alleged recruitment ring in Amman. According to the main defendant, Zaid Horani, he and several other Jordanians crossed into Syria and boarded buses in Damascus, Syria that were bound for Iraq as the Coalition forces invaded. Horani apparently returned home and helped to organize a recruitment pipeline for Jordanians interested in joining the insurgency in Iraq. Figuring prominently in the case was a Syrian, Abu al-Janna, who was allegedly the point of contact in Iraq for the Jordanians. Al-Janna is reportedly a central figure in the regional terror network.<sup>748</sup>

A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, is the main suspect in the suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, killing more than 125.<sup>749</sup> On August 21, 2005, Laith Kubba, spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, accused Jordan of allowing the family of Saddam Hussein to finance the insurgent campaign in Iraq in an effort to reestablish the Ba'ath Party in that country.<sup>750</sup>

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

## XI. Iraqi Views of the Threat

Iraqi views of the threat can be useful indicators of the country's status and the direction it may be heading. The U.S. cannot win the "hearts and minds" of Iraqis. Effective Iraqi governance and forces and the true key to any solution to the insurgency and finding a solution will depend primarily on whether Iraqis can work inclusively to address issues of national concern.

At the same time, it is difficult to determine Iraqi attitudes and how they view the insurgency. There is no single Iraqi view of any major issue that affects Iraq. Iraqis disagree on details regarding almost all of the issues covered in this analysis. Sometimes they presented very different views of how serious they took the threat from Syria and Iran, how and whether they quantified various threat forces, and how serious they saw given extremist, terrorist, and insurgent elements. As the political process and insurgency have continued, Iraqis have also differed over its implications and significance for their lives and the future of Iraq.

### *Iraq's View of the Threat*

Iraqis and the Coalition have often judged the insurgency differently. Throughout the conflict Iraqi officials have felt MNSTC-I estimates of the insurgent threat were misleading because they seemed to only include hardcore insurgents. Some felt that the Minister of Defense was generally correct in including some 200,000 sympathizers in one guess at the threat. They agree with his statement that, "It does no one any good to deny the insurgents have major public support, particularly in Sunni areas. Our political problem is much more important than our military one."

If one focuses solely on the Sunni insurgency, Iraqis have seen the same four broad groups of insurgents as the US and MNSTC-I:

- *Zarqawi and Outside Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters*: Composed of mostly foreign Arabs and from other countries. They cannot be quantified, but their numbers are small and probably well under 1,000. The problem is their methods of attack have great impact.
- *Former Regime Elements (FRE)s*: Large numbers, and a mix of true supporters of the Ba'ath, alienated Sunnis, paid volunteers, temporary recruits, and other Iraqis. There is no way to quantify them, but some feel it is in the 15,000 to 30,000 level depending on how one estimates full time and part time fighters.
- *Iraqi Native Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters*: This group is small with numbers probably well under 500. Their methods of attack can mirror image outside extremists and have great impact.
- *Organized Crime*: The major source of violence and insecurity in at least 12 of the 18 governorates. Criminals often seem to cooperate with terrorists and insurgents. The seriousness and severity varies, but numbers of criminals and their incidents are very high, as is impact.

Iraqis, however, see far more Iraqi popular hostility to the Coalition forces and "occupation" than many US officials and officers. From the start of Coalition occupation, they saw the deployment of Iraqi forces as a critical step in winning popular support for the new government, and as vital in Shi'ite areas as well as Sunni. They did not agree on how quickly the Coalition should phase down its role, but they have broadly agreed that the Coalition is part of the problem and not simply part of the solution.

Iraqis also continue to differ over just how serious the problem of Shi'ite attacks and reprisals was becoming, and over the extent to which Shi'ite actions were helping to divide the country along sectarian lines. Shi'ites have tended to focus on the Sunni threat. Many Sunnis who have supported the interim Iraqi government, or former officials in it, have felt Shi'ite elements of the

Ministry of Interior forces and the various Shi'ite and Kurdish militias were becoming a serious problem. Some accused the Shi'ite militias of atrocities against Sunnis, and both Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs accused the Kurdish leadership and Pesh Merga of supporting ethnic cleansing in the north, though the details were unclear.

## ***Iraqi Public Opinion Polls***

Iraqi public opinion has increasingly been divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, but Iraqis have consistently had mixed feelings about the war, the Coalition, and the insurgents. In general, Iraqis have tended to oppose the Coalition, rather than support the insurgents – particularly Sunni Islamist extremists.

### ***Iraqi Attitudes After the Invasion***

The polls conducted during the first year after the invasion generally did not ask questions about the insurgency. They did, however, provide a consistent warning about the lack of popularity of the war and the Coalition:

First poll conducted in Iraq in August 2003 by Zogby International, revealed that just over 50 percent of Iraqis felt that the U.S. will “hurt” Iraq over the next five years and that a slightly higher number thought “democracy is a Western way of doing things and it will not work here.” *Some 31.6 percent felt that Coalition Forces should leave within six months; 34 percent said within one year; and 25 percent within two years.* In addition, just fewer than 60 percent felt that Iraq should determine its political future alone and without the help of the Coalition.<sup>751</sup>

Some of these findings were substantiated by a poll conducted in May 2004 by BBC, ABC News, the German network ARD and NHK in Japan. Among these: while more than half said that life was better a year ago under Saddam, “only 25 per cent expressed confidence in the US/UK occupation forces and 28 per cent in both Iraq’s political parties and the CPA.”<sup>752</sup>

USA Today/CNN/Gallop polls published in April 2004 revealed further developments in Iraqi perceptions of U.S. policy, presence and operations. *Among these was that “53 percent say they would feel less secure without the Coalition in Iraq, but 57 percent say the foreign troops should leave anyway”, while 71 percent of the respondents identified Coalition troops as “occupiers.”*<sup>753</sup>

In the 29 April 2004 *USA Today* poll cited earlier, many Iraqis considered American troops to be arrogant and insensitive:

- 58 percent said [Coalition Forces] soldiers conduct themselves badly or very badly;
- 60 percent said the troops show disrespect for Iraqi people in searches of their homes, and 42 percent said U.S. forces have shown disrespect toward mosques;
- 46 percent said the soldiers show a lack of respect for Iraqi women; and
- 11 percent of Iraqis say Coalition Forces are trying hard to restore basic services such as electricity and clean drinking water.

US/Oxford polls showed 78 percent of Iraqis had no confidence in Coalition forces in October 2003 and 81 percent in June 2004 – and this figure included the Kurds.

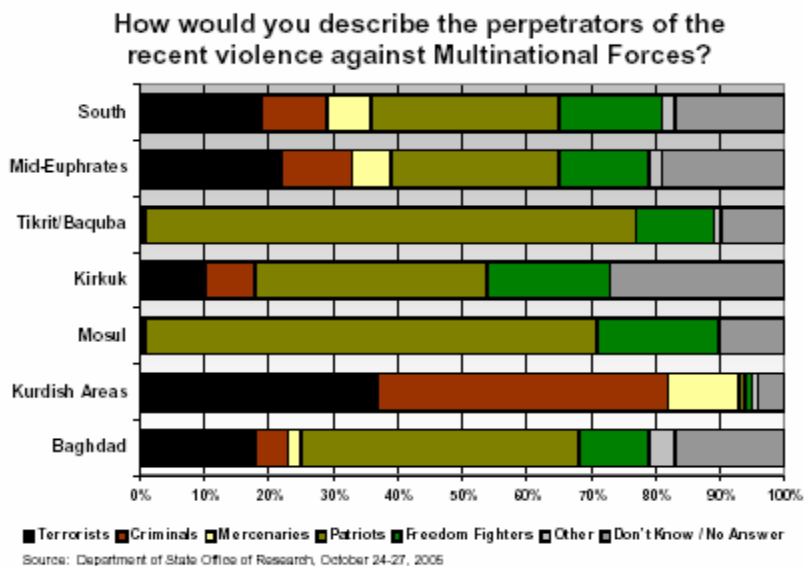
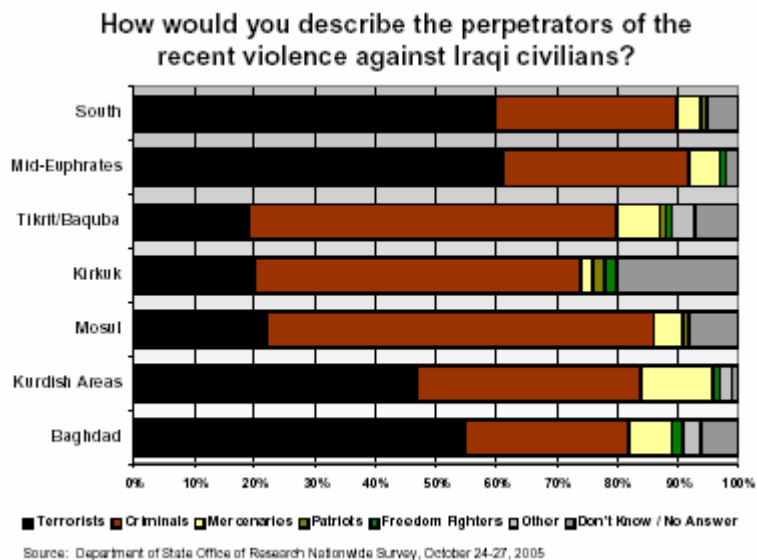
While such polls, and all polls since, raised serious issues about the adequacy of the sample, methods, and the quality of the questions asked, the results of such polls were consistent enough to provide a clear warning that only an Iraqi government and Iraqi forces would be perceived as legitimate, and a Coalition occupation might well be a preface to civil war.



