Iraqi Force Development: Summer 2006 Update

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Revised August 23, 2006

Executive Summary

Iraqi force development in the summer of 2006 occurred against a backdrop of increasing adversity and violence. Initial events suggested cause for optimism. A new elected Iraqi government that included all major factions finally took shape in May. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed on June 7. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki seemed poised to take the initiative with a proposal for national reconciliation and the beginning of the Baghdad security plan called Operation Forward Together. Yet security proved an elusive goal, and inability to halt waves of sectarian-motivated killing sparked renewed fears of civil war as Shi'ite versus Sunni clashes escalated. Militias and "death squads" became the primary targets for security forces.

Securing Baghdad was clearly the central objective of Iraqi and Coalition efforts during the summer of 2006, and it proved to be an elusive goal. The "first phase" of Operation Forward Together relied on a show of strength with more Iraqi security forces on the streets manning more checkpoints. "Phase two" of the operation, formulated in late July well after the failure to slow the violence was apparent, incorporated more US troops and more elements of counterinsurgency warfare, specifically the "oil spot" strategy of creating secured areas one by one and the attempt to win the confidence of Iraqi civilians through more sensitive and subtle search operations and efforts to clean up battle-scarred neighbourhoods. "Phase two" may have been a better plan, but its true test will be when secured areas are returned to the control of Iraqi military and police units.

While Baghdad remained a center of attention, Iraqi and US forces attempted to reassert government control in Ramadi and the Anbar province at large, which remained a hotspot for Sunni insurgents. Another major operational development of the summer was the handover of security responsibilities to Iraqi forces. In July, Muthanna became the first Iraqi province transferred to full Iraqi security control, and more transfers were being planned.

Efforts to recruit and train Iraq's Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior forces continued in the midst of the turmoil, and US military leaders reported that 268,000 Iraqi soldiers and police had been trained by midsummer, with the remainder of what was planned to be a 325,000-man force to be ready by the end of 2006. Yet the increased quantity of Iraqi "boots on the ground" did not result in immediate improvements of the security situation. Despite improved training and capabilities, persistent problems, notably sectarian militia loyalties, corruption, lack of logistical and administrative support, and a lack of trust from the Iraqi people, continued to hinder significant progress.

Iraqi internal politics could still lead to a major civil conflict between ethnic factions and sects. It is too soon to predict how well Iraqi forces can or cannot supplement, whether they will remain unified and serve the nation and not factions, and the extent to which they can eventually replace Coalition forces. The nation-building aspects of the "war after the war" remain a struggle in progress, and there still is no way to know whether the light at the end of the tunnel is daylight or an oncoming train.

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The Acceleration and Effects of Sectarian Violence in Summer 2006

By the end of June 2006, the rising level of casualties was impossible to ignore. Despite the installation of the national unity government, the death of al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and the presentation of a national reconciliation plan, the rate of killings had accelerated to "more than 100 Iraqi civilians a day" in the month of June.[1] According to the Baghdad morgue, a total of 1,595 Iraqis were killed in or near Baghdad that month.[2] A UN report released on July 18 stated:[3]

> Insurgent, militia, and terrorist attacks continued unabated in many parts of Iraq, especially in Baghdad and in the central and western regions, with an increasingly sectarian connotation. A total of 5,818 civilians were reportedly killed and at least 5,762 wounded during May and June 2006. Killings, kidnappings, and torture remain widespread. Fear resulting from these and other crimes continued to increase internal displacement and outflows of Iraqis to neighboring countries. The negative effect of violence on professional categories, targeted by sectarian and criminal violence or displaced as a result, coupled with inadequate provision of basic services, also affected the level of education and health care received by the population. Women, children, and vulnerable groups, such as minorities, internally displaced, and disabled persons continue to be directly affected by the violence and the ongoing impunity for human rights violations.

July brought no relief. The Associated Press stated "at least 695 Iraqis were killed in sectarian or insurgent-related violence" in the first 18 days of the month.[4] The Baghdad central morgue's count was even higher, at around 1,000 deaths for the same period of time.[5] Media attention centered on a wave of spectacularly brutal and indiscriminate attacks against civilians in mid-July. Around midday on July 9, 41 people were killed when Shi'ite gunmen, possibly affiliated with the Mahdi militia, invaded Baghdad's al-Jihad neighbourhood, dragged Sunni residents from their cars and homes and killed them in the streets.[6] On July 17, a large group of Sunni insurgents drove into the predominantly Shi'ite town of Mahmudiya south of Baghdad and killed over 40 unarmed civilians in a crowded market, "hurling grenades to blow up merchants at their counters and shooting down mothers as they fled with their children" in an attack that lasted 30 minutes.[7]

The next day, 53 Shi'ite civilians were killed by a suicide bomber in a van in Kufa.[8] As Reuters reported at the time:[9]

> Four of the bloodiest incidents this year have taken place this month—two al-Qaeda car bombings of Shi'ite markets in Baghdad and Kufa and two gun attacks blamed on Shi'ite militias.

> Those four alone, two of them just this week, claimed some 220 lives. But as the United Nations said this week, that is a fraction of some 100 civilians a day who are dying in violence.

The immediate effect of such violence was to send people fleeing from homes in mixed neighbourhoods to more secure locations in segregated sectarian strongholds. The Iraqi government released figures on July 20 indicating that "1,117 families abandoned mixed areas for Shi'ite or Sunni strongholds in the last week alone," and that "nearly 27,000 families, about 162,000 people, had registered for relocation aid since the bombing of a Shi'ite shrine in Samarra on Feb. 22, which set off waves of killings, kidnappings and

reprisals." People moved to areas where their sect was an overwhelming majority, as in the case of Falluja:[10]

> For Sunnis, Falluja has become a preferred safe haven. Officials there describe the majority Sunni city as a swelling metropolis, with hundreds if no thousands of families moving in every week, crowding homes and seeking identification cards with Falluja addresses to ensure that they are not mistaken for Shi'ites.

Baghdad became increasingly divided, with Iraqi officials saying "the Tigris river is already looking like the Beirut 'Green Line,' dividing Sunni west Baghdad, known by its ancient name of Karkh, from the mainly Shi'ite east, or Rusafa." The violence had become so overwhelming that some Iraqi leaders had "all but given up on holding the country together" and spoke privately about "pre-empting the worst bloodshed by agreeing to an east-west division of Baghdad into Shi'ite and Sunni Muslim zones."[11] A civil war mentality seemed to have taken hold, particularly in the capital city.

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, said it was necessary for neighbourhoods to form "defense committees" to defend themselves—signalling the widespread distrust and lack of confidence in government security forces.[12] Some Iraqis apparently swapped houses with friends of different sects in order to keep from being a minority in a given neighbourhood as Iraqi government forces struggled to keep track of the large-scale population movements. US and Iraqi officials were insistent that a significant portion of the sectarian threat was exaggerated "rumor-mongering."[13] Yet between July 20 and July 31, some 20,000 more Iraqis fled their homes, raising the total number of displaced people to 182,154, including 27,744 from Baghdad, since the February 22 bombing of a Shi'ite shrine in Samarra "sparked a new phase of killing by Shi'ites and minority Sunni groups."[14]

US Army Col. Brian Jones, commanding a unit in the Diyala province, said that the civilian population, rather than US troops, had become the primary targets of most of the violence, with "anywhere from 20 to 30 deaths an evening" in his area of operations since the beginning of the summer. "Some of it is certainly tribal. Some of it is political. And some, of course, is sectarian. But it's very difficult to separate those, even days after the fact."[15] Some 60 percent of attacks in the Diyala province during the summer of 2006 were directed against civilians. Another American officer, describing the escalating sectarian violence in the provinces, said, "We see the challenges of Baghdad being exported."[16]

Sectarian violence in Baghdad continued unabated, generating increasing debate over whether Iraq had already fallen into civil war. In August 2006 testimony before Congress, US CENTCOM commander Gen. John Abizaid said "the violence was as bad as he had seen it and the country risked sliding into civil war unless conditions in the capital were brought under control." More US troops were deployed to Baghdad early that month to try to stabilize the security situation and enable the government to "kick-start efforts toward reconciliation."[17]

US and Iraqi troops on the ground in Iraq said that civil war had already begun in Baghdad, describing neighborhoods turning into "open battlefields," streets as "dividing lines," entire villages "cleared out," and bodies "dropped in canals and left on the side of

the road." A 4th Infantry Division battalion commander summed up the goal of the militant factions as "trying to force Shi'ites into Shi'ite areas and Sunnis into Sunni areas" and compared Iraq to 1994 Rwanda.[18] A BBC correspondent reported that "Baghdad is increasingly becoming a patchwork of Shia and Sunni enclaves looking nervously out across barricades."[19] The Baghdad morgue reported that it had handled 1,815 bodies in the month of July. About 85% of them had suffered violent deaths, the "biggest cause" of which were gunshot wounds to the head "execution style," a method associated with "sectarian death squads."[20] Some Sunnis in Baghdad took to impersonating Shi'ites to avoid becoming targets of death squads. A Sunni organization's website displayed "tips on being Shia" such as "memorize the names of the 12 imams," "have an ID with a different name," and "keep a poster in your house of Imam Hussein."[21]

Overall 3,438 civilians were killed in Iraq in July, an average of over 110 Iraqis daily, a nine percent increase over the previous month, and "nearly double the toll in January." Those figures were released by the Iraqi Health Ministry that outside analysts said "almost certainly reflect severe undercounting."[22]

The growing "self-segregation" or "soft ethnic cleansing" of Sunni and Shi'ite communities led to increasingly loud public calls for dividing the country as a solution to sectarian violence. Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the major Shi'ite political faction called the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, began "aggressively promoting a radical plan to partition the country a way of separating the warring sects:"

> Shi'ites have long advocated some sort of autonomy in the south, similar to the Kurds' 15-year-old enclave in the north, with its own defense forces and control over oil exploration. And the new constitution does allow provinces to team up into federal regions. But the latest effort, promulgated by Cabinet ministers, clerics, and columnists, marks the first time they have advocated regional partition as a way of stemming violence.

> "Federalism will cut off all the parts of the country that are incubating terrorism from those that are upgrading and improving," said Khudair Khuzai, the Shi'ite education minister. "We will do it just like Kurdistan. We will put soldiers along the frontiers."

> The growing clamor for partition illustrates how dire the country's security, economic, and political problems have come to seem to many Iraqis: Until recently, the idea of redrawing the 8 ½ decade-old map of Iraq was considered seditious.

Sunni political leaders condemned the suggestion as an oil grab, which would leave the Shi'ite south and Kurdish north regions in control nearly all of Iraq's natural resources. Yet the idea of "splitting the capital along the Tigris, which roughly divides the city between a mostly Shi'ite east and a mostly Sunni west," had broader appeal as a means of possibly reducing the rampant sectarian strife.[23]

The increasing risk of civil war made stopping so-called "death squads" and militias responsible for sectarian killing became the primary mission for security forces.[24] In early August, US military leaders were reporting that "more people in Baghdad are being killed by Shi'ite death squads than by al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgents, who had been the main focus of US and Iraqi forces in the capital" previously.

General George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, reported that 60% of Baghdad killings at the time were attributable to Shi'ite death squads and declared that security forces would "dismantle all death squads, regardless of affiliation. 'We're going after people who are actively murdering other Iraqis,' Casey said in an interview." But it would be easier said than done. Not only were some of the militias better equipped than Iraqi forces, but the connections between the militias and certain Iraqi Shi'ite political leaders made targeting "death squads" responsible for sectarian violence a sensitive issue.[25]

The lack of progress in curbing violence was demonstrable and led to recriminations between US and Iraqi leaders. Throughout Iraq, attacks "mounted with each US-declared step of progress:"

> When L. Paul Bremer, then the top US representative in Iraq, appointed an Iraqi Governing Council in July 2003, insurgent attacks averaged 16 daily. When Saddam Hussein was captured that December, the average was 19. When Bremer signed the handover of sovereignty in June 2004, it was 45 attacks daily. When Iraq held its elections for a transitional government in January 2005, it was 61. When Iraqis voted last December for a permanent government, it was 75. When US forces killed terrorist mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in June, it was up to 90.

Iraqi political leaders accused the US of not grasping the reality of the problems facing the country and worried "that the rosy views are preventing the creation of effective strategies against the escalating violence." "'The American policy has failed both in terms of politics and security, but the big problem is that they will not confess or admit that,' said Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of Parliament." "'All the American policies have failed because the American analysis of the situation is wrong; it is not related to reality,' [Shi'ite parliament member Jalaladin] Saghir said." Some American soldiers on the ground privately shared that view and were concerned that top officials did not understand what was going on beyond the Green Zone, let alone how to handle it.[26]

The Killing of Zarqawi

The most striking of all such developments during the first half of 2006 was the killing of Al-Qa'ida's leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in early June. The Iraqi government and US forces in Iraq scored a major political and propaganda victory by killing Zarqawi. The militant leader was located with the assistance of Jordanian intelligence, which used human intelligence, as well as the background landscape in one of the videos Zarqawi released to the media, to determine Zarqawi's location. On June 7, Zarqawi was positively identified in a house near the village of Hibhib, west of Baquba. He died after US F-16s attacked the building with 500-pound bombs.[27] The fact that this coincided with a new government increased the impact of this victory, and Prime Minister Maliki sought to exploit the resulting window of opportunity by taking a range of actions that affected Iraqi force development:

- *Appointing Ministers of Defense and Interior*: The appointment of ministers to head ministries that had seen a year of non-leadership was a key development. The task still remained to convince Sunnis that the Ministry of Interior and its forces would no longer support attacks on Sunnis, and yet to still reassure Shi'ites and Kurds. The new Ministers cannot be successful overnight, but

simply appointing them was an important first step. Following up with real action would have a lasting value.

- *Freeing Detainees and Bringing Sunnis and Ba'athists Back into Government and the Iraqi Forces*: Maliki has already taken a vital step by freeing some detainees and the eventual total could be much higher. He has talked about bringing more Sunnis into office and the Iraqi forces, as well as more Ba'athists. This latter step is critical because so many leading secular Iraqis joined the Ba'ath simply to survive, and are innocent of any of Saddam's abuses.

- *Investigating American "Abuses":* An Iraqi investigation may seem critical of the US, but it is absolutely essential that both the Iraqi government and the US make it clear who is really guilty of what, punish the guilty, and identify the innocent. Only such Iraqi action can show the government is truly sovereign and provide a basis for showing there is no cover up or concealment. It is vital to establishing the fact that many of the charges being piled on the US military are almost certainly exaggerated or false, and to rebuild Iraqi-US trust and confidence.

- *Reaching out to Sunnis:* Maliki has already shown he is actively seeking to include Sunnis in the political process -- and Sunnis who supported the insurgency for political reasons, not out of loyalty to Saddam or religious extremism. Many of these Sunnis have every reason to fear or hate the more extreme insurgents, and Zarqawi's death may convince them to move back towards the center.

- *Cleaning Up the Ministry of Interior, Security Forces, Police Forces, and Guards*: Maliki has talked about a sweeping clean up and reorganization, with new uniforms and badges, tighter controls and discipline, and backed by a MNSTC-I advisory effort that gives the "year of the police" real meaning. There already has been considerable progress in the MOI, prison system, and several key MOI security units associated with "death squads." If a broader effort can even be seen to begin to take hold, this could have a major impact.

- *Dealing with the Militias and Irregulars*: Maliki already delivered key messages calling for an end to militia operations, and gave one in Basra -- showing he will deal with Shi'ite militias in even the most trouble areas. Making good on his words will be difficult, dangerous, and time consuming. Once again, however, even a real start would have a major impact.

- *Cleaning Up Baghdad:* Plans have been underway for months for joint Iraqi-US action to try to take back the parts of Baghdad that have come back under Shi'ite militias (Sadr) and insurgent control. A major sweep, led by Iraqi forces with a real Iraqi government, can't win back the whole city, but could be a critical start. If other actions take place in Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, the move toward reestablishing security in the most important areas in the country could offset much of the problems created by more than half a year of political turmoil.

- *Appointing the Group to Review the Constitution*: Finally, Sunnis, Shi'ites, Kurds, and others will be far more willing to believe in the new government if they see a body appointed to deal with the 55 areas in the constitution that must be reviewed to finish a draft that is national and representative.

It was clear that Zarqawi's death would have at least a positive short-term impact regardless of how seriously the government follows-up on these steps. At the same time, this list of measures illustrates the fact that that neither Iraqi force development nor tactical victories against insurgents can produce lasting victories or stability without sustained political progress, moves towards rebuilding the economy, and without providing critical government services and a functioning infrastructure throughout the country. From the start, dollars have been as important as bullets, and creating jobs has been as important as Iraqi combat units.

Although US spokesmen claimed that the killing of Zarqawi "forced the terrorists to reshuffle their leadership, dislodging them from their quarters leading into the capital," a successor to lead al-Qa'ida was named within days. The name announced on militant websites, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, was determined by the US to be an alias for Abu Ayyub al-Masri, an Egyptian explosives specialist associated with Ayman al-Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad movement since 1982.[28] The US promptly offered a $5 million bounty for information leading to al-Masri's capture.[29]

Efforts to Secure Baghdad in Summer 2006

On June 14, 2006, one day after President Bush visited Iraq to express confidence in the new government, a major security operation dubbed "Operation Forward Together" ordered by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki commenced in Baghdad. The operation was to involve tens of thousands of US-backed Iraqi security personnel taking to Baghdad's streets to enforce a curfew, weapons ban, and a vehicle ban around the time of Friday prayers.

The exact number of personnel participating in the action was not disclosed, but was initially estimated to be as high as 75,000.[30] The actual number was eventually determined to be 42,500 Iraqi troops and 7,200 Americans.[31] Forward Together was to be a dramatic first initiative to curb violence in the capital and comprised a substantial increase in standard security measures such as patrols, checkpoints, and curfews.[32]

The effectiveness of the Baghdad security crackdown was initially mixed. Few incidents of insurgent violence occurred in the city in the first two days of the operation. The checkpoints caused massive traffic jams and inconveniences, but much of the population outside of the Sunni-majority districts seemed supportive of government action.[33] On June 17, however, the calm was broken by seven separate attacks in Baghdad: "one suicide bombing, a mortar attack, three car bombings and the explosions of a bomb placed under a pushcart and a bomb placed inside a minibus. Thirty-eight Iraqis were killed and 75 wounded, the Interior Ministry said."[34]

The attacks increased in scale and audacity in spite of Operation Forward Together. On June 21, approximately 50 gunmen wearing police uniforms abducted as many as 100 factory workers in broad daylight in the northeastern Baghdad zone of Taji, home to a major US base.[35] On June 23, the government extended the curfew to afternoon hours following a major shootout involving Sunni insurgents, Shi'ite militiamen, and Iraqi and US security forces.[36] Two major incidents occurred on July 1. A suicide car bomb blasted a crowded market in the Shi'ite Sadr City district, killing over 60 people and wounding twice as many. Media reports noted that US and Iraqi soldiers who arrived to the emergency site were pelted with rocks by Iraqi children and jeered by civilians. Meanwhile, Tayseer Najah al-Mashhadani, a female Sunni member of the Iraqi parliament, and her eight bodyguards were abducted at gunpoint on the city's northern outskirts.[37]

These events in Baghdad prompted the Iraqi government to announce a "comprehensive review" of the security operation. US officials "admitted that the plan has produced so far only a slight dip in the violence, and nothing like the results that had been hoped for."[38]

Violence remained prevalent and increasingly took the form of sectarian-motivated killings of civilians. Baghdad's central morgue reported receiving 1,595 bodies in June 2006, a sixteen percent increase from the previous month, indicating that the pace of killing since Zarqawi's death and the imposition of the Baghdad security plan had not slowed at all. US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad told the BBC that "killing Zarqawi had not made Iraq any safer."[39] On July 9, a "mob of gunmen went on a brazen daylight rampage through a predominantly Sunni Arab district of western Baghdad…pulling people from their cars and homes and killing them." The number of dead from this incident alone was in the dozens, and the suspected perpetrators were Shi'ite militiamen.[40] This incident marked the beginning of an upsurge in sectarian killings in the Baghdad area. On July 17, another group of gunmen, presumably Sunni, massacred over 40 Shi'ite civilians at a marketplace in Mahmudiyah, a town just south of Baghdad.[41]

The mass killings of civilians began to have serious political consequences in the fledgling Iraqi government as Shi'ite and Sunni lawmakers traded accusations and the security forces were alternately blamed for not doing enough to quell the violence and for aiding sectarian militants.

Top US officials attempted to paint the best possible portrait of Iraqi security force "progress," as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice asserted on July 10, "I'm quite certain that the combination of a strong government and the security forces that are now engaged in the security plan for Baghdad will be able to bring this situation under control."[42] The words, however, seemed to ring hollow as events on the ground unfolded. Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell "announced no great accomplishments as the Baghdad crackdown involving 50,000 security forces—42,000 Iraqi and 8,000 American—approached the 30-day point."[43] On July 11, "frustrated by the lack of results, Iraqi lawmakers called on the country's Defense and Interior ministers to explain why the security operation hasn't led to a decline in violence."[44]

By July, the initial phases of the security operation had clearly failed to reduce the violence. In fact, violence continued to increase: "in the 101 days before the crackdown, an average of 23.8 attacks occurred daily. In the first 35 days of the operation, the average was 25.2 attacks a day."[45] US military figures released July 20 "showed that the number of daily attacks recorded by the police and allied forces in Baghdad jumped to an average of 34 this month [July 2006] from 24 in June."

Caldwell reported, "We have not witnessed the reduction in violence one would have hoped for in a perfect world."[46] Attacks had occurred in seven of Baghdad's ten districts, although according to Caldwell, "a few neighbourhoods" were accounting for 41% of the killings in the city. According to the US military, the toll on Iraqi forces was 92 Iraqi soldiers and police dead and 444 wounded.[47]

Operation Forward Together revealed that Iraqi security forces as they were remained incapable of bringing a complete halt to violent disorder in the capital. CENTCOM commander General John Abizaid acknowledged on July 21, "The situation with sectarian violence in Baghdad is very serious" and noted that more Iraqi and American troops would be redeployed to the capital to try re-establish some semblance of order. "The country can deal with the insurgency better than it can deal with the sectarian violence, and it needs to move decisively against the sectarian violence now," the general said.[48]

These developments forced the Iraqi government and MNF-I to react. While in London for talks on July 24, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki announced a plan to reinforce the security forces in Baghdad with some 4,000 additional troops, including a US brigade, while taking control of neighborhoods prone to experience sectarian violence and "cordoning off the city to prevent armed men and explosives from getting in."[49] US President Bush agreed, noting that additional forces being sent to Baghdad would "be pulled from areas in Iraq that are deemed relatively free of violence" and that final numbers would be decided by military commanders.[50] Another aspect of the strategy discussed by Maliki and Bush in their July 25 meeting was the embedding of more US military police with Iraqi police units.[51]

The plan agreed to by the two leaders involved boosting force levels in Baghdad by a total of 8,000, of which half would be Iraqi and half American. The US contribution included "units equipped with Stryker armoured vehicles, military police and, essentially, what is left of the American military's reserve in Kuwait." The plan also focused on a new strategy to "concentrate on specific neighbourhoods rather than distribute the forces throughout the city, control movement in and out of sectors of the capital and try to sweep them of insurgents and violent militias.

American officials admitted some risk in diverting additional forces, particularly the military police intended to help build up Iraqi police capabilities, earmarked for other areas of the country to Baghdad, but US spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell insisted, "Baghdad is truly a must-win…We have to win in Baghdad. We don't have an option."[52] The US units redeployed to Baghdad included four military police companies and the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team.[53]

Lt. General Peter W. Chiarelli, "commander of day-to-day US military operations in Iraq," revealed another aspect of the revamped security plan in an interview. As US and Iraqi troops secured neighborhoods in force, unemployed Iraqis living in those areas would be offered jobs on local public works projects, like digging water and sewer lines. "When [Chiarelli] commanded the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad from March 2004 to March 2005, he reduced the violence in the Shi'ite neighborhood of Sadr City by putting many of the fighting age men to work digging a sewer system." With a budget of $75 million to $100 million, Chiarelli planned to adopt that approach on a city-wide scale. Yet he admitted the troubles the US military was having in learning how to deal with the situation it faced in Baghdad, remarking, "Quite frankly, in 33 years in the United States Army, I never trained to stop a sectarian fight. This is something new."[54]

The US reinforcements from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team began arriving in Baghdad on August 6, "patrolling predominantly Sunni areas of the west of the city." A BBC correspondent reported that more US troops than initially thought, perhaps up to 7,000, could be sent to secure Baghdad.[55]

On August 7, Gen. George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, described the new plan to secure Baghdad, saying, "What you will see are Iraqi security forces, supported by the coalition, clearing out areas where there are terrorists and death squads, and the establishing the security presence to protect the people." The new goal was to "restore security to the capital by the end of September," when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan was expected to begin.[56]

Early on August 7, US and Iraqi troops set out to apprehend members of a suspected "death squad" in Sadr City. The raid turned into a two-hour shootout with gunmen that resulted in civilians killed and injured. The operation was the beginning of the reinforced Baghdad security effort to clamp down on sectarian violence associated with militias, but many Iraqis, including those in leadership positions, perceived the tactics as "heavy-handed" and careless with regard to civilian lives.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki condemned the August 7 raid as damaging to his national reconciliation efforts, highlighting differences with US leaders on security policy.[57] Spokesman William Caldwell reported that Iraqi and US forces had carried out "operations against 10 death squads throughout Baghdad" and found 222 roadside bombs in the first week of the revamped security plan.[58]

US military leaders were reporting that "more people in Baghdad are being killed by Shi'ite death squads than by al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgents, who had been the main focus of US and Iraqi forces in the capital" previously. General George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, reported that 60% of Baghdad killings at the time were attributable to Shi'ite death squads and declared that security forces would "dismantle all death squads, regardless of affiliation." But it would be easier said than done. Not only were some of the militias better equipped than Iraqi forces, but the connections between the militias and certain Iraqi Shi'ite political leaders made targeting "death squads" responsible for sectarian violence a sensitive issue.[59] Parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani said, "Disbanding the militias means disbanding the Interior and Defense Ministries and disbanding the sides funding the militias in the Interior and Defense ministries."[60]

On August 10, a combined force of 5,000 US and Iraqi troops sealed off the southern Baghdad district of Dora. Dora had been one of the most violent neighborhoods in the capital, with a murder rate peaking at 20 per day. House-to-house searches yielded some weapons caches and 36 arrests. Yet the operation in Dora also included new measures to attempt to win the support of the Iraqi cvilians living there. Security forces patrolled specific beats to develop the trust of local residents and trash and rubble was cleared from the streets. "If successful, the military could use the operation as a model for similar operations in the rest of Baghdad" to stabilize the security situation.[61]

On August 13, Iraqi and US forces entered and cordoned off the Shula and Ameriyah neighbourhoods of western Baghdad. Thousands of homes and businesses were searched in operations that included the 1st and 5th Brigades of the 6th Iraqi Army Division the 5th

Brigade of the 2nd Iraqi National Police Division.[62]   The tactics used in these neighbourhoods were very similar to those used in Dora:

> In their struggle to quell the sectarian violence gripping the capital, thousands of US troops and their Iraqi counterparts are fanning out into Baghdad's most violent neighbourhoods, a mission that is part security sweep, part public relations.
>
> Even as they hunt for insurgents and weapons, they are cleaning streets, reopening shops, medical clinics, and gas stations, and fixing electricity lines. In areas like Amiriyah, where insurgents melt easily into the population and sectarian distrust runs deep, success is measured not in arrests or arms confiscated, but in perceptions.