### ***Iraqi Attitudes in October 2005***

Iraqi attitudes did not change markedly during the course of the following year. Polling did, however, begin to ask serious questions about the insurgency and not simply about attitudes towards the new Iraqi government and Coalition. While many aspects of the polling remained uncertain, the Department of State found in the fall of 2005 that Iraqis differed strikingly over their attitudes towards the insurgency depending on whether insurgent attacks struck at Coalition forces or Iraqi civilians,

The results of these polls are summarized in Figure XI.1. They show that Iraqis did not support insurgent attacks designed to provoke a civil war or attack Iraqi civilians, but differed along sectarian and ethnic lines when it came to attacks on Coalition forces. Strikingly, many in Shi'ite as well as Sunni areas approved of insurgent attacks on Coalition forces.

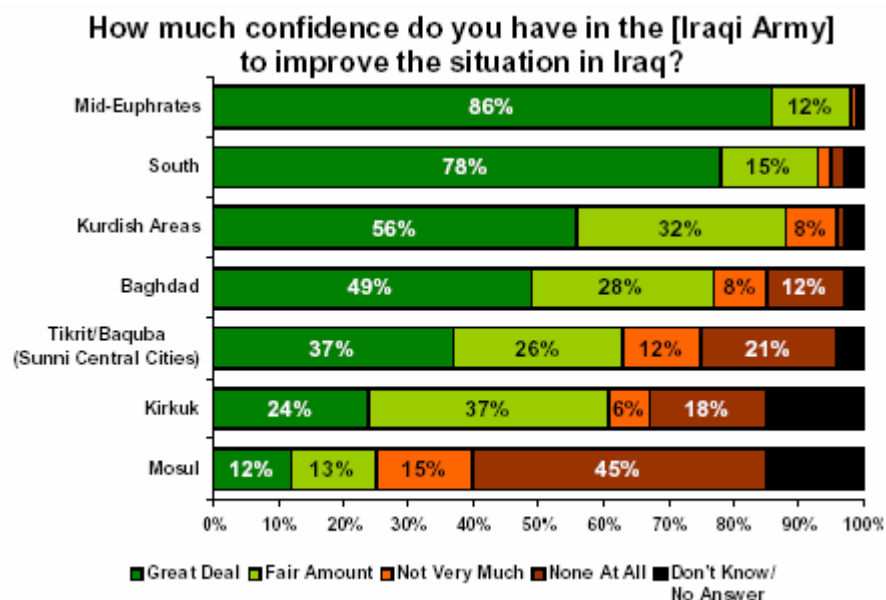
**Figure XI.1: Iraqi Perceptions of Insurgents**

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense report to Congress, February 2006, p. 32.

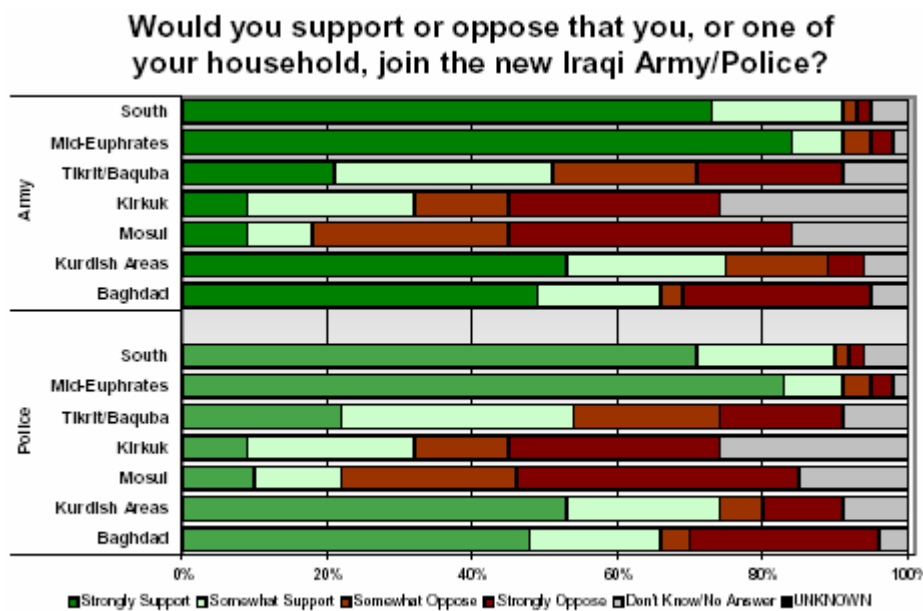
Note: Survey was conducted on October 24-27, 2005.

The same report measured Iraqi confidence in the Iraqi security forces by region as of October and November. It focused on whether the individual polled would support or oppose himself or herself, or someone they knew joining the Army or police force. The results clearly showed deep sectarian and ethnic divisions. Shi'ite and Kurds generally supported the Iraqi security forces. Many in Sunni and mixed regions showed deep distrust.

These results in Figure XI.2, and provide a powerful warning about just how important making the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces inclusive is in defeating the insurgency. They also provide a warning that many Sunni Iraqis fear that the Iraqi forces do support the Shi'ites and attacks on Sunnis, and fear that Iraqi forces might divide and become Shi'ite and Kurdish forces in an intense civil war.

**Figure XI.2: Iraqi Support and Confidence in the Iraqi Army**

Source: Department of State Office of Research, November 2005



Source: Department of State Office of Research, October 2005

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense report to Congress, February 2006, p. 31.

### ***Iraqi Attitudes in Early 2006***

A poll of Iraqis conducted in early January of 2006 found that while some 66% of all Iraqis polled thought the elections were fair, this was not a meaningful picture of how Iraqis felt in ethnic and sectarian terms. While 89% of Iraqi Arab Shi'ites thought it was fair, as did 77% of Iraqi Kurds, only 5% of the Sunnis polled agreed. Put differently, only 33% of all Iraqis, 11% of Arab Shi'ites, and 19% of Kurds thought the elections were not fair, but 94% of Arab Sunnis *did* feel they were unfair.<sup>754</sup>

Iraqis felt much the same about the prospects for the new government. A total of 68% of all Iraqis, 90% of Arab Shi'ites, and 81% of Kurds thought the new government would be legitimate, but only 6% of Arab Sunnis. While only 31% of all Iraqis, 10% of Arab Shi'ites, and 15% of Kurds thought the new government would *not* be legitimate, 92% of Arab Sunnis agreed.<sup>755</sup>

Iraqis disagreed over more than the election and the future government. When they were asked whether ousting Saddam was worth the cost and suffering caused by the war and its aftermath, 77% of all Iraqis, 98% of Arab Shi'ites, and 91% of Kurds thought the new government would be legitimate, but only 13% of Arab Sunnis. While only 22% of all Iraqis, 10% of Arab Shi'ites, and 15% of Kurds thought the ousting Saddam was not worth it, 83% of Arab Sunnis agreed.

In a similar vein, 64% of all Iraqis, 84% of Arab Shi'ites, and 76% of Kurds thought Iraq was moving in the right direction, but only 6% of Arab Sunnis. A total of 93% of Iraqi Arab Sunnis thought that Iraq was moving in the wrong direction.<sup>756</sup>

### ***Iraqi Attitudes Towards Iraqi Forces and US Withdrawal and Military Assistance***

These issues again are reflected in Iraqi opinion polls conducted in early 2006. The coalition forces had very uncertain popularity in Iraq – a result consistent with all previous polls from late 2003 onwards. As **Figure XL.3** shows, some 47% of all Iraqis approved attacks on US-led forces, versus 7% approved attacks on Iraqi forces and roughly 1% attacks on Iraqi civilians. Some 41% of Arab Shi'ites, 16% of Kurds, and 88% of Arab Sunnis approved of attacks on US led forces.<sup>757</sup>

Almost all Iraqis wanted US-led forces to leave Iraq: 35% wanted withdrawal by July 2006, and 70% wanted withdrawal in two years. Once again, however, there are striking differences. Only 22% of Arab-Shi'ites wanted the US to withdraw in six months, although 71% wanted withdrawal in two years. Some 13% of Kurds wanted the US to withdraw in six months, and only 40% wanted withdrawal in two years. In the case of Sunnis, however, 83% wanted the US out in six months and 94% in two years.<sup>758</sup> When the question was asked differently, Iraqis seemed somewhat less divided. A total of 29% were willing to wait and only reduce US forces when the situation improved in the field. This included 29% of Arab Shi'ites, 57% of Kurds, and 29% of Arab Sunnis. This at least in part reflected concerns about the quality of Iraqi forces.