US troops accompanied Iraqi units on door-to-door searches of homes and mosques, behaving politely to build up the local residents' trust in Iraqi forces. It was a difficult process, because many Iraqi citizens felt that insurgents were simply lying low or hiding outside the secured neighbourhoods until after US troops left.[63]

Securing Baghdad was clearly the primary objective of Iraqi and Coalition efforts during the summer of 2006, and it proved to be an elusive goal. The "first phase" of Operation Forward Together was simplistic in its approach, relying on a show of strength with more Iraqi security forces on the streets manning more checkpoints. It was a relatively passive operation that spread the participating units across the city, attempting to handle the entire capital at once with no preponderance of force in any area. The plan did not anticipate the acceleration of sectarian violence and was unable to cope with the cycle of retaliatory attacks and spiralling death toll.

"Phase two" of Operation Forward Together, formulated in late July well after the failure to slow the violence was apparent, demonstrated Coalition leaders' recognition that a more coherent plan was necessary to provide security to Baghdad. It incorporated more elements of counterinsurgency warfare, specifically the "oil spot" strategy of creating secured areas one by one and the attempt to win the confidence of Iraqi civilians through more sensitive and subtle search operations and efforts to clean up battle-scarred neighbourhoods. Yet the introduction of more US troops in this phase was also something of an admission that Iraqi forces alone could not be counted on to handle security responsibilities. "Phase two" of Operation Forward Together may have been a better plan, but its true test will be when secured areas are returned to the control of Iraqi military and police units.

Efforts to Secure Ramadi in Summer 2006

Ramadi, capital city of the restive Anbar province, became the focus of renewed joint US-Iraqi efforts to bring the insurgency to heel. A group of 400 American and Iraqi troops moved into the city's ruined downtown area from the west on the night of June 25, occupying houses to establish a makeshift base. US commanders adopted a more subtle strategy in retaking Ramadi than had been used in Fallujah in 2004, opting to surround the city with bases and clear one neighborhood at a time. The plan was based on providing more permanent stabilizing forces to secure the city:[64]

> Instead of leaving after the shooting stops -- as the Americans have been forced to do in other Iraqi cities -- the Americans plan to leave behind garrisons of American and Iraqi troops at various points throughout the city. For the first time, they say, they believe they have the manpower to

make the strategy work. The combat outpost the Americans and Iraqis started building on Monday morning was the fifth one to go up [during June 2006] on the southern edge of the city.

Central to the strategy, American commanders say, is the decision to commit significant numbers of Iraqi troops who can hold the neighborhoods after the Americans do most of the work of pacification. That, the American commanders hope, will make the city safe enough for its shattered economy to renew itself and for Iraqi police officers to feel secure enough to start showing up for work.

Iraqi troops, however, did not always prove to be reliable allies. For example, Lt. Col. Raad Niaf Haroosh, commander of a mostly Sunni Iraqi army battalion, found himself leading only 145 men, while some 500 more refused to deploy to Ramadi. The unwillingness of security forces to fight other Iraqis, especially those of the same sect, proved to be a significant factor.[65] An American commander reported that "out of 750 Iraqi soldiers assigned to work in Ramadi, 600 quit. 'They didn't want to come to Ramadi,' he said."[66]

US and Iraqi troops carried out raids in Ramadi to clear out known insurgent operating areas, most notably a local mosque and the hospital, which had been used as a major insurgent command center. The city's "government complex, home to municipal and provincial government offices, was subjected to relentless insurgent attacks.[67] The facility was under such frequent attack that a Marine plan called for demolishing several of the surrounding buildings to create an open "Green Zone" to deny insurgents places to seek cover while attacking.[68] US military commanders insisted their approach was "paying dividends as normal daily activity slowly return[ed] to the secured sections of the city" and said that rapid change could not be expected but Iraqi security force improvements were translating into better security in Ramadi.[69] Still, controlling Ramadi and Anbar province were major challenges for the Iraqi government and caused Iraqi Brigadier General Jaleel Khalf to suggest that Iraqi troops would not be ready to assume control of the area for another year "under the best of circumstances," a view backed by US commanders in the province.[70]

Persistent manning problems continued to seriously undermine the ability of Iraqi forces to establish security in Anbar province. US military figures show that "the two Iraqi divisions in Anbar Province are about 5,000 short of their authorized strength, while some 660 soldiers are currently AWOL." A battalion in Haditha had 700 soldiers in the fall of 2005, but by August of 2006 had only 400. Iraqi divisions countrywide were manned at "85 to 90 percent" of authorized strength, with frequent leaves for volunteer soldiers dropping them to "65 to 70 percent strength." In Anbar, however, with long leaves and desertions due to pay problems, the 7th and 1st Iraqi Divisions operated at 35 percent and 50 percent strength, respectively.[71]

The Transfer of Security Responsibilities

At the same time, the Coalition and the Iraqi government embarked on a plan to transfer provincial security responsibilities in phases. The Muthanna province, a predominantly Shi'ite area of southern Iraq bordering Saudi Arabia, became the first Iraqi province to be handed over by Coalition troops to the full control of the Iraqi government and security forces on July 13. The quiescent territory had formerly been secured by British,

Australian, and Japanese troops.[72]   The pre-planned handover was lauded by US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. George W. Casey as "a milestone in the successful development of Iraq's capability to govern and protect itself as a sovereign and democratic nation."[73]   It was a step in Prime Minister al-Maliki's plan to have security responsibilities transferred to Iraqi security forces province-by-province in an 18-month process.[74]

Media reports reflected a lingering MNF-I concern over the ability of the Iraqi forces to maintain order by themselves after the territorial security responsibilities were handed over. US commanders lauded the number of Iraqi troops coming on-line, which enabled them to perform a "number" of missions that US forces lacked the "combat power" to carry out. Air Force Brig. Gen. Kurt Cichowski, head of strategy and planning for US command in Iraq, noted that "troop reductions and the transfer of Iraqi security control are mutually exlcusive."

Yet, complaints about the Iraqi forces from their fellow citizens ranged from accusations of corruption to complicity in sectarian attacks, suggesting a need for the continued presence of US troops. Iraqi officers insisted that they had the support of Iraqi civilians and "unconventional tactics" were a necessary part of counterinsurgency. "When [the insurgents] are fighting us, they use gangster rules," one officer noted. "We fight them using the same rules."[75]

Moreover, increasing the numbers of Iraqi forces often did no lead to better seurity. The fact that violence was on the increase in summer 2006 seemed to be "challenging a central assumption behind the US strategy: Training more Iraqi security forces will allow American troops to start going home." In actuality, attacks and fatalities were were on the rise, especially in Baghdad. As a July report by the Government Accountability Office stated, "Even as the number of Iraqi security forces have increased, security conditions have deteriorated."[76] On August 2, however, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani asserted his view that Iraqi forces could assume responsibility for security nationwide by the end of 2006, in contrast to the far less optimistic assessments of US military commanders. He termed the surge in sectarian violence "the last arrows in their quivers."[77]

Despite sectarian violence, the Coalition moved ahead with plans to transfer security control to Iraqi forces. On August 8, Forward Operating Base Dagger near Tikrit and the lead security role for the provinces of Nineveh, Salahuddin, and Tamim provinces to the Iraqi Army 4th Division. Following the handover, five of Iraq's 10 army divisions had primary security responsibility in their areas of operation, and 48 of 110 US bases in Iraq had been turned over to Iraqi control.[78] British troops were planning to transfer full responsibility for security in the Maysan province to Iraqi forces in the fall of 2006, training more Iraqi units and preparing to vacate its base at Abu Naji.[79]

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki asserted on August 17 that Iraqi forces "have become capable of taking over security tasks in the majority of the provinces and that they will be able to fill the vacuum in case the Multi-National Forces withdraw." Iraqi forces at the time were only in full control in the Muthanna province, although the Prime Minister said that they would soon be taking responsibility in parts of the Qadisiyah province.[80]

However, with violence reaching new highs and the US bolstering its troop presence in an attempt to stop the killing, Maliki's statement did not ring true. While Iraqi forces may have been more capable than before, but in August 2006 there was no indication that they could uphold law and order in the face of worsening violence in most regions of the country.

The Emerging "Second Threat:" Adding Shi'ite and Kurdish Violence and Militias to the ISF Mission

Prime Minister Maliki made bringing the militias under control a key priority for a reason. The CPA and Iraqi interim government had failed to deal with the militias in early 2003, when they had the chance to do so at minimal cost and risk. This left a lasting legacy that grew steadily more dangerous as the insurgency drove Shi'ites and Kurds to react in kind, and by relying on their own forces rather than those of the government. By early 2006, the militias had become a serious threat in virtually all of the provinces, cities, and areas where the insurgency had limited presence.

While any such estimates are extreme uncertain, by mid-2006 some experts estimated that Iraq's private militia groups might outnumber the 120,000-strong police force, which continued to lose at least several hundred recruits a month.[81] There were many different small militia and security forces, but the key militias operating in Iraq in the spring of 2006 had three major elements -- all of which posed a direct challenge to the authority and control of Iraqi forces:

> **Peshmerga:** A Kurdish word meaning "those ready to die," the Peshmerga were created in 1946 to fight for an independent Kurdish state. The forces number up to 140,000 with loyalties divided between the two main Kurdish political parties: the Kurdish Democratic Party, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. About 20,000 Peshmerga had been integrated into Iraq's army by the spring of 2006, but were still largely based in the Kurdish provinces to the north.

> **Badr Brigades:** A Shi'ite militia formed in Iran in the early 1980s with the aim of toppling Saddam Hussein from exile. Thought to number up to 20,000 trained individuals, it fought on the side of Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. It was once led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who came to head the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of the main parties in Iraq's ruling Shi'ite coalition. Badr changed its name to the Badr Organization after Saddam's overthrow to shift its image away from its military roots.

> **Mahdi Army:** Formed after Saddam's overthrow in April 2003, it is loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr, who led two rebellions against US and British forces in 2004, and in 2006 threw its political weight in to al-Dawa party behind Shi'ite Prime Minister al-Jafari. The Mahdi Army is estimated to number around 10,000 core fighters, but has thousands more supporters that could be called on to fight.

The Shi'ite Militias as the Main New Threat

The problems with the militias were least damaging inside the areas controlled by the Kurdish government, which had long been under Kurdish control, but the Peshmerga remained a threat to both Iraqi force development and the Iraqi government in areas like Kirkuk and wherever there was tension between Kurd, Arab, Turcoman, and other minorities.

The most serious problems occurred in areas where Shi'ite militias came into contact with Sunnis, which threatened to push the country towards civil war in precisely the way that Sunni Islamist extremists sought in attacking Shi'ites and Kurds in the first place. At the same time, Shi'ite factions contended for power with the central government and each other. The most overt examples were Sadr City in Baghdad, and Basra -- Iraq's second largest city. In these cases, Iraqi forces at best had formal authority while de facto power was in the hands of the militias -- many of which committed crimes and violent acts against members of their own sect.

The Badr Organization, formerly the Badr Brigade, similarly denied charges that it was using the Ministry of the Interior, controlled by SCIRI member Bayan Jabr, to carry out attacks against Sunnis. Hadi al-Amery, the leader of the Badr Organization, claimed that the abductions and executions were the work of insurgents who had either infiltrated the ISF or were using the uniforms to mask their true identity and generate sectarian tensions. He claimed that 5% of his 20,000 Badr Brigade members had been incorporated into the security forces and that the rest were involved in politics.[82]

He also charged that Shi'ites were more often the victims and that the violence that persists is a result of the US inability to provide security: "When you ask me who kills the Sunnis, I ask you who kills the Shi'ites? I am not responsible for security. The American forces are responsible for security…Rather than asking me, ask the Americans."[83]

On April 27, 2006, Iraq's senior Shi'ite Muslim religious figure, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, called on the country's militias to disarm. In a statement, Sistani said that "Weapons must be in the hands of government security forces that should not be tied to political parties but to the nation."[84] This issuance, however, came amid growing concerns over militia recruiting successes in 2006. Through better pay, promises of greater levels of safety, and other perks, there was growing evidence at this time that in some instances the militias were outcompeting local police departments in recruiting to expand their forces.[85]

By the summer of 2006, Shi'ite militias operating in the southern province of Basra had become enough of a problem to prompt a visit from Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. During his visit to the city of Basra on May 31, 2006, Maliki berated local leaders regarding the breakdown of the security situation. Rival Shi'ite parties and their associated militias became embroiled in a power grab struggle as Coalition and Iraqi officials largely focused on battling the insurgency in other parts of the country. The result was a sharp increase in killings -- 174 in the two months leading up to Maliki's visit -- as the factions fought for control of the provincial government and the region's oil wealth.

Much of the killings were being carried out through rival factions within the local police force. Basra Police Chief Maj. Gen. Hassan Swadi al-Saad, said at the time that he trusted only a small fraction of his forces, as the 15,000-man force was largely manipulated by the various political parties.[86]

It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that one of Prime Minister Maliki's first steps in coming to office was to call for disbanding the militias or somehow incorporating them

into the government or security services, and that he saw bringing the militias under control as a critical priority. It was not only critical to create a political compact that Arab Sunnis could live with, it was critical to make the central government the key authority in Iraq, and Iraqi government forces the source of security and order.