Iraqis praised the US force development effort more than they praised any other aspect of the US assistance effort, but such praise was relative. Only 33% felt the US was doing a good job. Another 44% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 23% disapproved. Again, major differences occurred by sect and ethnicity: Some 54% of Kurds felt the US was doing a good job, 42% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and only 9% disapproved. In

the case of Arab Shi'ites, however, only 37% felt the US was doing a good job, 52% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 11% disapproved. And, in the case of Arab Sunnis, only 6% felt the US was doing a good job, 20% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 74% disapproved.

As a result, Iraqis had very mixed views about how soon Iraqi forces would be ready to take over the mission. The poll found that 35% of all Iraqis wanted US- led forces to withdraw in six months (83% Sunnis), and 35% more in two years (11% Sunnis). Iraqis also were relatively confident about the impact of such withdrawals. Some 35% thought US withdrawals would increase the number of violent attacks (13% Sunnis), 34% thought crime would rise (12% Sunni), and 33% though interethnic violence would increase (18% Sunnis). A total of 73% felt US withdrawal would increase the willingness of factions in the national assembly to cooperate (62% Kurd, 69% Arab Shi'ite, and 87% Arab Sunni.)

At the same time, only 39% felt Iraqi forces were ready to deal with security challenges on their own (38% Sunni). A total of 21% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for another year (21% Sunnis). A total of 26% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for two years (31% Sunnis), and a total of 12% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for three years or more (5% Sunnis).

The good news for both Iraq's political and force development is that there is far more unity about avoiding attacks on Iraqi forces and civilians. Only 7% of Iraqis approved attacks on Iraqi forces and 93% disapproved. Even among Sunnis, only 24% "approved somewhat," and 76% disapproved, of which 24% disapproved strongly. When it came to attacks on Iraqi civilians, 99% disapproved. So few Sunnis approved that the results for "approve" were not statistically meaningful. Nearly 100% disapproved, of which 95% disapproved strongly.

**Figure XI.3: Iraqi Attitudes Towards the Security Situation in Iraq in Early 2006**

(Support Shown in Percent)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Kurd</u>	<u>Shi'ite Arab</u>	<u>Sunni Arab</u>	<u>Other</u>
<u>Attacks on US Forces in Iraq</u>					
Strongly Approve	23	8	9	77	5
Approve Somewhat	24	8	32	11	38
Disapprove Somewhat	29	18	41	9	24
Strongly Disapprove	23	63	18	3	31
<u>Attacks on Iraqi Government Forces</u>					
Strongly Approve	1	-	2	-	0
Approve Somewhat	6	-	2	24	2
Disapprove Somewhat	27	13	19	52	47
Strongly Disapprove	66	86	78	24	51
<u>Attacks on Iraqi Civilians</u>					
Strongly Approve	-	-	0	0	0
Approve Somewhat	1	-	1	0	0
Disapprove Somewhat	4	1	5	5	0
Strongly Disapprove	95	98	94	95	100
<u>What Should the New Iraqi Government Ask the US to Do About US-led Forces?</u>					
Withdraw all in 6 months	35	13	22	83	36
Gradually withdraw in 2 years	35	28	49	11	14
Reduce only as security Situation improves	29	57	29	4	46
<u>Would the US Withdraw in 6 months If asked by Iraqi government?</u>					
Would	23	17	32	5	14
Would Not	76	77	67	94	82
<u>How Capable are Iraqi Security Forces?</u>					
Strong enough now	39	22	45	38	33
Still need foreign help	59	73	55	58	67
<u>How much Longer Will Iraqi Forces Need Foreign Help?</u>					
1 year	21	5	25	21	25
2 years	26	31	21	31	33
3 years or more	12	33	8	5	7

Note: the percentages for "Refused/Don't Know" are all 5% or lower and are not shown.

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants-A WorldPublicOpinionPoll, January 2-5, 2006, sample of 1000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

## ***The Impact of Iraqi Opinion on the Insurgency; 2006 as a Tipping Year in the “Long War”?***

If one looks at these popular attitudes, and the political and military history summarized in Chapter II, it is clear that 2006 could be a year that resulted in successful political compromise and further progress in developing Iraqi forces. At the same time, if Iraqi politics fail, the divisions sectarian and ethnic divisions between Iraqis are so serious that it could also result in the division of both the country and Iraq's forces, and make the US presence and advisory effort difficult to untenable.

The one thing that seems certain from such polls, and the history and nature of the insurgency to date, is that success for either the government or insurgents will be relative.

Iraq will not emerge as an example to the region. In fact, virtually any form of compromise that most Shi'ites, Sunnis, Kurds, and other minorities can accept will be good enough to be defined as “success.” Any Iraqi force development effort that avoids the division of the regular armed forces, ends most abuses in the Ministry of the Interior and security forces, makes the police more professional and neutral, and gradually limits the role of the militias will also be success. It has become all too apparent that “victory” for the Coalition is the art of Iraqi compromise, and that the goal of “transforming” Iraq into some shining example to the region was always little more than a neoconservative dream.

The alternative, however, is not victory for the insurgency. The polls confirm the fact that the Sunni insurgents are a divided minority within a minority who has serious support from only a relatively small part of Iraq's population. Insurgent success, could lead to national paralysis, civil war, or separation, and might well trigger a major Shi'ite and Kurdish offensive against Sunnis that might take years to defeat the Sunni insurgency but do immense damage to Iraqi Sunnis in the process and leave them a weak and poor minority.

### ***Hardline Insurgents Act Independently of Iraqi and Iraqi Sunni Popular Opinion***

The probable outcomes of the fighting, and Iraqi popular attitudes, however, have at most had a limited impact on Sunni Islamist extremists. Insurgencies are inevitably driven by minorities and true believers that are convinced that the people should follow them and will in time. The strategy of hard-line Sunni Islamist insurgents is unlikely to change. From the viewpoint of hard-line insurgents, there are still good reasons for to block the creation of a stable coalition that includes Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'ites, and Kurds, and block every efforts to make an inclusive coalition government successful.

Iraqis clearly do not want civil war. From the hard-line insurgent perspective, however, what Iraqis and Iraqi Sunnis want may often be irrelevant. Bloody attacks on Shi'ites and Kurds, and civil war, remain the best way to do this regardless of what most Iraqis, and Iraqi Sunnis, think. So is attempting to discredit the whole process of governance by exploiting political and economic vulnerabilities like the rise in fuel and gas prices in late 2005, and attacking/threatening refineries to make things worse. At least for the near term, the primary goal of hard-line insurgents is logically to disrupt coalition building and discredit the government.



### ***For Some, Joining the Political Process Can Be a Tactic to Support the Insurgency***

Where Sunni insurgent groups may differ in response to Iraqi popular attitudes is over the need to create and maintain a Sunni popular base and attack/discredit Sunnis moving towards compromise. This did not make sense during the elections. Security was at an all time peak that US and Iraqi forces could not sustain.

Giving Arab Sunnis legislative power made sense to at least some Sunni insurgents as long as those elected used it to check Shi'ite power and limit coalition building. Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida still opposed the elections, but others were willing to wait and intimidate the Sunnis who gained office, exploit charges of election fraud, and make it clear that it was safe to oppose coalitions and compromise within the political system, but not to oppose the insurgency.

If one "red teams" insurgent motives at the start of 2006, there were also reasons for insurgents to be more optimistic about what they might accomplish during the coming year that might counter the successes in Iraqi politics and force development:

The insurgents showed by early January that they still could mount large numbers of attacks. The Coalition forces stressed that the number of attacks has risen, but that successes had dropped. It was far from clear this is true if one considered the impact of the successful attacks, and such claims ignored the key point that the insurgents were still strong enough for the number of attacks to increase.

Some key aspects of the fracture lines between Sunni and Shi'ite were still growing. The Arab Sunni vs. Arab Shi'ite and Kurd tensions in the security forces were gradually becoming more serious, although the US and UK were making major new efforts to control and ease them. Sectarian divisions within the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior continued to grow. The new army continued to become steadily more Shi'ite and there were still growing problems in promoting Sunni officers. The police remained divided along sectarian and ethnic lines.

Rushing new Iraqi units into the field, many in areas where they created sectarian friction, was increasing these problems.

The election was proving to be highly controversial among Sunnis, with all kinds of charges and conspiracy theories. Many who voted, voted against the constitution and as a check to the growth of Shi'ite and Kurdish power.

It was clear than any new Iraqi coalition that did emerge would be inherently unstable even if it did include Sunni groups that were willing to compromise. The new Iraqi government faced at least 6-8 months in which ongoing political debates had to occur over federation, control of oil resources and revenues, power of taxation, allocation of government funds, role of religion in government and law, and virtually every other "hot button" issue.

The tragedy of this strategy is that a failure by the new Iraqi government, and/or the division of the new Iraqi forces, almost certainly means that most Iraqi Sunnis will suffer more than the Shi'ites and Kurds. They will live in the area where the real fighting takes place, their economy will continue to deteriorate, and they will get little oil money and few government services. There is no charismatic Iraqi Sunni leader; radical insurgents like Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida can only disrupt the nation, not lead Iraq's Sunnis. The insurgents only have limited foreign support, the hard-line insurgents are a distinct minority within the Sunni majority, and most of the successes in building up the new Iraq forces are real enough so that alienating the Shi'ites and Kurds might well backfire if the country did divide into more serious civil conflict.

The tragedy for Iraq is that this simply may not matter to hard-line Sunni insurgents. At least some would welcome a divided Iraq as a means to their broader goal of weakening moderate

regimes throughout the region and polarizing its people in ways that push Sunnis toward Islamist extremism. In any case, the immediate goal of many insurgents is not to win, or to implement a given program (most such insurgents have no coherent practical program). It is rather to deny victory and success to the newly elected Iraqi government and push the US and Coalition out in a war of attrition. From a “red team” view, this goal must still seem all too possible and most insurgents seem to be acting on this strategy.

### ***What the Elections Did and Did Not Show About the Prospects for the Insurgency versus Iraqi Political Unity***

One also needs to be extremely careful about concluding that the December 15, 2005 election weakened popular support for the insurgency. The December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling results found that Sunni attitudes on security versus those of other ethnic and sectarian groups as follows:

“Sixty-one percent of Iraqis now say they feel security is better than it was before the war; that represents a 12 percent increase since we last asked, and a fairly startling counterweight to the prevalent view in the press. Having said that, these numbers are driven almost entirely by Shi’ites and Kurds who were treated so brutally under Saddam Hussein.

“...By contrast, among Iraq’s Sunnis — for whom “security” was almost ironclad under Saddam — a whopping 90 percent report their security is worse today. In 2005, the majority of insurgent attacks have been concentrated in four of Iraq’s 18 provinces, which are home to roughly 45 percent of the country’s population: Ninevah, Al Anbar, Baghdad and Salah ah Din. Attacks have focused primarily on members of the Iraqi Security Forces, members of the Multinational Forces, Iraqi civilians and government officials — as well as foreign diplomatic and media personnel.”

The ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling results also found that only 43% of Sunnis described life as good versus 86% for Shi’ites. Only 9% of Sunnis felt things in Iraq were going well versus 53% for Shi’ites. Only 7% of Sunnis felt the US had a right to invade versus 59% for Shi’ites. Only 11% of Sunnis said they felt “very safe” versus 80% for Shi’ites.<sup>759</sup>

Sunni faith in the Iraqi Army fell by 13% between mid-2004 and the winter of 2005, while Shi’ite faith increased by 22%. In December 2005, Sunnis were 50% less confident in the army than Shi’ites and 23% less confident in the police.

Iraqis entered the election without broad Sunni support for the draft constitution and the Iraqi government. Only 27% of Sunnis approved the constitution versus 82% for Shi’ites. And, only 37% of Sunnis were confident in the Army versus 87% for Shi’ites. These figures are striking because the poll could not fully sample the Sunni areas where support for the insurgency was strongest.

Sunni attitudes were particularly polarized in Al Anbar, the western province where the insurgency is strongest. Only 1% of those polled felt the US invasion was a good thing, and no respondent placed any faith in US or Coalition forces. Nearly 50% of those polled in Al Anbar called instability their greatest problem. This was more than 17% more than in the other Sunni provinces. Only 13% said their local security situation was good, and only 28% expected it to improve. Only 20% of those polled approved of the new constitution, although 60% did believe the December 15, 2005 elections would produce a more stable government.

***Indicators: Voting in the four most troubled provinces where the insurgency has the most support (Anbar, Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Diyala)***

The results of the election did to some extent show that the more centrist Sunnis, and more “nationalist” Sunni insurgent movements, were stronger than the hard-line neo-Salafi religious extremist movements who opposed voting. Sunni voting levels were relatively high, particularly compared to past Sunni participation.

It should be noted, however, that some insurgent organizations and many Sunni leaders opposed to federation and the constitution in its current form did call for participation. Voters can remain opponents and insurgents.

(i) Some insurgents and pro-insurgents voted simply to create a counterweight to the Shi'ites and Kurds. One can still support violence and vote.

(ii) Voting pro-Sunni did not mean willingness to accommodate the new government; that will depend on the efforts over the months that follow to define the constitution and the way in which the new government operates.

(iii) Such voting did not mean support for the US or Coalition. The December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll showed Iraqi Sunnis still decisively reject a US and Coalition role in Iraq. It also reveals they have serious mistrust about the new Iraqi government and armed forces.

Moreover, the ABC analysis of the December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll found that Sunnis saw a steady deterioration in their provinces when they were asked about whether conditions were good.

**Figure XI.4: Are Local Conditions Good? Change in Results from 2004 to 2005**

(In Percent)

Area Polled	All	Shi'ite	Sunni	Mixed	Kurdish
Overall conditions of life	+1	+21`	<b>-26</b>	+6	-4
Crime Protection	+13	+7	<b>-22</b>	+45	+13
Security	+12	+22	<b>-19</b>	+29	+14
Jobs	+12	+31	<b>-12</b>	+16	+9

Source: ABC News Poll: Where Things Stand, “Poll Finds Broad Optimism in Iraq, But Also Deep Divisions Among Groups,” ABC News, December 23, 2005.

The final election results were certified on February 9, 2006. They confirmed the fact that the United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi'ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 out of 275 seats in the new parliament. The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. The Sunni dominated Iraqi Accordance Front won 1.8 million votes and 44 seats in parliament. The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a coalition of Sunni groups with nearly 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats.<sup>760</sup>

Although charges of fraud delayed the final certification, incidents were found to be minor and did not change the initial results. The final result allocated seats to the main parties as follows: Shi'ites 47%, Kurds 19%, Sunnis 20%, and Allawi's secular nationalists 9%.<sup>761</sup> Sunni parties got

roughly the same number of seats as the Kurds, and the Shi'ites and Kurds did not get the 184 seats they needed to have the two-thirds majority necessary to form a new government, or to ignore the Sunnis.

These results scarcely indicate whether Sunnis, and others who object to the results, will actually participate in the new government and/or support a peaceful political process. Furthermore, they strongly indicate that any government that did not act as a national unity coalition, or emphasize unity and inclusion, could trigger serious ethnic cleansing or civil war. At the same time, the results do act as another indication that extreme insurgents lack broad support even among Sunni Arabs.

The key Sunni parties included two very different kinds of coalitions:

- **Iraqi Accord(ance) Front, Iraqi Consensus Front, or Tawafoq Iraqi Front:** This list, led by Adnan al-Dulaymi, has three predominantly Sunni parties and largely supports the constitution:
  - General Conference of the People of Iraq (GCPI), led by Adnan al-Dulaymi
  - Iraqi Islamic Party, led by Tariq al-Hashimi
  - National Dialogue Council led by Khalaf al-Ulayyan.
- **Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewan National Iraqi Front:** Salih al-Mutlaq heads this list and split the Iraqi Dialogue Council because he opposed the constitution. The list includes the following political groups:
  - Christian Democratic Party led by Minas al-Yusufi
  - Arab Democratic Front led by Fahran al-Sudayd
  - National Front for a Free and United Iraq led by Hasan Zaydan
  - United Sons of Iraq Movement led by Ali al-Suhayri.
  - Iraqi National Front

The Iraqi Islamic Party that had supported the constitutional referendum divided long before the election. Adnan al-Dulaymi's General Conference of the People of Iraq and the NDC agreed to merge with the Islamic Party to form the Iraqi Accord Front. Al-Mutlaq split with the National Dialogue Council (NDC) and some smaller parties under the name the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue. The Association of Muslim Scholars refused to participate on the grounds that multinational forces should first announce a timetable for withdrawal.