Moreover, by now there were so many different kinds of uniformed and non-uniformed guards that it was difficult for Iraqis to know who they all were, or whether they had any legitimacy. Small security detachments were also a problem. The leaders of some political parties appointed to head ministries had recruited members of their parties' armed wings to serve as guards for their ministries' facilities.

Nabil al-Haidari, Radio Free Iraq's Baghdad bureau chief, made this problem clear: "You have different kinds, and many kinds, of guard forces. There is the police, with official cars, and there are army members, with different colored uniforms, and at the same time there are some ministry guard forces, well-armed, and the strangest thing here are the many cars with civilian people who do not wear uniforms, they are well-armed and they are shouting loudly and sometimes shooting [in the air] for the people to make way for them."[87] It is difficult enough to distinguish between the police and members of the al-Mahdi Army as both wear identical blue uniforms, carry the same weapons, and drive blue-and-white marked squad cars.[88]

US military leaders were reporting that "more people in Baghdad are being killed by Shi'ite death squads than by al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgents, who had been the main focus of US and Iraqi forces in the capital" previously. General George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, reported that 60% of Baghdad killings at the time were attributable to Shi'ite death squads.[89]

US and Iraqi officials sought to avoid antagonizing militia leaders and their politically powerful backers by saying that security crackdowns were "designed to go after sectarian death squads and militias of all stripes" rather than singling out the Mahdi Army or other organizations as targets. A US officer said operations were aimed "at anyone involved in murders, kidnappings, and assassinations. 'We're not asking them what union card they're carrying,' [Brig. Gen. David] Halverston said.'"[90]

Rising Uncertainty as to the Role of Iraqi Forces in Sectarian and Ethnic Violence

Abductions committed by groups of individuals wearing Iraqi Special Forces uniforms were an ongoing problem in early 2006. Although the Ministry of Interior continually denied the existence of "death squads" within the predominately Shi'ite MOI forces, the ministry launched an internal investigation to address the accusations. Some Sunni leaders estimated that 1,600 people had been killed in what they identified as a campaign of sectarian violence.[91]

For example, an inquiry was launched into the infiltration of Iraq's police by militia forces in mid-February 2006. A 22-man death squad was caught red-handed at a checkpoint in Baghdad. When questioned, the men admitted they were on their way to executing a Sunni prisoner. Four of the men were suspected of having links to the Badr

brigades, the armed wing of the Shi'ite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution. They were arrested and held in the US detention facility at Abu Ghraib. The others were taken to an Iraqi jail.

Although accurate numbers are impossible to obtain, the increasing scale of targeted sectarian killings and similar violence reached the point by 2006 where it changed the nature of the Iraq war and threatened to plunge Iraq into deeper civil conflict.

Baghdad, a "mixed" city, was ground zero for much of this violence. More Iraqi civilians were killed in Baghdad during the first three months of 2006, than at any time since the end of the Saddam regime. Between January and March, 3,800 Iraqi civilians were killed, a significant number of which were found tied, shot in the head, and showing signs of torture.[92] According to the Baghdad morgue in May 2006, it received on average 40 bodies a day. Anonymous US officials disclosed that the targeted sectarian killings, or soft-sectarian cleansing, claim nine times more lives than car bombings, and that execution killings increased by 86% in the nine weeks after the February Askariya mosque bombing.[93]

Sectarian militias did more than infiltrate the security forces. There were numerous incidents of the Mahdi Army installing its own members to head hospitals, dental offices, schools, trucking companies, and other private businesses. Rank employees are often fired for no reason. As a Baghdad University professor said, "We are all victims of this new thought police. No longer content to intimidate us with violence, these militias want to control our every move, so they appoint the administrators and managers while dissenters lose their jobs."[94]

The end result was that Sunni neighborhoods in western Baghdad formed citizen groups to keep the paramilitary forces out of their areas entirely. Young men took turns standing in the streets after the 11 pm curfew and sent signals by flashlights and cell phones if strangers approached. In some cases, citizens set up barricades and took up arms against Shi'ite-led commando raids into their neighborhoods. In other cases, residents tipped off Sunni insurgents.[95] Sunni residents attributed the recent drop in paramilitary raids to neighborhood patrols obstructing them. Sunnis cited the fact that killers now struck targets at their workplaces, in hospitals, and while they commuted.[96]

Such actions also, however, created new divisions within the Iraqi forces. For example, Iraqi Army night patrols checked in on the citizen watch groups in some areas in Baghdad after dark. Many Sunnis said that they tolerated the Iraqi Army, despite their fear of the Iraqi special police, considering it more professional and less partisan.[97]

Acts of sectarian violence in the summer of 2006 were increasingly perpetrated by men wearing uniforms, resulting in a continuing lack of trust in the security forces amongst ordinary Iraqis. Shi'ite militias impersonating or operating within the security forces were presumed to be responsible for much of the activity. A Sunni citizen of Baghdad said, "Whener I see uniforms now, I figure they must be militias. I immediately try and avoid them."

Even Interior Ministry spokesman Brig. Abdul-Rahman admitted "that when he sees men in uniform in Baghdad, he makes sure to keep his distance. 'I just know,' he said, 'that

they are authorized to shoot.'" Interior Minister Jawad Bolani "acknowledged rogues were among his ranks. He told Parliament that new uniforms and identification cards would soon be supplied to hobble those 'who carry out bad activities under the cover of this institution.'"

Sunni spokesmen, however, "said the Shi'ite-led government would never end corruption and killings by officers or impersonators until it broke with Shi'ite militias."[98] The security forces remained unwilling to confront the militias, highlighting the troublesome role of militant sectarian politics in the Iraqi government.

Overall Progress in the Recruiting, Training and Deployment of Iraqi Forces January-June 2006

It is difficult to separate the progress made within each major element of Iraqi forces from the impact of the political climate and changing threat environment in which they had to operate. Some MNF-I and Iraqi government reporting was anything but objective or transparent in character. It is clear, however, that significant progress did occur, especially in Iraq's regular forces.

The US Department of Defense outlined the following progress in Iraqi Security Force development in its February 2006 report to Congress:[99]

- **A continued increase in the number of Iraqi units able to take the lead in combat operations against the insurgency.** As of January 23, 2006, 98 Iraqi Army and special operations battalions are now conducting counter-insurgency operations, 11% more than reported in October. Fifty-three of these battalions are assessed as being "in the lead or full independent" -- a 47% increase since October. There are 27 National Police Force battalion (formerly the Special Police Forces) and one Emergency Response Unit capable of combat operations, with 10 units assessed as being in the lead.

- **Progress of Iraqi units in assuming responsibility for the battle space.** Thirty-seven Iraq Army battalions now control their own battle space. Iraqi Security Forces are responsible for security in roughly 460 square miles of Baghdad and more than 11,600 square miles in other provinces of Iraq, an increase of almost 4,000 square miles since the last report [October 2005].

- **A continued increase in the number of units and individuals trained, equipped, and formed into operational status.** The program of training and equipping members of the Iraqi Security Forces continues on track. Almost 107,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen have now been trained and equipped -- an increase of 19,000 since the last report. More than 82,000 police have been trained and equipped -- an increase of over 13,000 since the last report. These police work alongside 38,000 other Ministry of Interior forces. Overall, there are over 227,000 Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior forces trained and equipped for counterinsurgency operations -- an increase of 18% since the October 2005 report.

Trends in Quantity and Quality

Figure 4 shows the growth in total "trained and equipped" manpower in Iraqi forces between January 2006 and May 2006. Such data are the totals of men, however, MNSTC-I and the MNF-I do not attempt to take full account of desertions, or men on unauthorized leave or absent. They also do not report large numbers of police, security, and militia forces that have not been "trained and equipped" but which are present in

most of Iraq and actually dominate or control security in many areas, including key areas where there is a negligible insurgent presence, like Kirkuk and Basra.

Nevertheless, the May total of 263,400 was 14% higher than the total reported in February, and 35% higher than the total of 171,300 reported in the first quarterly report to Congress, issued in July 2005. As the following analysis shows, the qualitative improvements in Iraqi forces were as important as the improvements in size, although the effectiveness of such forces was still very mixed.

In the case of Tal Afar, for example, an increase in US troops and better counterinsurgency tactics led to claims the situation was improving because attacks dropped from five per day to fewer than two per day. But the real test was whether Iraqi soldiers could "hold" these cities themselves.

According to Coalition forces in the city, Iraqi troops were displaying more confidence and demonstrating greater discipline by late March 2006. At the same time, problems with pay and equipment shortages continued to plagued Iraqi forces. "AK-47s and Russian jeeps are not going to keep the peace in northern Iraq," noted one US tank company commander.[100]

Sectarian tensions within the town were also a major problem and some US soldiers worried that heavy-handed tactics by the 1,700 Shi'ite-Sunni mixed police force were alienating Sunni residents. In one instance, after an officer was shot in a Sunni neighborhood, police returned the following day arresting nearly 100 people and put them all in a small cell at a local makeshift jail. US troops took the Iraqi police back to the neighborhood the following day to hand out food and refurbish their image, but local residents such as laborer Fakari Wahab were hesitant to accept the good will. Wahab had lost 30 tribesmen to the Iraqi police "dragnet" and when told to take a list of their names to the jail he protested, "If I go…I'll be locked up!"[101]

While some reports talked about Iraqi "control," questions arose as to just what Iraqi forces were controlling. Many of the areas transferred to Iraqi "control" were Shi'ite dominated and typically less violent. This reflected the fact that the level of the insurgent threat in the area was just one of four considerations taken into account by the US military when deciding when Iraqi forces are capable of controlling an area. The other three were the size, readiness, and preparation of Iraqi forces; the quality of the local government; and the ability of multinational forces to back up the Iraqi forces if they are over-run.[102]

In some cases, "control" seemed to mean assigning responsibility, not actual capability. Some maps showed Iraqi forces as in charge of areas where militias and local security forces clearly had actual day-to-day authority. In a few areas, Iraqi forces were said to be in charge of areas which actually did have a significant insurgent presence, or where at least the police confronted significant "no go" or "don't intervene" areas.

 "Control" also had its costs as well as its benefits. In Rutbah, which joins Tal Afar, Mosul and Samarra, US forces built a 10 and a half mile long, seven foot high, ring of sand around the city, allowing only three possible entrances. This allowed Coalition forces to man a few checkpoints with their Iraqi counterparts rather than patrol the city on

foot.[103] Although the number of car bombs declined from 25 per month to just five per month once the wall was built, the limited points of entry and exit created massive traffic jams for the citizens and waits could last from one to three hours during peak travel times. Marine Lt. Col. Robert Kosid admitted that the wall was only "an intermediate solution" and that "the long-term success of Rutbah involves a permanent presence in the city." Although the city had a police force, it was disbanded in 2005 because of corruption within its ranks. Other Iraqi soldiers that were in the surrounding area were moved north for another joint US-Iraqi operation near Qaim.[104]

Iraqi forces did, however, continue to expand their role. By the end of April, Iraqi police and military forces had taken responsibility for of Sulimaniyah and Salahuddin provinces.[105] In early May, soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment ("No Slack"), 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division turned over large parts of Kirkuk to the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, Nisser Battalion. This marked the second transfer of battle space in the region to the Iraqi army in the same year.[106]

Still, in military press briefings and releases, Iraqi forces were increasingly given credit for operations that netted terrorists, insurgents, weapons caches, and an increase in actionable intelligence from Iraqi citizens. Specifically, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch said in May that Iraqi security forces were responsible for capturing or killing more than 161 senior leaders of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and seizing more than 2,000 weapons caches in the past six months. He also said that because of the increasing ability of ISF, more than 50% of bombs in the country were defused before they could detonate.[107]

The problems remained largely the same through the summer of 2006:[108]

> Nationwide, the Iraqi Army has grown substantially in size—up to 113,000 soldiers. But many of the units are still not fully integrated and few can operate without US support. The Pentagon has touted the handover in July of Multhanna, one of Iraq's most peaceful provinces, to Iraqi security control. But even Nasier Abadi, deputy chief of staff for the Iraqi armed forces, concedes that not a single Iraqi Army battalion is ready to operate independently.

The focus of Coalition efforts was to put more Iraqi soldiers on the ground as quickly as possible, but it occurred at some expense in quality. Thus the quantity of Iraqi troops and the handover of "control" still did not actually indicate improved capabilities.

Iraqi Readiness and "Owning the Battle Space"

Figure 7 shows that Iraqi regular forces made similar progress in increasing the strength of their combat units. By February 2006, the Department of Defense reported that insurgents in Iraq had largely begun to avoid highly coordinated attack scenarios against the ISF, preferring stand-off or hit-and-run attacks instead. However, 80% of all attacks remained directed at Coalition and Iraqi forces at this time, with Iraqis suffering three-quarters of all casualties. Improvised explosive devices remained the primary insurgent method of attack.[109]

According to the February 2006 DOD report to Congress, 37 Iraqi battalions controlled their own battle space at that time. The report further stated that Iraqi Security Forces were responsible for security in roughly 460 square miles of Baghdad and more than

11,600 square miles in other provinces of Iraq, an increase of more than 4,000 square miles since the DOD last reported to Congress in October 2005. Furthermore, according to the report, ISF independent operations had increased by 24% since May 2005.[110]

Progress continued in the spring. A White House press release, dated March 13, 2006 stated that more than 60 of the 130 Iraq battalions were taking the lead in the fight. This compared with 40 of 120 total Iraqi Army and Police combat battalions taking the lead in fall 2005.[111]

In a speech delivered in March 2006, President Bush highlighted progress in turning over areas patrolled by US troops to Iraqi forces and made it a goal to turn over the majority of Iraq to Iraqi soldiers by the end of the year.[112] He stated that there were more than 130 Iraqi Army and Police battalions that were operational, 60 of which were taking the lead in operations. He also said that at that time Iraqi forces conducted more independent operations than did Coalition forces.[113] If measured in actual territory, Bush said that Iraqi units had "primary responsibility" for over 30,000 square miles, an increase of 20,000 since the first of the year.[114]

Quantity also continued to improve along with quality. In an April report, the Government Accountability Office stated that the number of security forces trained and equipped increased from 142,000 in March 2005 to 242,000 in March 2006.[115] This included 52 Iraqi army battalions, 14 army brigades, and two army divisions that took the lead in counterinsurgency operations supported by Coalition forces. This covered about 18% of Iraq's territory and about 65% of Baghdad.[116] It also stated generally that:[117]

> Many Iraqis in Baghdad and the central and northern Sunni areas have lost confidence in the Iraqi army and police to improve the security situation. In some Sunni areas, support for the insurgents has increased, and Iraqi Shi'as have expressed greater confidence in their militias. The poor security situation in Iraq has impeded the development of an inclusive Iraqi government and hindered the development of effective Iraqi security forces.