In any event, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue got 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats.<sup>762</sup> The Iraqi Accord(ance) Front or Tawafoq Iraqi Front got 1.8 million votes, or 19% of the total national vote, and 44 seats in parliament. This result was particularly important since the key party in this group was one of the few Sunni parties to openly endorse the constitution. Political factions such as the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewan National Iraqi Front were more hostile to it.

If one compares the vote for these two parties by governorate, the results were mixed. The Iraqi Accord(ance) Front or Tawafoq Iraqi Front got 74% of the preliminary vote in Anbar, 19% in Baghdad, 37% in Diyala, 6% in Kirkuk, 37% in Nineveh, and 34% in Salahiddin. The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewan National Iraqi Front got 18% of the preliminary vote in Anbar, 10% in Diyala, 14% in Kirkuk, 10% in Nineveh, and 19% in Salahiddin.

### ***Indicators: Nationalist versus Sectarian and Ethnic Parties***

The results showed that Iyad Allawi and the Iraqi National List or National Iraqi List, #731 got a relatively limited level of support: 9% in Babil, 14% in Baghdad, 11% in Dyala, 12% in Karbala, 8% in Najaf, 11% in Nineveh, 9% in Qadisyyah, 11% in Salahaddin, 5% in Theqar and 8% in

Wasit. This was not a bad result in national terms, but scarcely the result that made the party the key power broker some of its leaders hoped.

Allawi's party made complaints about the electoral process similar to the Sunnis. Many of the expectations this group might do well, however, were based on the attitudes of elites in the Baghdad area, and not on the realities of a divided Iraq. The results were also tainted by personal attacks on Allawi. The campaign led to an increasingly bitter set of exchanges between Allawi and leading Shi'ite politicians in the UIA, and even to threats by the Badr Organization to overthrow any Allawi government that emerged out of the election. Allawi had received money from the CIA during his opposition to Saddam Hussein, and he was attacked during the campaign as a tool of the US.

Moreover, as has been touched upon earlier, many Iraqis saw a need to vote an ethnic or sectarian ticket in this election rather than risk "wasting" their vote on a minority party. They did so even though the new ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll did not show strong support for religious government. ABC reported that, "Preference for a democratic political structure has advanced, to 57 percent of Iraqis, while support for an Islamic state has lost ground, to 14 percent. The rest, 26 percent, chiefly in Sunni Arab areas, favor a 'single strong leader.'

### ***Indicators: Voting in the Kurdish Areas***

The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. These results provided a strong indication of Kurdish strength, and the two main Kurdish political parties in the ruling Coalition of Barzani and Talibani -- the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) -- seem likely to emerge with around 20 percent of the vote. They also succeeded in dominating the Kurdish vote in the election and keeping smaller parties like Islamic Union from winning a meaningful number of seats.

The voting did not reveal how many Kurds still wanted independence, the level of tension in the Kurdish dominated areas over issues like oil and Kirkuk, the level of tension between the Barzani and Talabani factions, or the level of tension with other ethnic groups like the Turcomans.

Accordingly, the results did not serve as a prediction of how the Kurds will behave, and be treated, in the very different government that must emerge out of the elections. Even before the election, Jalal Talabani said the presidency would be a hollow part of the new government structure. Arab Shi'ites may become more interested in compromise with Arab Sunnis than with the Kurds.

The flow of money that previously kept the KDP and PUK unified to the extent there had only been minor armed clashes is also uncertain. The Kurds face serious revenue issues as oil for food and aid phase down. They already lost most of their revenue from smuggling shortly after Saddam fell when the CPA virtually abolished most Iraqi tariffs.

### ***Non-Indicators: Shi'ite Intentions and Unity***

The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi'ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 seats in the parliament. This vote showed that the UIA was clearly the dominant party. Ahmed Chalabi did not succeed in capturing a large part of the Shi'ite vote or convincing other groups he stood for an effective secular or national program. His new party only captured a token vote in most areas.

At the same time, the results did not provide a picture of how flexible or inclusive the main Shi'ite parties will be, or how the Shi'ite parties will behave after the Coalition departs from Iraq.

The present Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, was seen as both popular and weak, but no clear alternative has as yet emerged. Many felt that Deputy President Adel Abdul Mahdi had emerged as a strong potential leader. In fact, al-Jaafari won the position of Prime Minister by only one vote. Much of this had to do with the legislative seats held by supporters of al-Sadr, who threw their support behind al-Jaafari giving him the narrow victory. Still, much depends on how the election results for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) are translated into actual decisions about its leadership and how it will behave.

As has been discussed earlier, national polls before the election showed less support for a religious type of government at the national level, and local reporting shows some dissatisfaction with local religious governments. However, hard-line Shi'ite factions control Basra and a significant part of Baghdad, and even if the national leaders have cohesive positions, it is not clear how well they will speak for local government and politics in the Shi'ite dominated provinces.

The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) will probably remain an umbrella coalition of Shi'ite parties after the election. Its status, however, is much more uncertain than in the January 2005 election. The key parties still in the UIA are the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Islamic Al-Da'wah or Dawa Party; members of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's movement and these parties have many internal tensions. For example, one Sadr supporter, Fattah al-Shaykh, seems to have dropped out because of Sadr's failure to adopt a decisive stand "on participation in the elections." A number of former UIA participants have left to form or join other parties and coalitions.

Key UIA leaders like the Moqtada Al-Sadr and Abdul Aziz Al Hakim differed sharply over critical issues like federation. Sadr strongly opposes it, and Hakim strongly favors it. Sadr is always an explosive political uncertainty, and has reasserted himself as a major political voice in Baghdad, Basra, and elsewhere as well as a major anti-US voice. Hakim's post election political role could be particularly critical because he is the leader of the Shi'ite Islamist Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and plays a major role in the actions of the Badr Organization, which is blamed for many of the Shi'ite attacks on Sunnis. He also has ties to the present Minister of the Interior, who is blamed for tolerating some of the abuses by government prisons and the special security units.

Ahmad al-Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress and the Constitutional Monarchy Movement were part of the UIA in the last election but left to form the National Congress Coalition. It is too soon to count out the ever-ambiguous Ahmad Chalabi, but he did not do well in any area in Iraq, and could not win a personnel seat in the election in the Baghdad governorate.

Another uncertainty is the future role of the most important unelected figure in Iraq, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. Sistani's role may be particularly critical in deciding how seriously Shi'ites pursue separatism under the guise of federation, versus inclusive politics and national unity.

## ***Public Opinion, the Insurgency, and the Fragile Structure of Iraqi Politics in 2006***

The election left many fault lines that the insurgency can exploit in the future. It did not resolve any major issue confronting the Iraqi people. It was not a “turning point,” but a “trigger.” It instead started a political process that will determine, during the course of 2006, whether Iraq has a solid chance of emerging out of its present turmoil with stability, as well as the success or failure of the Coalition in Iraq

Instead, the elections created the following schedule for political action, and for insurgent efforts to attack the political process and intensify civil war:<sup>763</sup>

- Final voting results expected in first week of January

- 15 days after the final election results are announced, the newly elected Council of Representatives (National Assembly in the old government) meets for the first time. Is supposed to elect a speaker.

- The Council of Representatives must then negotiate among its members, without a clear deadline, to elect a Presidential Council with a president and two deputy presidents. They must be approved by two-thirds of the Council of Representatives. (This allows a Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurd to share the presidency, but this is not required.)

- 15 days after the Council of Representatives approves the Presidential Council, it is supposed to agree on a prime minister (in practice, chosen by the major parties). The Presidential Council must unanimously approve the choice.

- No more than 30 days later, the new Prime Minister is to announce his cabinet.

- The Council of Representatives must then begin a four-month review of the constitution.

- The Council of Representatives must approve any amendments by a majority. (Goes up to two-thirds after four months.)

- Two months later, the nation votes on a revised constitution.

During the six to ten months following the December 15, 2005 election, the newly elected Iraqi assembly must form a government, transform vaguely defined political parties and coalitions into specific courses of action, allocate power by ethnic or sectarian faction, and come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution. If they succeed in creating an inclusive structure in virtually any peaceful form, Iraq succeeds. If they fail, the Coalition fails almost regardless of its military success, and that of the new Iraqi forces, and Iraq will move towards division, paralysis, civil conflict and/or a new strongman.

### ***Other Factors Shaping Attitudes Towards the Insurgency and Government***

As yet, no polls show the prospects for unity or civil war following the attack on the mosque of the golden dome in February. **Figure IX.5** does, however, summarize the results of a post-election poll in early January. Some 93% of Arab Sunnis felt Iraq was headed in the wrong direction versus 36% of all Iraqis, and only 16% of Arab Shi'ites and 23% of Kurds – although 40% of Iraqi minorities did feel the same as most Sunnis. Some 94% of Arab Sunnis thought the elections were not “free and fair” versus only 33% of all Iraqis, 11% of Shi'ites, and 19% of Kurds.

Sunni attitudes were generally far less favorable towards the government and the elections than Shi'ites and Kurds. The poll found that, “The contrast among Sunnis is stark: Only 27 percent approve of the constitution; 48 percent say they are confident regarding the elections; and only

12 percent believe the government has done a good job.” It also found that Sunni confidence in the elections was just 48% versus 80% elsewhere.

Support for democracy is also an issue. When Sunnis were asked their current preference for a type of government, only 38% favored democracy versus 57% for all Iraqis, 75% in mixed areas like Baghdad, 63% in Kurdish areas, and 45% in Shi’ite areas. As the table below shows, the poll found that Sunnis had a more favorable attitude towards democracy when they looked five years into the future. It also found, however, that Sunnis were still much more likely to prefer a strong leader for life over democracy than other Iraqis.

It also seems likely that those Sunnis who favored democracy sometimes did so more because they opposed an Islamic state they felt would be dominated by Shi’ites than because of any basic faith in democracy. Some 88% in Sunni governorates also favor a unified Iraq versus only 56% in Shi’ite provinces, but this again seems likely to reflect a fear of the loss of oil wealth, power, and isolation as well as a deep belief in national unity.



### Figure IX.5: Iraqi Political Divisions by Iraqi Ethnic Group and Arab Religious Sect

#### Iraqi Attitudes Towards the Security Situation in Iraq: Early January 2006

(Support Shown in Percent)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Kurd</u>	<u>Shi'ite Arab</u>	<u>Sunni Arab</u>	<u>Other</u>
<u>Iraq is:</u>					
Headed In Right Direction	64	76	84	6	60
Headed in Wrong Direction	36	23	16	93	40
<u>Parliamentary Elections Were:</u>					
Free And Fair	66	77	89	5	49
Not Free and Fair	33	19	11	94	51
<u>New Parliament Will Be Legitimate:</u>					
Will	68	81	90	6	51
Will Not	31	16	10	92	47
<u>Suffering From Ousting of Saddam Was:</u>					
Worth It	77	91	98	13	64
Not Worth It	22	8	2	83	31

Note: Small percentages of don't know and refused to answer are not shown.

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants-A WorldPublicOpinionPoll, January 2-5, 2006, sample of 1000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

#### Preferred System of Government: Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurd: Post-Election, December 2005.

(In Percent)

<u>What Iraq Needs in Five Years</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Shi'ite</u>	<u>Sunni</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>Kurdish</u>
Democracy	64	59	55	74	61
Islamic State	12	24	4	8	14
Stronger Leader	18	11	34	11	17

Source: ABC News Poll: Where Things Stand, "Poll Finds Broad Optimism in Iraq, But Also Deep Divisions Among Groups," ABC News, December 23, 2005.

### ***Insurgent Capability to Exploit the Lack of Popular Support for the US and Coalition Forces***

The mid-December ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll provided a strong warning that voting will not mean an endorsement of the US and Coalition, regardless of what faction Iraqis vote for. ABC summarized the results as follows:

“...Half of Iraqis now say it was wrong for U.S.-led forces to invade in spring 2003, up from 39 percent in 2004.

“The number of Iraqis who say things are going well in their country overall is just 44 percent, far fewer than the 71 percent who say their own lives are going well. Fifty-two percent instead say the country is doing badly.

“There’s other evidence of the United States’ increasing unpopularity: Two-thirds now oppose the presence of U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq, 14 points higher than in February 2004. Nearly six in 10 disapprove of how the United States has operated in Iraq since the war, and most of them disapprove strongly. And nearly half of Iraqis would like to see U.S. forces leave soon.

“Specifically, 26 percent of Iraqis say U.S. and other Coalition forces should “leave now” and another 19 percent say they should go after the government chosen in this week’s election takes office; that adds to 45 percent. Roughly the other half says coalition forces should remain until security is restored (31 percent), until Iraqi security forces can operate independently (16 percent), or longer (5 percent).”

Civil war was clearly a popular concern. A total of 37% said that a lack of security, chaos, civil war, internal trouble, or division of the country was the worst thing that could happen to Iraq in the next year. An additional 12% cited terrorism. Some 9% of Iraqis polled said that the worst thing would be for Coalition forces *not* to leave the country.

A total of 49% of all Iraqis polled still said they felt unsafe, and cited terrorism as the main reason. However, when they were asked what they did to feel more safe, 67% said they avoided US forces, 52% said they avoided checkpoints, 47% said they avoided the police and government buildings, and 43% said they were careful about what they said.

Another ABC report on the situation in Iraq in mid-December noted that,

“The impact of security shortfalls remains significant. Violence has hampered reconstruction, in western and central Iraq in particular, and it has meant that badly needed funds for electricity, clean water, education and salaries for health care professionals are spent instead on security. In one stunning measure of “Where Things Stand” in Iraq we found that as of October 2005, approximately \$5 billion of the \$18.4 billion appropriated by the U.S. Congress for reconstruction in Iraq had been diverted to security needs.

“Many parents have become more afraid to allow their children, girls in particular, to attend school, and some Iraqis are too frightened even to visit the doctor when sick.

“... a strange calm pervades some cities where local militias have seized power. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Karbala, a major city in southern Iraq where such militia appear to have infiltrated the police and security forces. It’s a development that outsiders, and some locals, view with fear and dismay — how, after all, can the true authorities hold power and garner respect when bands of armed men outside the government set up checkpoints and rule the streets? Yet many locals — in Karbala at least — report that these militias have improved security. An “iron hand” may be at work, and it may be a fleeting calm, but for the moment it is noticed and appreciated.”

### ***Iraqi Attitudes Towards Security by Region, Sect, and Ethnicity***

Events since the election have confirmed the fact that there is a serious risk of political division or paralysis in spite of political negotiations. As of late March 2006, even symbolic unity was

still in question. It was also clear that even if the Sunni parties did participate fully in the new government, the fact remains that they would be divided and have leaders and candidates whose behavior would be unpredictable.

Security is a major issue. The ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll found that,

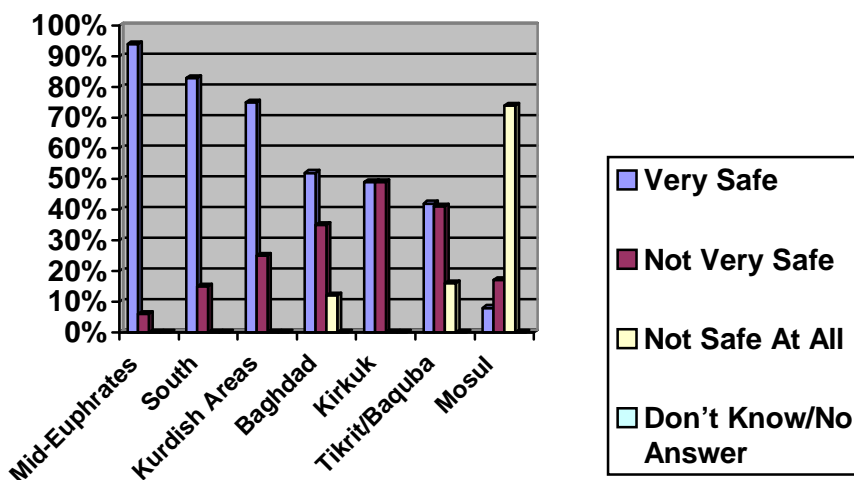
“Surprisingly, given the insurgents’ attacks on Iraqi civilians, more than six in 10 Iraqis feel very safe in their own neighborhoods, up sharply from just 40 percent in a poll in June 2004. And 61 percent say local security is good — up from 49 percent in the first ABC News poll in Iraq in February 2004.

“Nonetheless, nationally, security is seen as the most pressing problem by far; 57 percent identify it as the country’s top priority. Economic improvements are helping the public mood. Other views, moreover, are more negative: Fewer than half, 46 percent, say the country is better off now than it was before the war...The number of Iraqis who say things are going well in their country overall is just 44 percent, far fewer than the 71 percent who say their own lives are going well. Fifty-two percent instead say the country is doing badly.”

Even these results understate the fears the insurgents can feed upon. The ABC-Oxford poll did not break out the results by province or ethnic/sectarian group. The Shi’ites and Kurds living in the relatively safe provinces have every reason to be far more optimistic about security and life than other Iraqis. Nation-wide results disguise more than they reveal in describing an insurgency that is driven by a Sunni minority that cannot be more than 20% of the total population and which is scarcely united around the insurgents.