In a statement to Congress in May, in which he urged the body to pass an emergency supplemental spending bill for the training of equipping of ISF, Secretary Rumsfeld stated that 254,000 Iraqi police and army forces had been trained and that 75 security force battalions were leading operations. In addition, early that month the Iraqi army opened its first joint operations center giving it national command and control over its ground forces.[118]

US military spokesmen claimed that as Iraqi forces increasingly took on more responsibility for policing neighborhoods and cities, residents became wore willing to work with them and the Coalition, offering intelligence and assistance. For example, in the northern city of Tarmia, local officials approached Coalition soldiers and asked them to route out the insurgents in the area. US and Iraqi forces subsequently cordoned off the city, established checkpoints and swept through the area.[119]

According to the spring 2006 DOD Report to Congress, as of May 15, 2006, there were two Iraqi divisions, 16 brigades, and 63 Army and National Police battalions with the security lead in their areas of responsibility. These areas covered more than 30,000 square miles of Iraq. As of May 6, 2006, the MOD, MOI, and Ministry of Finance had

assumed control and responsibility for 34 Forward Operating Bases from Coalition forces.

Coalition officials, partnered with four divisions of the Iraqi army in the north, said that two of those divisions would be ready to take the lead in operations by the end of the summer and the other two by the end of the year.[120] In a video conference with the Pentagon on May 20, 2006, Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, said that the ISF was on pace to control about 75% of the country's battlespace by the end of the summer. That same month, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said that the Iraqi army and police would be able to assume responsibility for security across the entire country by late 2007.

Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell later emphasized the progress made, asserting that between June 21 and June 28, "Iraqi forces performed 486 operations, 34 percent of which were independently planned and executed entirely by Iraqis." These operations resulted in the seizure of 26 weapons caches, the detention of 587 "anti-Iraq elements," and the death of 64 "terrorists and insurgents."[121] Caldwell would later report a nighttime operation in eastern Baghdad "planned, organized, led, and carried out" independently by Iraqi forces to capture a "high-value insurgent," whom officials would not identify.[122] The executive officer of a battalion in the 4th Iraqi Army Division, operating near Tikrit, reported in July that his unit could secure its area of operations "75 percent ourselves and 25 percent with American help."[123]

This did not mean, however, that Iraqi forces were moving rapidly towards being able to operate without continuing US support, a point many Iraqis seemed to have accepted. In a poll conducted by the Brookings Institution in May 2006, 59% of Iraqis surveyed said that Coalition troops would be needed to maintain security for at least six months.[124] At this time, 130,000 US troops were still in Iraq, with American military officials projecting that 100,000 to 110,000 American forces would still be in Iraq by the end of 2006.[125]

Figure 7

MOD Forces' Assessed Capabilities - Part One

Number of Units

	Iraqi Army & Special Operations Combat Forces		Logistics		Air Force		Navy	
	Jun-05	May-06	Jun-05	May-06	Jun-05	May-06	Jun-05	May-06
☐ Units in the Lead with Coalition Enablers or Fully Independent	24	71	1	7	3		3	3
◼ Units Fighting Side by Side with Coalition Forces	55	40	1	3		3		
☐ Units Not Ready	35	14	8	8	3	6	1	1
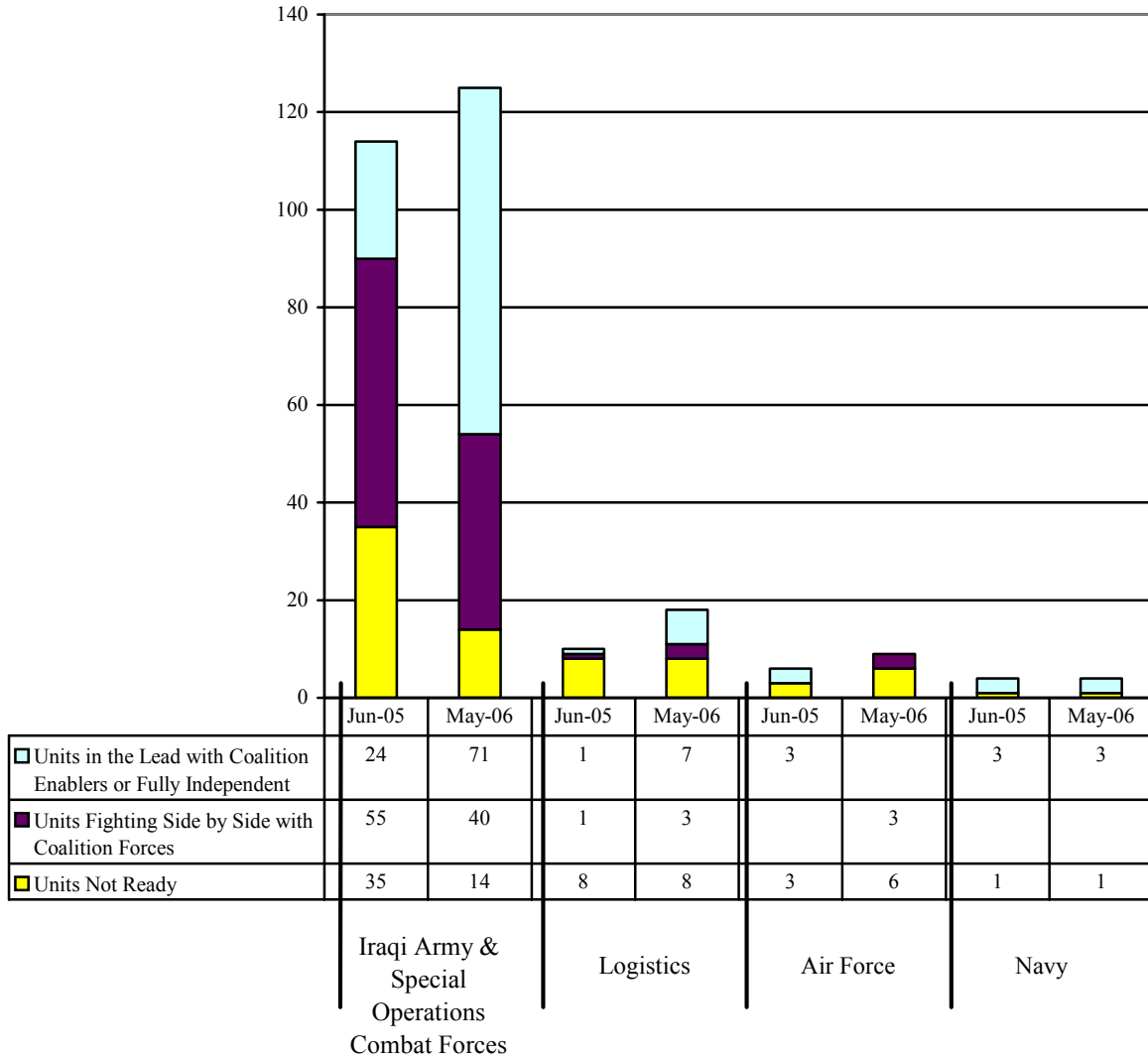
Figure 7

MOD Forces' Assessed Capabilities - Part Two

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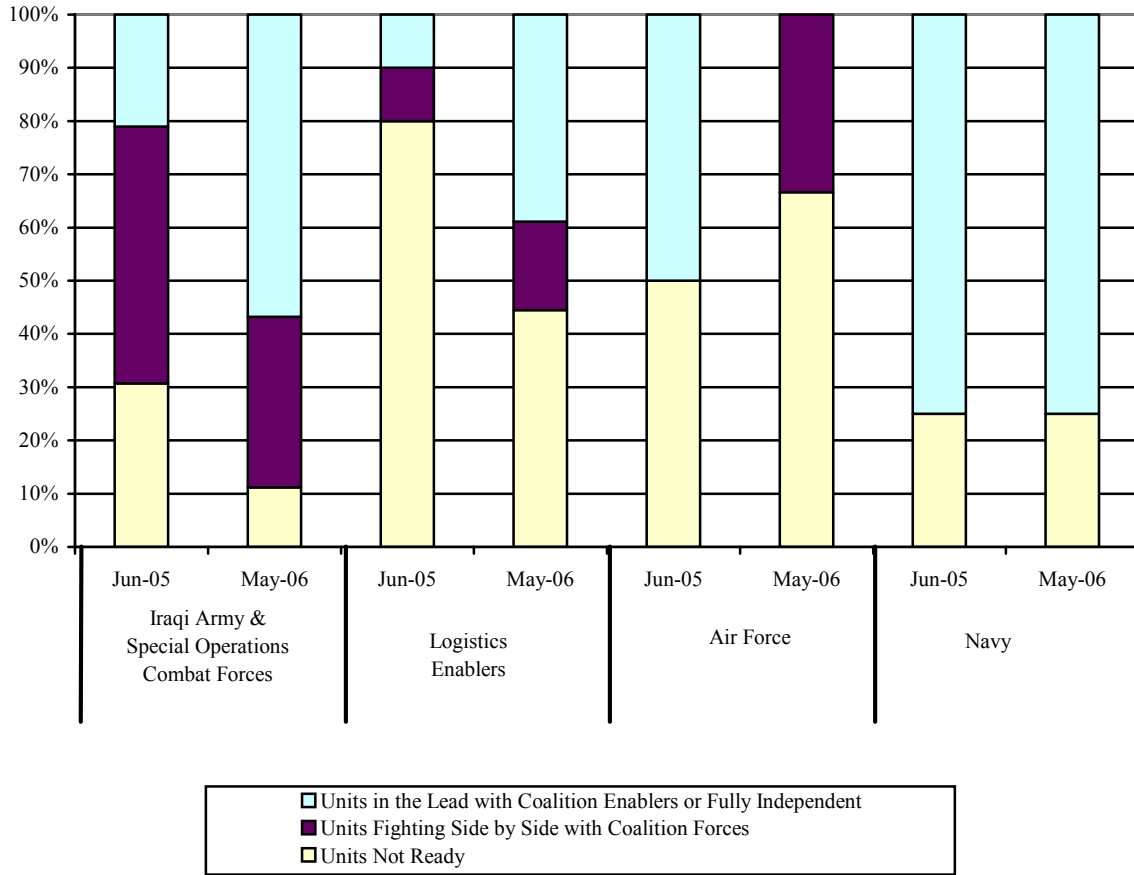
Source: Adapted from "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 47.

Ongoing Efforts to Recruit and Train the ISF

By the winter of 2006, the basic training system for the Iraqi army was expanded and consolidated under the command of the Iraqi Training Brigade, which was set to consist of three Iraqi Training Battalions (ITBs). At the time, two ITBs were operational at the Kirkush Military Training Base, and a third was partially formed and conducting training at An-Numaniya.

New recruits to the training brigades attended a five-week program of instruction. Upon graduation, they received an additional three to seven weeks of training depending on their military occupational skill assignment. The specialized training developed infantry, supply, communications, administration, armor, transportation, maintenance, and military police skills, among others. Other training initiatives, such as the Military Intelligence School, Signal School, and Engineer Training School, were also implemented.[126]

Although the Iraqi security forces competed with local militias and gangs for recruits, Coalition troops attempted to seize the initiative by improving Iraqis' lives on a local level with the hope that turnouts at recruitment stations would increase. For example, in the northern Iraqi city of Tamia, Coalition forces constructed a medical clinic that treated over 375 people on its first day of operation. Local leaders then asked citizens to join the police forces to provide security for the town. US military spokesman Maj. Gen. Lynch said that 2,000 Iraqis volunteered, 225 of which were selected for training in Jordan.[127] Such successes were particularly important because of the failures in the civil aid program. Only 20 of the 142 health clinics the US had originally planned for construction in 2003 were still scheduled to be completed in 2006.[128]

In early March 2006, the US further standardized its methods for training US advisors to Iraqi forces. The US Army's 1st Infantry Division 1st Brigade Combat team took over the training of the Army's Military Training and Transition (MITT) teams, the groups imbedded with Iraqi units. These teams were expected to remain with Iraqi forces for what military officials called a "multi-year commitment."[129]

The new training process reassigned the recruits from Fort Carson to Fort Riley, where a small-scale replica of an Iraqi urban center was being constructed. The number of days devoted to training at the fort was extended as well from 45 to 60. Trainers received an additional 10 days of training in Kuwait, followed by 10 more days of training in Taji, Iraq at a major US training facility. Before beginning their official stint with Iraqi units, new trainers spent two weeks following their predecessors in the field.[130]

The MITT teams were embedded at the battalion, brigade, and division level with 11, 10 and 15 man teams at each, respectively. They were there not only to serve as a professional example, but also to provide additional firepower and air support to the Iraqi forces as needed.[131]

By April 2006, the Department of Defense noted the following key measures of progress in the effort to train the ISF:[132]

- Continued increases in the numbers of individuals trained, equipped, and formed into operational units: As of March 20, US and coalition forces have trained and equipped more than 111,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen. More than 89,000 police have been trained and equipped. Police work alongside 41,700 other Ministry of Interior forces, such as the National Police (formerly the Special Police). Overall, over 240,000 Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior forces have been trained and equipped.