This is clear from other polls. Even before the attack on the Mosque of the Golden dome, such polls found major sectarian differences over how Iraqis felt about their security. According to the February 2006 Iraq status report by the Pentagon, an overwhelming number of Iraqi’s felts very safe in the South, Kurdish areas, and mid-Euphrates. These results are summarized in Figure IX.6.

However, the same report found that attitudes towards security were mixed in Baghdad and Kirkuk. Onlt about half felt very safe and the other half felt they were not very safe or not very safe at all. While the poll did not break out the results by sect, it was clear that Sunnis felt notably less secure than Shi’ites. In the Sunni central cities such as Tikrit and Baquba, only 42% said they felt very safe, while 41% responded not very safe and 16% not very safe at all. In Mosul, a full 74% of Iraqi’s said they did not feel safe at all.

**Figure IX.6: Iraqi Perceptions of Safety by Area**

Source:

"Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 30.

Note: Responses not shown where they are 3% or below.

### ***Support for Insurgent Actions Outside Iraq***

A Zogby poll showed that the hostility that insurgents feed upon extends far beyond Iraq. When Zogby asked what the most important factor in determining Arab attitudes towards the US were, he got the following results summarized in Figure IX.7. Zogby found that 84% of Egyptians polled said their attitudes towards the US have grown worse over the last year, 62% of Jordanian, 49% of Lebanese, 72% of Moroccans, 82% of Saudis, and 58% of those in the UAE.

The causes of Arab anger towards the US shown in Figure 11.7 results have significant similarities to the results of earlier polling done by the Pew Trust, and it is clear that the Iraq War has so far done far more to encourage outside hostility than deter terrorism.

**Figure IX.7: Most Important Factor in Determining Attitude Towards US in 2005**

Factor	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Saudi Arabia	UAE
War in Iraq	57	48	34	45	49	31
President Bush's Promotion of Democracy and Reform	4	6	16	2	9	9
Developments in Arab-Israeli Front	8	13	19	8	8	7
American Treatment of Arabs And Muslims	28	28	22	40	32	41
Other	0	3	4	2	0	5

Source: Zogby International, *Attitudes of Arabs: 2005*, December 7, 2005, p. 14.

### ***Sunni versus Shi'ite Differences Over Other Aspects of Iraqi Life***

The ABC report on “Where Things Stand” found major differences between Sunni and Shi'ite in other areas the insurgency can exploit:

“Virtually all signs of optimism vanish when one is interviewing Iraq's Sunni Muslims. There's more on this in the Local Government section of the report; suffice for now to cite a pair of poll results. While 54 percent of Shi'ite Muslims believe the country is in better shape than it was before the war, only 7 percent of Sunnis believe the same. Optimism about security — 80 percent of Shi'ites and 94 percent of Kurds say they feel safer — is absent among Sunnis. Only 11 percent of Iraq's Sunni Muslims say they feel safer than they did under Saddam.

“Overall, there is a Rorschach-test quality to all this. One could easily sift through the research and field reporting and conclude that Iraq is in danger of collapse; one could almost as easily glean from the same data that there is great cause for optimism.

“At the heart of the ‘collapse’ scenario is a litany of dashed hopes. Many Iraqis cannot understand why — two-and-a-half years after the Americans arrived — electricity and sewage are not more reliable, why more reconstruction projects have not reached their neighborhoods, why corruption remains so prevalent and why their local (and in many cases democratically elected) officials have not changed things for the better.

“Yet there are ample reasons for optimism: The burgeoning commerce that now touches nearly all corners of the country; an economy growing, thanks in part to the high price of oil; per-capita income up 60 percent, to \$263 per month; improvements in health care and education; and the widely held belief that next week's elections will make a positive difference. Seventy-six percent of Iraqis told us they were “confident” the elections would produce a “stable government” — and despite the sectarian divisions, few Iraqis express concern about civil war.”

Ironically, this latter statement illustrates the dilemmas and contradictions in reporting on Iraq and Iraqi attitudes. The rise in per capita income is a national average based on dividing the total population into the total GNP measured in ppp terms. It is driven as much by a flood of wartime income and aid as oil revenue, and the distribution is unquestionably far less equitable than at the time of Saddam Hussein.

As ABC reported in its mid December poll,

“Unemployment overall is difficult to gauge. There is a growing ‘informal economy,’ and many Iraqis have taken second jobs. A U.N. survey published in May 2005 put unemployment at 18.4 percent; this is

almost certainly a low-end figure...nationwide unemployment currently hovers between 27 percent and 40 percent.

“...The work rolls remain decimated because of the purging of the old army and much of the old Ba’athist apparatus. Whatever the political benefits or costs of that much-debated policy, there is no question that it put a great many Iraqi men out of work. Further, the Iraqi government no longer finds it practical or feasible to employ the sprawling work force that existed during the rule of Saddam Hussein.”

ABC found negligible support or gratitude for the US aid effort: Only 18% percent of the Iraqis polled described the post-war construction efforts in their area as “very effective.” At total of 52% said they were ineffective or had never occurred at all. Only 6% saw the US as playing a main role in the reconstruction process and only 12% gave credit to the government.

As **Figure IX.8** shows, this result was scarcely unique. Other polls produced similar results, and show just how little credibility most aspects of the US aid effort had with Iraqis:

**Figure IX.8: Iraqi Attitudes Towards the US Aid Effort in Iraq**

(Support Shown in Percent)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Kurd</u>	<u>Shi'ite Arab</u>	<u>Sunni Arab</u>	<u>Other</u>
<u>Training Iraqi Security Forces</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	33	54	37	6	23
Approve but US is doing poor job	44	42	52	20	67
Disapprove	23	4	11	74	9
<u>Assisting with the Economic Development Of Iraq</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	29	36	36	5	26
Approve but US is doing poor job	46	51	53	19	67
Disapprove	25	12	11	76	7
<u>Assisting with the Development Of Iraq's Oil Industry</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	28	41	35	4	21
Approve but US is doing poor job	44	46	51	20	55
Disapprove	27	12	14	76	14
<u>Help Build Government Institutions</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	23	37	27	4	5
Approve but US is doing poor job	50	57	59	15	79
Disapprove	27	6	14	80	14
<u>Develop Infrastructure (Roads, Electricity, etc.)</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	20	24	26	4	2
Approve but US is doing poor job	52	57	62	16	81
Disapprove	34	11	24	81	14
<u>Meet Community and Local Needs</u>					
Approve and US doing good job	25	39	29	6	9
Approve but US is doing poor job	45	48	54	14	67
Disapprove	30	11	17	80	23

Note: The results for refuse to answer or don't know have been deleted. The percentages are too small to be relevant.

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants-A WorldPublicOpinionPoll, January 2-5, 2006, some of 1000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

***Implications for the Future***

Iraqi attitudes towards the insurgency and Iraq's political future are volatile and will be highly dependent on how the Iraqi political process evolves and how well Iraqi forces do during the coming year. It is already clear, however, that the full impact of the December 15, 2005 election on the insurgency in Iraq will not clear until (and if) there is both a true Iraqi unity government and one that proves it is effective in dealing with the constitution and the other issues that threaten to tear Iraq apart.

It will months before the full nature of the new political structure the election has created has been negotiated and every element of the new government is in place. There is still some risk

that significant numbers of Sunnis will not accept the result. It will almost certainly be well into 2007 before it is clear whether some combination of the insurgency and tensions between Sunni and Shi'ite divide the country.



## XII. Probable Outcomes and the Lessons of War

The positive side of events is that Shi'ite, Kurdish, and some key Sunni leaders still actively work for a united Iraq. More and more Iraqi forces are coming on-line, playing an active role, and taking over their own battlespace. The insurgency so far lacks major foreign support, although it does get limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign fighters. It does not have the support of most Shi'ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population.

*If* Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, *if* the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and *if* the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

The negative side is that there is a serious risk of full-scale civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi'ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi'ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi'ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

In short, the odds of insurgent success at best are even. Iraq could degenerate into full-scale civil conflict or remain divided and/or unstable for some years to come. There already is limited popular support in the US and Britain for a continued military role and major new aid programs, and continued political turmoil or serious civil war could make a continued Coalition presence untenable and drive US and British forces out of Iraq. It seems likely that the US will have to slow its plans to reduce its military presence, adjust to new threats, and intensify its efforts to shape effective security and police forces if it is to deal with the growing risk of civil conflict during the period in which the new government must come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution -- a period which now seems likely to last until at least September of 2006.

Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitutional referendum and need for action on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will drive Iraq's political and religious leaders and various elements of the Iraqi forces into warring Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions. Even the most committed leaders may be forced to abandon the search for a national and inclusive political structure if sectarian and ethnic fighting escalates out of control. Those that do not, may be replaced by far more extreme voices.

The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi'ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Sunnis, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

## ***The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk***

Whatever happens, the US and its allies need to consider the lessons of the "war after the war" in Iraq. One key lesson is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about "lessons," as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. "Oil spots," "hearts and minds," "Special Forces," walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

### ***The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment***

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalitions' side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War -- at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people -- were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy

could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid "Phase IV" and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the "waste" of US troops on "low priority" missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated," and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency where it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall of Saddam's regime, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, failed to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency as legitimate causes, and choose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi'ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to preventing and limiting insurgency, and

planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

### ***The Limits of "Oil Spots"***

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is useful if it simply means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

At a different level, however, "oil spots" are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Iraq is not atypical of many insurgencies in the fact that the key areas where insurgencies are active are also centers of ethnic and sectarian tension, and that the insurgency within these areas is also a low-level civil war.

In cities like Baghdad and Mosul, the most important potential "oil spots," it simply is not practical to try to separate the constant risk of more intense civil conflict from defeating the insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has intensified in spite of local security efforts, and a concept that ultimately failed in Vietnam is in many ways simply not applicable to Iraq.

Neither option can really be chosen over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country – where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethnic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in sectarian and ethnic based insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot solve either the security or political problem without a local ally's aid.

### ***The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques***

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea even for the warfighting part of the conflict. This is particularly true when the insurgency is far more "human-centric" than net-centric and when insurgency is mixed with civil ethnic and sectarian conflict

For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practice, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia chooses in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated with modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.<sup>764</sup>

The same is true of the similar British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different targets at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "Counterinsurgency," "Small Wars," "a modular army," and "pacification." Come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning that in many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

### ***The “Undrainable Swamp”***

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents' incentives to join civil society. In short, to “drain the swamp.”

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In the cases of Iraq, Vietnam, and many others, the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, “crusader,” or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from the US. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power set of local political movements drive the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.

### ***The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion***

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are “simple, quick and wrong.” History shows all too clearly that this “simple, quick and wrong” approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, “a triumph of hope over experience.” The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a “worst case” or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed. We become involved because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

### ***The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unattended Consequences"***

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the “fog of war” evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by “law of unintended consequences.” Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis is based on what we think we know going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face

major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges, think tanks and universities during the Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed the situation well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

### ***The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play, the Counterinsurgency Game***

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all—even if this does mean years of instability and accepting the uncertainties of civil conflict

It is far easier to blunder into a war like the Iraq War than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency and civil conflict, downplay economic and security risks, and mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said “USA Water,” while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the “Investor’s Journal” in Vietnamese and English. This was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a



deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

### ***Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?***

This raises another lesson the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to play it, particularly if the nation is divided along sectarian, ethnic, or tribal lines in ways where there is no clear “good side” or positive force for change. Robert Osgood made the point a long time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself if they had known when we went the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms. Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

No nation is every likely to stay a “failed nation.” This does not mean, however, that the US can “fix” any given country in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world’s worst problems are its most tragic problems, but this does not mean that the US can decisively change them with affordable amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform. If anything, Iraq is a warning that the US does not know how to measure and characterize the risks of intervention, is not structured to combine nation building and counterinsurgency on a massive scale, and cannot impose its system and values on another people unless they actually want them. In retrospect, the US could almost certainly have done far more good spreading the same resources among the nations and peoples where they would have had real benefits, and by concentrating on the wars it actually had to fight.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that given both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer

in future crisis may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, *and alternative means* honestly and in depth.

### ***Counterinsurgency Does Not always Mean Winning***

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point in “staying the course” through a major Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn't a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

### ***Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives***

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose. You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you can't lose, having no limits, and then losing. This should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.

## ***If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting***

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency in a weak and divided nation. If the US must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, civil war and ethnic and sectarian conflict, and risks that will require more forces and resources. If such "long wars" are too costly relative to the value of the objective, the US must set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them -- regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

### ***The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.***

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. To some extent, it will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can't figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can't deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far too often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

### ***Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets***

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now have spent or committed its way through nearly \$20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can't protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" is illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is relevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don't win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

### ***Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures***

The US announced on February 4th that its new Quadrennial Defense Review was based on a strategy of long wars, and an enduring conflict with terrorists and Islamist extremists. As the Iraq War and so many similar conflicts have shown, "long wars" can also take the form of long nation buildings, long stability operations, and long counter insurgencies. This means they can only be fought with patience, over a period of years, and with sustained investment in terms of US presence, military expenditures, and aid money.

In the case of Iraq, virtually every senior officer and official came to realize by 2005 that a short campaign plan had failed to prepare the US and Coalition for a meaningful effort, helped create a serious insurgency, and led to a situation that cost thousands of additional killed and wounded and meant tens of billions of additional dollars were needed to have any chance of success. Talk of major reductions in US forces moved to end-2006, and many experts talked about 2007. Most senior serving officers privately talked about a major advisory and combat support effort through 2010. A "three month" departure had turned into what threatened to be a decade-long presence *if* the US and its allies were to succeed. Estimates of total costs in the hundreds of billions of dollars that senior officials in the Bush Administration had dismissed in going to war had already become a reality, and the US was well on its way to a war that would cost at least 3,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

The message is clear. Any plan for counterinsurgency and stability operations must include years of effort, not months. Spending plans for military operations and all forms of aid must be shaped accordingly. The American tendency to begin operations with the same plan for immediate success -- "simple, quick, and wrong" -- needs to be replaced with an honest assessment of the fact that history takes time. The tendency to oversell the ease of operations, demand quick and decisive success, is a natural one for both policymakers and senior military officers. It is also a path to failure and defeat. At best, it is likely to be paid for in unnecessary body bags and billions of dollars.

### ***Honestly Winning the Support of the American People***

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush

Administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda loose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and its allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn't a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US "spins" each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don't end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President's term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executors, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

## ***Lessons for Warfighting***

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lesson about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn't matter how well the war went last month; it doesn't matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don't know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority.** It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Mahdi's victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn't a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don't win. Technology doesn't win.

- **Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it.** The character of America's political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many

counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think *they* can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth, although the US does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with “toys.”** Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: twin IR sensors, shaped charges, radio-controlled devices, and foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.
- **Fifth, the force must have the right balance of numbers and expertise.** Many have argued since the beginning of the Iraq War that the Coalition needed far more manpower for stability operations. This is a solution to some problems, where a simple security presence will deter terrorism and the growth of an insurgency. It is, also, however, a dangerous illusion in other cases. Large numbers of forces that will never have the right language and area skills with any serious proficiency, which lack the necessary specialist training, and have a different culture and religion will simply compound local resentments and the feeling the US or US-led force is at best an occupier and at worst an enemy. "Stabilizers" can easily become targets, and deployed large numbers of forces means more incidents with the local population, more problems in getting the host country to take responsibility, the growth of more rear-area military bureaucracy, and dealing with large number of no or little-purpose troops that need to be protected.

At the same time, too few ordinary troops can be equally dangerous, particularly in establishing initial security and presence. Small elites cannot do large or routine jobs. There must be enough military and civilians in country to establish basic security. There is no point in wasting Special Forces, translators, military police, counterinsurgency counterterrorism experts, civil-military experts and other scarce elite forces in "presence" and "support" missions.

Finding the right balance will be difficult and case specific, and must deal with contingency risks and not simply the outcome policymakers and military planners want. The key to success is to fit the force to the case, and not to the desire or the doctrine.

- **Sixth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner.** If it is true that the US can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it doesn't mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior or the ministry of finance, just doesn't work.

In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. And, incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices

- **Seventh, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies

that goes against its present emphasis on “democracy.” In most of the world, “legitimacy” has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But, bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don't win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

- **Eighth, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaff the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn't require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to “civilianize” some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier that is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, human-centric warfare does not mean “super-soldiers” or super-intelligence officers. Military forces -- and the civilian support needed for stability operations, nation building, and counterinsurgency -- do need better training in the nature of such operations, local languages, and local cultures. *But*, military forces and civilians that are outstanding is a dangerous illusion. Effective operations require both adequate force quality and adequate force quantity, and the

understanding that most people are, by definition, "average." Elites are an essential part of military operations, but only a part.

This demand for elites and super-intelligence officers is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn't important? Of course it doesn't; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.



## Endnotes

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<sup>iii</sup> Gordon Corera, "Iraqi Charter and the Insurgency," BBC Online, August 26, 2005, available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4186766.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4186766.stm)

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<sup>v</sup> Reuters, "US Military Death Toll Down Past 2 Months," Washington Times, February 1, 2006, p. 3.

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<sup>xxii</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "Violent Cycle of Revenge Stuns Iraqis," The New York Times, February 24, 2006.

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