- Continued increases in unit readiness and ability to take the lead in combat operations against the insurgents: As of March 20, 102 Iraqi Army regular and special operations battalions are conducting counter-insurgency operations. Sixty-two of these battalions are able to lead in such operations. There are 27 National Police Force battalions (formerly the Special Police Forces) and one Emergency Response Unit conducting combat operations. Seven of the National Police battalions and the Emergency Response Unit are able to lead such operations.

- Progress in assuming responsibility for their battle space: As of March 20, forty-nine Iraqi Army battalions now control their own battle space. Iraqi units have primary responsibility for 65% of Baghdad.

The DOD report also addressed the structure of the ISF, manning progress, and the question of battalions operating "in the lead":[133]

The Iraqi government, together with the Coalition, has identified a force structure to maintain a security environment in Iraq to provide a basis for transitioning Iraq to security self-reliance. The end-strength forces structure of the Iraqi Armed Forces is approximately 131,000 personnel, manning one Iraqi Ground Forces Command, 10 divisions and 36 brigade headquarters, 114 Army and special operations battalions, six Air Force squadrons, three Navy squadrons, and 18 combat support, combat service, and support battalions. As of March 20, 111,000 personnel or 85 percent of the authorized end strength has been trained and equipped. With the initial focus on establishing combat units, attention is now shifting toward the logistics backbone needed to facilitate independent operations. One hundred-two Iraqi Army and Special Operations battalions are now conducting counter-insurgency operations with 62 battalions "in the lead." ISF have conducted more independent operations than MNF-I in three of the last five months.

The report went on to assert that "There is no specific threshold for the number of Iraqi Armed Forces battalions that must be judged capable of operating independently before the number of US forces in Iraq can be reduced."[134]   Coalition forces also sought to ensure that Iraqi military training would continue without outside leadership by setting up programs for "platoons of highly skilled Iraqi Army soldiers" to train other units.[135]

Nevertheless sectarian issues continued to trouble US efforts to recruit and train an effective force. The security forces in general were made up largely of Shi'ites and Kurds. This imbalance made the government forces untrustworthy in the eyes of Sunnis, who had been subjected to abuses by Shi'ite units patrolling Sunni-majority areas. The US established a target of 6,500 Sunni recruits from the Anbar province, a major center of insurgent activity. Yet recruiting and maintaining the loyalty of these troops was not easy. Only 300 Sunni enlistees reported for duty out of a graduating class of 1,000 in July 2006. Two classes of recruits produced only 530 new soldiers actually serving in the ranks.[136]

Creating an Effective Officer Corps

The effort to create a functioning leadership corps within the ISF command chain continued into the summer of 2006. This was a challenging process, especially because the "early emphasis of US and coalition forces in getting 'Iraqi boots on the ground' to take pressure off their troops mean rebuilding the Iraqi security forces was very much a bottom-up process. As a result, the more senior levels of Iraq's defense and security establishment are relatively immature."[137]

The DOD's February 2006 Report to Congress marked the progress as such:[138]

Leadership development is a major focus in order to build a capable and professional Iraqi Army. To achieve this, a system of Regional Training Centers (RTCs) has been established to meet the Iraqi Army's need for professionally trained junior leaders. Six RTCs enable increased numbers of students to attend training such as the Squad and Platoon Sergeant courses, which contribute to the development of a non-commissioned officer corps -- a concept non-existent under the Saddam regime. Additionally, these RTCs are conducting the month-long Former Officer Course that provides human rights, ethics, and counter-insurgency training to officers who served in the former regime's Army and have now been recruited back into the Iraqi Army. A year-long Basic Officer Commissioning Course is being conducted at the three Iraqi Military Academies, with a class of 180 recently graduating from Ar Rustamiyah. The first class of 73 cadets graduated from the Iraqi Military Academy in Ar Rustamiyah in January 2006. The newly commissioned officers completed 52 weeks of intensive military training, including 2,490 hours of lessons and 14 field training exercises in a Sandhurst-modeled curriculum.

> The leadership courses are complemented and reinforced through the daily guidance provided by Coalition Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) embedded with every Iraqi battalion, brigade, and division, as well as partnership with Coalition units. The MiTTs and partnership program provide mentorship and expertise critical for development of both unit proficiency and leadership, contributing to increased operational effectiveness. Monthly transition readiness assessments are prepared as a tool to measure each unit's progress and identify areas for improvement.

The role of the international community remained important in the leadership development effort as well, with the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) playing a key role in professionalizing the Iraqi armed forces. The focus remained on training and advisory support to mid- and senior-level leaders, with NTM-I serving as the lead agent to develop the Junior and Senior Staff Colleges. More than 500 Iraqis had completed out-of-country courses coordinated by NTM-I by early 2006. Host countries included Germany, Norway, Romania, and Turkey, among others.[139] Additionally, the Iraqi Defense Ministry announced in August 2006 "that it would begin accepting applications from Iraqis who wanted to attend US military academies."[140]

Figure 8 provides details on schooling for Iraqi Armed Forces personnel as of January 16, 2006.

Figure 8

Iraq Armed Forces Personnel Details -- Schools

RTC Schools				
	AUTH	ASSN	AWOL	%FILL
Officer	78	24	1	31
NCOs	456	139	2	30
Enlisted	30	72	5	240
Totals	564	235	8	42
ITB/Academy Schools				
	AUTH	ASSN	AWOL	%FILL
Officer	345	153	0	44
NCOs	1391	802	12	58
Enlisted	586	484	3	83
Totals	2322	1439	15	62
Branch Schools				
	AUTH	ASSN	AWOL	%FILL
Officer	220	109	0	50
NCOs	336	236	3	70
Enlisted	129	193	0	150
Totals	685	538	3	79
Schools Roll-Up				
	AUTH	ASSN	AWOL	%FILL
Officer	643	286	1	44
NCOs	2183	1177	17	54
Enlisted	745	749	8	101
Totals	3571	2212	26	62

Source: Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, US Department of State, January 16, 2006

Training and Progress in Military Transition Teams (MITTs)

The Coalition and Ministry of Defense set the goal of training and equipping 195,000 personnel by spring 2006. MNSTC-I projected that this goal would be met by December 2006. The force generation plan for the Ministry of Defense forces would be completed by mid-2006, with an end-strength of approximately 131,000 soldiers.[141] It also announced that the Iraqi forces would create their own training command, as described in Figure 9.

This training effort was now reinforced systematically during action in the field. The US Army had begun fielding 11-man Military Training and Transition Teams (MITTs) in early 2005. Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated in January 2006 that Coalition forces had deployed over 200 transition teams -- military officers embedded with Iraqi forces for training purposes. He further stated that transition teams were operating at the battalion, brigade, and division levels in the Iraqi Army.

In March 2006, the Army announced that it had selected the 1st Infantry Division 1st Brigade Combat Team to take over the training of the Army's MITTs at Fort Riley. The announcement meant that the Army had finally formalized the training process for these teams, and that instead of drawing troops with needed skills for temporary duty in Iraq, the Army would now begin permanently reassigning these selected trainers to Fort Riley. At the time of the announcement, the Army was looking for 2,300 trainers for 2007 in Iraq and Afghanistan, with a potential future need of 5,000.[142]

In addition to the MITTs, other types of small teams were working in Iraq, such as the similarly sized Special Police Transition Teams and Border Transition Teams. As of mid-January 2006, there were more than 2,000 officers and noncommissioned officers on more than 200 such teams in Iraq. Before soldiers, sailors, or airmen assume the role or mission of a team, they went through 75 days of training, the first 45 of which were at Fort Hood, Texas. About 500 soldiers were in training in early 2006, set to graduate in March. Training included instruction in Arabic language skills, close-quarter combat drills, staff operations, and basic soldiering.[143]

Yet the MITTs were far from perfect:[144]

> But though these vital military transition teams are billed as handpicked, elite units, the forces are too often "cobbled together," according to a defense official who has studied the teams. Indeed, one US military report concluded, "The Army could do better to screen [military transition teams] for proper qualifications in skill.
>
> Marine trainers in Fallujah tend to agree. "We're not really set up to train other people to be policemen," says one marine. The teams often report feeling undertrained and overwhelmed. One senior Pentagon official estimates that, throughout the country, Iraq is short US military training teams "by a factor of four or five." President Bush seemed to acknowledge the shortfall last week, when he called for more US military personnel to be embedded with Iraqi units to make them "more effective." What's more, the transition teams all too often lose institutional memory as US trainers rotate to new assignments.

Figure 9

Proposed Iraqi Training Command Organization
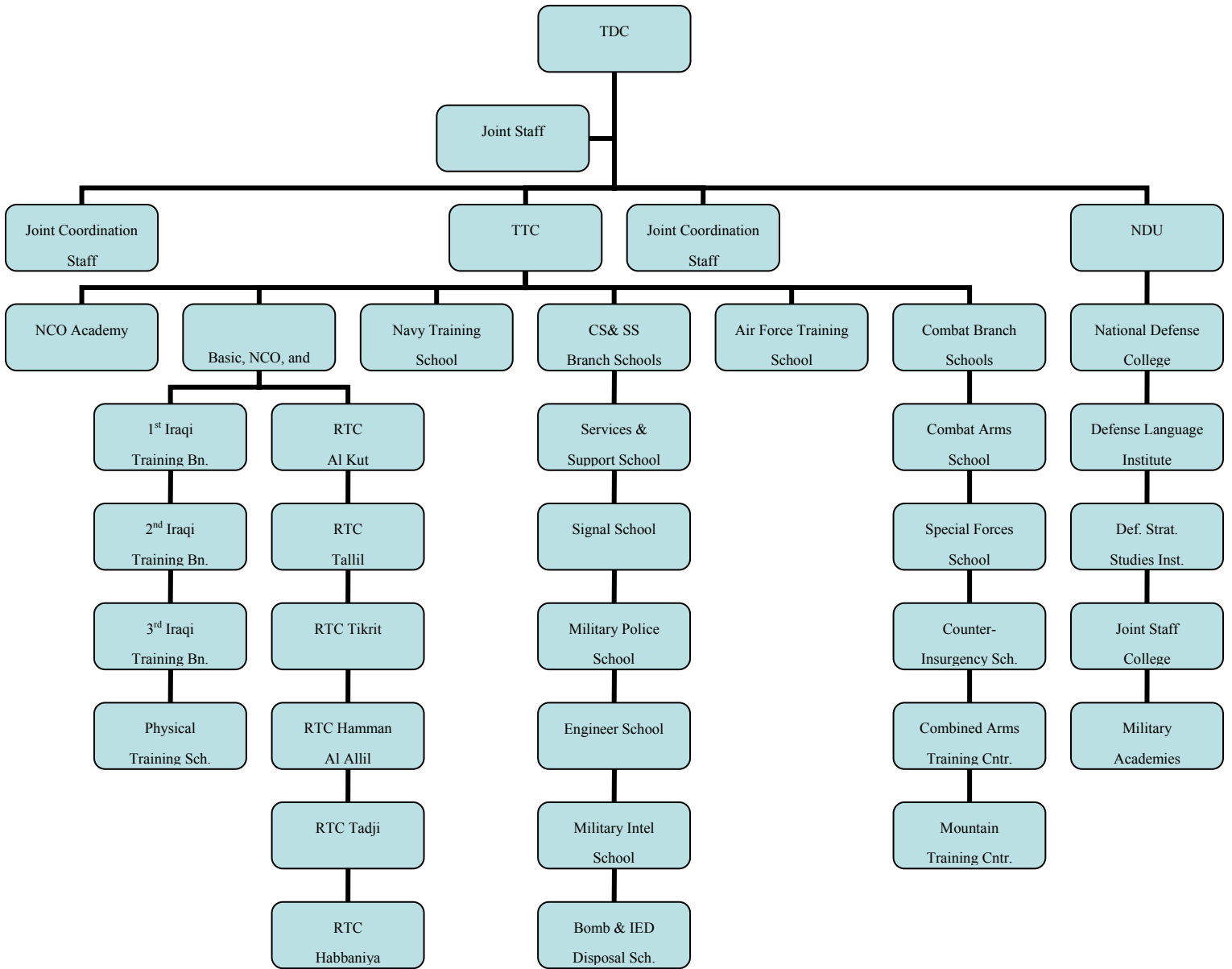
Source: MNSTC-I, April 2006.

Transitioning Security Responsibility to the Iraqi Government and Criteria for Withdrawing Forces

All of these efforts moved towards a common goal for both the Iraqi government and Coalition: The transition of responsibility for security from Coalition to Iraqi forces. While neither the Iraqi government nor Coalition as yet had a common timetable or plan, both Iraqi and US official agreed that this transition should be accomplished as soon as possible. The US also announced that its plans for security transition were broken down into four phases, which it described in its third report to Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," which it issued in May 2006:[145]

- Implement partnerships -- MNF-I and its major Subordinate Commands establish and maintain partnerships across the entire spectrum of Iraqi Security forces units, from battalion through to ministerial level.

- Iraqi Army Lead (IAL) -- Process during which Iraqi Army units progress through stages of capability from unit formation to the ability to conduct counter-insurgency operations.

- Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) -- Iraqi civil authorities satisfy the conditions require to assume control and exercise responsibility for the security of their respective provinces.

- Iraqi Security Self-Reliance -- The Government of Iraq achieves PIC (or a combination of PIC and IAL) throughout Iraq; and the Government, through its security ministries, is capable of planning, conducting, and sustaining security operations and forces.

The first phase was already complete by May 2006, and the second phase, Iraqi Army lead, was reported to be well under way. The third phase was being implemented on an area-by-area basis, building ultimately to control entire governorates.

This area-by-area assessment was made by the Iraqi government, acting in concert with Coalition military and political officials. They assessed when conditions permitted handing over security responsibility for specific areas from Coalition forces to Iraqi civil authorities. This assessment was to be made by the Joint Committee to Transfer Security Responsibility (JCTSR) whose principals included the US Ambassador, the UK Ambassador, the Iraqi Ministers of Defense and Interior, the Iraqi National Security Advisor, and the Commanding General of MNF-I. Recommendations for transferring security responsibility included assessing conditions in four categories: threat assessment, Iraqi Security Forces, governance, and MNF-I Forces. For the most part, however, decisions to transfer security responsibility to Iraqi forces were made on a case-by-case basis.

Iraqi progress was still erratic and left gaps that made any effort to predict when real transfers could take place difficult. Administration officials noted that although turning over territory and day-to-day responsibilities to Iraqis was an important indicator of progress in Iraq, even those Iraqi units that had control of areas did not operate wholly independent of US support and assistance.[146] US forces were still needed for back up. They also provided the backbone for Iraqi logistics and supply chain.[147] In other words, just because the Iraqis were increasingly taking the lead, it did not mean that US troops

could immediately come home, as they still served to facilitate important functions pertinent the operations of Iraqi forces.[148]

Lt. Gen. John Vines, who had served as commander of MNC-I, reaffirmed this when he said that although progress had been made in fielding effective Iraqi units, much more needed to be done "to bring up to speed the civilian defense bureaucracy needed to support the Iraqi military -- that is, civilian structures to do things like procurement, payroll, medical support, and housing."[149]

Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner added a similar caveat when praising the progress in training Iraq units in the north. "The major inhibitor to independent operations is a lack of equipment, manpower, their inability to sustain themselves [with food, fuel, ammunition, etc.] and a lack of systems or policies in place to manage the organization."[150]

In an April 2006 report, retired four-star Army General Barry McCaffrey stated that the embedding program had been a "brilliant success story." He also went on to state that the Iraqi military would need at least two to five more years of US partnership and combat backup before it would be able to stand on its own.[151]

The lack of an Iraqi logistic system meant that the US provided everything from food, to uniforms to weapons to Iraqi forces. Paychecks, which sometimes arrived as late as six months, were distributed by hand as cash after being transported in large sacs across the desert. A combination of a lack of pay and better opportunities elsewhere fueled desertion rates that were as high as 40% in some towns located in al-Anbar province. Of the 8,000 Iraqi soldiers in the province, 1,500 had deserted since the year prior.[152]

Although rare, there were reports of drug use among some Iraqi troops as well. For example, in Rawah, US soldiers discovered that some were taking hashish pills. "I'd hate to guess how many of them take that stuff. Now, whenever we step out on patrol, we give them a good look in the eye to make sure they're all there," said Major Anthony Marro.[153]

A Success, Rather than Calendar-Driven, Approach

Once again, the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq war within the US put added pressure on administration and military officials to drawdown US troop levels as quickly and as efficiently as possible. It was clear that the National Guard would be "the first on the off-ramp" according to an anonymous official.[154] This drawdown was at odds, however, with the fact that Iraqi forces would still need US support for the foreseeable future. Beyond the issue of logistics, Iraqi security forces would still rely on the US for both air-reconnaissance and strike capability.

Nevertheless, the US could still act on the principle that, "As Iraqi forces stand up, the Coalition will stand down." While US officials would not provide any timetables for a drawdown, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie said in April that there was an agreement between Iraq and the US that "by the end of this year the number of multi-national forces of the coalition forces probably will be less than a hundred thousand, by the end of next year the overwhelming majority of the coalition will have left the country, and probably by middle of 2008 there will be no foreign soldiers in the

country."[155] Al-Rubaie said that this reduction of Coalition forces was "based [on] when our Iraqi security forces are ready to assume responsibility." The goal, he said, was to have 80% of the Iraqi army capable of carrying out combat operations without US assistance.

By May of 2006, there were indications that US military planners were conducting initial preparations for restructuring the US air presence in the region for a time when few Coalition forces would remain on the ground in Iraq. These plans demonstrated both that the US intended to retain a significant flight capability in the region for some time, but that the aircraft would likely be housed in bases in Gulf countries outside of Iraq or Afghanistan.[156]

The US had already arranged agreements to use bases in Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The Air Force also maintained runway access and supplies in Oman and Saudi Arabia. Officials were also negotiating an extension of the current agreement with the Kyrgyz government to maintain forces at Manas Air Base used for operations in Afghanistan.[157]

The use of these bases in and around the Gulf, led some analysts to speculate that the US had concluded that constructing long-term US military bases in Iraq or Afghanistan is not a politically viable option and would be seen by many as verifying accusations that the US intends to "occupy" the Middle East. The alternative of basing aircraft in surrounding countries, while still operationally sufficient, does not necessarily obviate the problem of domestic opposition to US armed forces on Islamic territory. These countries are still Arab and Islamic nations, and are not immune to pressures from fundamentalist sectors of their societies.[158]

Further developments occurred in June 2006 when Gen. George Casey Jr., the top American commander in Iraq, presented a "concept" for phased troop withdrawals to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Casey's proposal outlined three phases for the future of Iraq:

> The next 12 months [from summer 2006] was described as a period of stabilization. The period from the summer of 2007 through the summer of 2008 was described as a time when the emphasis would be on the restoration of the Iraqi government's authority. The period from the summer of 2008 though the summer of 2009 was cast as one in which the Iraqi government would be increasingly self-reliant.

US forces would be drawn down from 14 combat brigades to five or six by December 2007. The withdrawals would be "contingent on the growth and expansion of Iraqi forces," projected by Casey to be 10 divisions strong by spring 2007.[159] The President later confirmed that he had heard Casey's plan and "reiterated that any decision on troop reductions would be based on conditions on the ground."[160]

The broad transition plan, however, remained the same. As Iraqis took on more responsibility for security, Coalition forces were increasingly moved to supporting roles in many areas. As security conditions improve and as the Iraqi Security Forces became more capable of securing their own country, Coalition forces were to move out of the cities, provide transition teams, reduce the number of bases from which they operate, and conduct fewer visible missions, but remain postured to assist. Although the Coalition

military presence would become less visible it the process, it would remain lethal and decisive, able to support Iraqi forces and confront the enemy wherever it might gather and organize.

Amid increasing sectarian violence in Baghdad during the summer of 2006, however, the nascent plans for withdrawals were put aside. The new directive was to redeploy troops to reinforce Baghdad, and some US troops had their deployments extended. The 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, a 3,700-strong force which had been stationed in Mosul since summer 2005, had its tour extended for up to 120 days to boost security in the capital city. The extension increased US troops levels in Iraq back above 130,000 and "decrease[d] the chances that the United States will be able to significantly reduce the number of forces in Iraq by the end of the year [2006]."[161]

The Effort to Create an Effective Support Apparatus

One key to implementing this security transition plan was to create effective combat support, service support, and logistic capabilities. Serious concerns remained over the ability of Iraqi forces to operate independently, and over what some deemed to be inadequate "back-end" support networks. While Coalition money had been poured into creating combat capabilities, and to recruit and train significant numbers of personnel in combat roles, the adequacy of combat support, combat service support, logistical and other tactical enablers was still very much a work in progress:[162]

> …while the US has done an admirable job of training Iraqi combat battalions, it has so far failed to build either combat support or combat service support structures to sustain the Iraqi armed forces in counterinsurgency and stability operations. As a result, the Iraqi armed forces lack a functional logistics system, command and control, communications, training, and other vital support elements. Instead, they are wholly reliant on the US military to provide such functions. Were the United States to withdraw its forces from Iraq under present circumstances, the newly-trained Iraqi combat battalions would quickly become incapacitated for want of support.

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

While Coalition forces continued to provide materiel movement, life support, and other combat support to the Iraqi Armed Forces, the MOD made progress in building Iraqi logistical capabilities during the first yearly quarter of 2006:[163]

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

solution for organizational and intermediate maintenance requirements of the Iraqi Armed forces at ten different locations throughout the country. The capability to provide some routine maintenance is being developed within the support units.

As of May 2006, more than 65% of personnel in the Iraqi Army's support forces had been trained and equipped, according to the May 2006 DOD Report to Congress, and logistics units continued to increase their capabilities. Figure 7 shows:

- the disparity between combat capabilities and enabling assets

- the MOD's capabilities for major services and missions, with a comparison of capabilities between June 2005 and May 2006

Civilian administrative capabilities and efficiency lagged due to a lack of attention paid to developing such institutions:[164]

> The lack of adequate resources, backed by incompetent Iraqi administrators, could decisively undermine all [US] efforts in Iraq. According to LTG Chiarelli, "turning off reconstruction funding is like turning off ammunition."

> The inadequacy of Iraqi ministries directly affects the ability of the security forces to function. Critical ministries in addition to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior are essential. As an example, LTG Chiarelli cited that the security forces will have organic fuel trucks to supply their needs, but the allocation of fuel is a function of the Ministry of Oil and, in the past, there has been no certainty that the Ministry would give priority to security needs.

Facilities continued to improve. A July 2006 report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction described an assessment of a newly constructed garrison post for the 609th Iraqi National Guard Battalion in the Thi Qar governorate. The US Army Corps of Engineers used a generic design that was also utilized for three other national guard garrisons and granted the construction contract to an Iraqi company in Baghdad. The Garrison was to house 850 officers and enlisted men with their equipment and included in its design:[165]

- Perimeter security wall, entrance gate, and guard towers

- Office building

- Officers quarters/club

- Laundry facilities for officers and for soldiers

- Battalion headquarters

- Mosque

- Medical center

- Sport room

- Dining facility for officers and enlisted personnel

- Three, two-story barracks

- Logistics building which includes a vehicle maintenance facility

- Ammunition storage building

- Weapons storage guard house building

- Four stand-alone toilet and shower facilities

- Five company offices buildings

- One parade ground

- Water storage and pumping facility

- Generator and transformer facilities

- Parking lots, interior roads, and pathways

Equipment Deliveries and Challenges

Another key was to properly equip Iraqi forces, particularly those in the MOD. Iraqi forces continued to make progress in acquiring the equipment they needed and creating suitable facilities. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) Report to Congress issued in April 2006 covered Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund-funded (IRRF) activities, as well as information on Iraq Security Forces Fund (ISFF) activity. The following represent the highlights of the security and justice sector report:[166]

- More US funds have been devoted to security and justice than any other reconstruction sector. A total of $11.6 billion has been allocated, combining funds from IRRF 2 and ISFF.

- By the end of this quarter, 82% of the $6.35 billion IRRF allocation had been expended, and 31% of ISFF funds have been expended.

- Approximately 250,500 military and police personnel have reportedly been trained and equipped.

- More than 600 facilities have been completed -- police stations, fire stations, courts, border forts, and army facilities.

According to MNSTC-I, the Iraqi Army had received a number of war zone essentials from Coalition forces by the end of 2005:[167]

- more than 95,000 assault rifles

- 4,400 machine guns

- almost 95,000 sets of body armor

- more than 3,500 vehicles

- 83,000 batons

- more than 105,000 sets of handcuffs

However, the continuing focus on light equipment deliveries is shown by the deliveries to the MOD in the final quarter of FY2005:

- 9,000 AK-47 rifles

- almost 1,800 pistols

- more than 4,700 light and medium machine guns

- more than 750 light and medium vehicles

- almost 15,000 sets of body armor

- more than 9,000 Kevlar helmets

According to Coalition planners, the Iraqi Armed Forces received equally light equipment between January 2006 and May 2006:

- more than 25,000 AK-47s

- more than 6,200 9mm pistols

- nearly 1,300 light and medium machine guns

- nearly 1,000 light and medium vehicles.

- more than 17,000 sets of body armor

- more than 15,000 Kevlar helmets.

- 176 HMMWVs, which were distributed among the divisions and Motorized Transportation Regiments.

There were some exceptions. During the same time period, the Iraqi Army's 9th Mechanized Division received 77 Hungarian-donated T-72 tanks and 36 Greek-donated BMP-1 armored personnel carriers. These vehicles were integrated into the 2nd Brigade, which was comprised of two tank battalions and one mechanized battalion.[168]

Equipment transfers from the US military continued to be significant. Through July 5, 2006, the US Army had "turned over to Iraqi forces 251 tracked vehicles, 2,600 wheeled vehicles, 153,000 small arms, 16,000 night-vision devices, 601,000 uniforms, 242,000 sets of body armor, 170,000 Kevlar helmets and 56 pieces of engineering equipment."[169]

Weapons also came from other sources. As of July 2006, the 9th Division, the only armored division in Iraq's ten-division army, posssessed 200 armored vehicles, mostly leftover Soviet equipment acquired under the Saddam regime such as T-55 and T-72 tanks and BMP and MTLB armored personnel carriers. These old vehicles were extremely difficult to maintain, with Iraqi mechanics and US transition teams struggling to "keep [the] machines running on little more than ingenuity and a few salvaged parts." Because "factories Mr. Hussein maintained to manufacture parts had been looted and destroyed after the 2003 invasion, damaged equipment like cracked engine blocks could not be repaired," and refurbishment work had to be carried out under contract in former Warsaw Pact countries such as Hungary. The armor also proved to still be vulnerable to large insurgent IEDs. Yet many Iraqi soldiers and civilians as well as US troops believed the efforts were worthwhile because of the "dampening effect" the appearance of armored units had on insurgent activity in certain areas of the country.[170] Additionally, some new equipment was planned for the Iraqi Army: the US Army's Tank-automotive and Armaments Command contracted BAE Land Systems to build 378 specially-designed Light Armored Vehicles, scheduled to be delivered to the Iraqi military between November 2006 and May 2007.[171]

As a result, equipment deliveries and plans became a growing issue with Iraqi commanders during 2006, with complaints that a lack of proper equipment precluded decisive advantage over relative well armed and equipped insurgent forces. One criticism was that corruption in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense was largely to blame for the problem.

In 2005, the MOD "misplaced" $1.3 billion that had been allocated to arm the troops. Another complaint from field commanders was that US and Coalition equipment deliveries did not contain the types of heavy equipment necessary to definitively crush the insurgents.[172]

Outside experts expressed similar views. In a memo written in April 2006, Army General Barry McCaffrey said that Iraqi army units were "very badly equipped with only a few light vehicles, small arms, most with body armor and one or two uniforms. They [had] almost no mortars, heavy machine guns, decent communications equipment, artillery, armor, or [air force] transport, helicopter and strike support."[173]

By the spring 2006, similar issues had arisen as to what types and how much heavy equipment would be left behind by the US military for use by the Iraqi Army. Because the bulk of Iraqi equipment at the time consisted of former Soviet and Warsaw Pact vehicles, doubts had arisen as to Iraq's ability to afford maintenance of more advanced US vehicles. At a March 30, 2006 joint hearing of the House Armed Services readiness and tactical air and land forces subcommittees, Gen. John Vines, who had recently spent a year as joint forces commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, spoke to the issue of equipping the Iraqi military: "I don't advocate leaving large amounts of that equipment because it's not compatible with their current force structure."[174]

By late March 2006, the US plans for heavy equipment leave-behinds for the Iraqis had yet to solidify. Although no list of equipment had yet been produced, Lt. Den. David Melcher, US Army deputy chief of staff for programming, analysis, and material integration, testified to the House Armed Services Committee that "up-armored Humvees of some nature" would clearly be on that list. He went on to explain that the Humvees likely to be left would likely not be the Level 1 M1114 vehicles, those constructed with the most armor, but rather Level 2 vehicles, which had armor added.[175]

Yet, more than 80% of IRRF 2 funds for military and police forces had been expended, as of March 31, 2006 -- although only 30.5% of ISFF funding was expended (ISFF funds began to be expended later than IRRF funds). The Administration also submitted an FY2006 supplemental request that included $3.7 billion to continue to train, equip, and build facilities for the Iraqi army and police, and $962 million in foreign assistance funding to fulfill goals related to security.[176]

The end result was that neither the Iraqi government nor the MNF-I announced any meaningful program to give Iraqi forces the armor, artillery, combat aircraft, and ships they need to defeat the insurgents, much less deter and defend against foreign enemies. At a more immediate level, the focus on MOD forces left the police particularly vulnerable. At the same time, central and national facilities were generally better funded and more secure than facilities in the field and urban areas, presenting problems in deploying and protecting forces in the field.

Army

By May 2006, the Iraqi Army included approximately 116,500 trained and equipped combat soldiers, including Strategic Infrastructure Battalion personnel and approximately

9,600 support forces. There were 111 Iraqi Army combat battalions "in the fight." These included two Special Operations battalions and seven Strategic Infrastructure Battalions. There were also 28 National Police battalions "in the fight." The number of Iraqi Army units that rated as having "assumed the lead" had doubled to two Iraqi Army divisions, 14 Iraqi brigades, and 57 Iraqi battalions. Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, commander of MNSTC-I announced in June 2006 that the Iraqi Army would be built up to full strength by the end of 2006, although it would still require US support for combat operations and officer training.[177] The ten-division national force would by then consist of approximately 137,000 men.[178]

Figure 10 shows the increase in the number of Iraqi army battalions in combat from August 2004 to January 2006. The generation of all Iraqi army battalions in current plans was more than 89% complete, and the Army's train-and-equip effort had shifted towards building combat support and combat service support forces.

Increasing Combat Capability and Readiness

In May 2006, MNC-I assessed the readiness of Iraqi units at four different levels: "Units Being Formed"; "Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces Fighting Side-by-Side"; "Iraqi Lead with Coalition Support"; and "Independent Iraqi Operations." This "Transition Readiness Assessment (TRA)" had been steadily refined to enable more accurate measurement of inputs from the advisory teams on the various criteria being assessed such as manning, command and control, training, sustainment/logistics, equipping, and leadership.

Iraqi units in all categories, save those classified as "Units Being Formed," were operational and engaged in operations against the enemy. However, only units rated "Iraqi Lead with Coalition Support" and higher could "control" their own areas of responsibility. This did not mean they were as yet truly independent of Coalition support, but it did mean they had reached the point where such support was limited, and Coalition forces could focus elsewhere.

The highest rated units, designated "Independent Iraqi Operations," were capable of planning, executing, and sustaining counter-insurgency operations. These units had considerably more capability than simply being able to fight and win at the small-unit level. Units rated as "Independent Iraqi Operations" had fully operational logistical elements, ministry capacity and capability, intelligence structures, and command and control.

As has been shown earlier, the number of counter-insurgency operations conducted independently by ISF as a percentage of total combat operations increased steadily from December 2005 through March 2006. Coalition forces intensified their own combat operations in April 2006, so the percentage of independent ISF operations declined somewhat. However, the total number of ISF and combined ISF/Coalition combat operations in April exceeded the number of independent and combined operations of the previous month. Moreover, MOI forces conducted many counter-insurgency operations that it did not report to Multi-National Corps-Iraq. MNC-I expected to include these MOI operations in future reports.

Figure 10

Iraqi Army Battalions in Combat
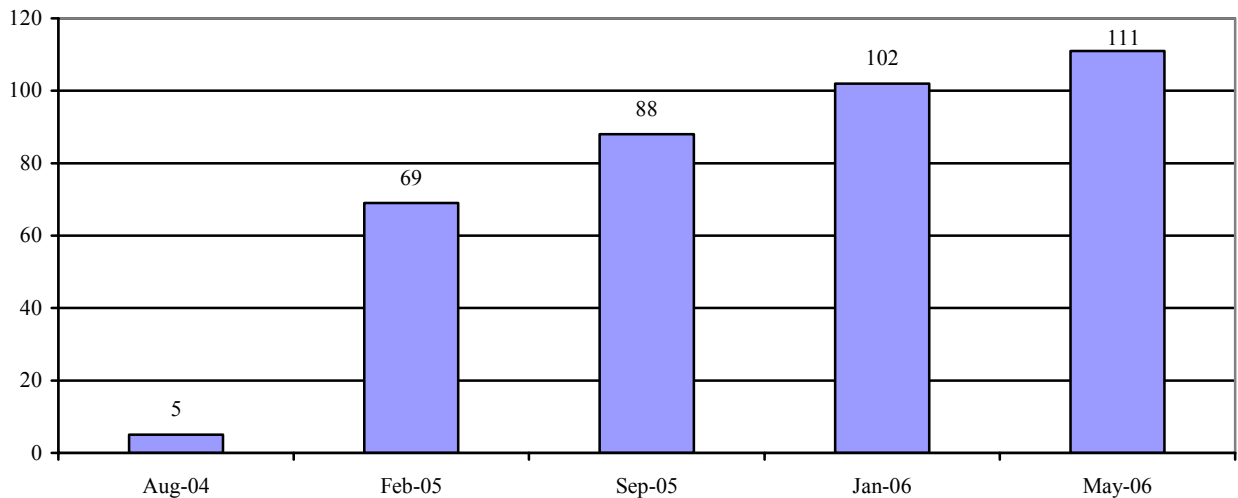
Note: Includes Special Operations battalions and Strategic Infrastructure battalions, but does not include Combat Support and Combat Service Support units. Source: Adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 53.

Trend in Army Support Forces

While combat force generation unfolded largely on schedule, the creation of army logistical support and other enablers lagged, and became a growing priority for improving the effort in force development. Progress in creating a logistical, tactical, and materiel support apparatus for the Iraqi army stood as follows as of early 2006:[179]

- The National Depot at Taji, which is currently in operation, provides operational-level supply and maintenance support through its military, defense civilian, and contractor staff. It provides warehouse facilities for the receipt, storage, and issue of the Iraqi Armed Forces' national stockholding of most classes of supply, as well as facilities for undertaking 4th-line maintenance support, including the ability to overhaul a range of vehicles and other equipment. The National Depot feeds five Regional Support Units (RSUs) that provide 3rd-level maintenance and supply support to nearby units. The RSUs, when fully operational, will also manage the provision of garrison and contract support for units located within their designated region. Garrison Support Units will be responsible for management and provision of garrison support to a designated base.

- Motorized Transport Regiments (MTRs) have been integrated into force generation plans to support each of the nine infantry divisions in order to provide improved mobility and sustainment capabilities for each division. Three MTRs are operational and are conducting critical logistical support missions for Iraqi Army units by moving personnel and materiel. The Coalition Corps Support Command is partnered with these units to mentor them and help develop their capabilities. A fourth MTR is being generated and will become operational in early 2006.

- In addition, each combat battalion will have a Headquarters and Service Company (HSC) to provide organic logistics and limited signal support; about half of these HSCs have been generated, and some are now operational.

- Vehicle maintenance is performed under a US Government-funded National Maintenance Contract in the absence of an organic MOD capability to provide depot-level maintenance. This capability will be built in the future since the contract does not expire until 2007. The capability to provide some routine maintenance is, however, being developed within the support units.

- The Iraqi Armed Service and Supply Institute (IASSI) at Taji plays a critical role in training the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers to fill combat service support positions throughout the Army. The IASSI is training the soldiers and supervisors for the Motorized Transport Regiments and Headquarters and Service Companies. Members of the Regional Support Units and Strategic Infrastructure Battalions will soon start to receive similar training. In this way, the IASSI is making a critical contribution to the development of capabilities that will be necessary for Iraqi forces to take over missions now being performed by the US and other Coalition forces. As the Iraqi Army's operational support system is completed and matures, its ability to provide logistics support to all echelons in the fight will emerge and reduce the need for US forces performing these functions.

In May, the army continued to focus on building combat enablers:[180]

> Of the planned nine Motorized Transportation Regiments (MTRs) to support each of the nine Iraqi Army light infantry divisions, four are now at least initially operationally capable. These MTRs provide improved mobility and sustainment support for the Iraqi forces. The operational regiments are conducting critical logistical support missions in partnership with the Coalition Support Command. All nine MTRs are expected to reach initial operational capability by mid-2006. Under the Iraqi Armed Forces Logistics Concept, the 9th Mechanized Division will be supported by a total of five Logistics Support Battalions, of which two are currently operational. Generation of the remaining battalions will significantly increase the division's ability to sustain itself throughout its area of operations. In addition to these combat enablers, the structure of each combat battalion brigade, and division has been adjusted to include a Headquarters and Service Company (HSC), which provides organic support to these units. This support includes resident transportation, communications, medical, supply, and maintenance capabilities. To date, approximately 80% of the required HSCs have been formed, of which 41% are operational.

The Iraqi Armed Service and Supply Institute (IASSI) at Taji trained more than 5,000 officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who were to be the soldiers and supervisors for the Motor Transport Regiments, Regional Support Units, and Headquarters and Service Companies. As consolidated under the Iraqi Training Brigade, the basic training system continued to develop. New recruits attended a five-week program at the Kirkush Military Training Base and An-Numiniyah. After graduating, recruits received additional specialty training that varied from three to seven weeks depending on the military occupational skill assignment.

Junior leadership development designed to help build a solid NCO Corps lay in a system of Regional Training Centers and in the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy. The NCO Professional Education System included a Sergeants Major Course and a Chief Warrant

Officer Course. Iraqi Military Academies at Zahko, Qualachulon, and Rustimiyah continued to conduct new officer training. The one-month Former Officer Course (FOC) continued to focus on human rights, ethics, and counter-insurgency operations. To further press upon members of the Iraqi Armed Forces the importance of ethics, human rights, and leadership, planners also proposed the concept of the Center for Ethics and Leadership to provide institutional oversight for ethics, education, training, and assessment.

As of July 2006, however, logistics and the provision of basic supplies to Iraqi troops remained "a serious issue" that "stymied" force development. A US Army major working with an Iraqi battalion asserted that logistics "was overlooked" earlier in Iraqi force development and that "it's probably going to take a couple more years for that [logistics] to come together." Iraqi military units still depended on the US for fuel, weapons, and equipment.[181] Iraqi supply-chain mismanagement became so problematic that in the Anbar province the US military resumed providing supplies to Iraqi forces. The overall situation was severely deficient:[182]

> Senior US officials speaking on the condition of anonymity said the situation was worse, with many Iraqi Army supplies not arriving and others being siphoned off to the black market. One Iraqi fighting unit went days without sufficient supplies of food. Meanwhile, because Iraqi forces are still paid in cash delivered to the front, some units suffered desertions after the Iraqi government failed to deliver their salaries on time.

> US officials said the deficiencies were disturbing and raised serious questions about the Iraqi government's ability to become self-sufficient.

Air Force

The organization of the Iraqi air force is shown in Figure 12. In early 2006, the Iraqi air force had nearly 500 trained and equipped personnel, and was developing three airpower capabilities: reconnaissance, battlefield mobility, and air transport. Major assets for these capabilities included the following:[183]

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

As of early 2006, the air force's UH-1 helicopters (from Jordan) were scheduled to be converted in the United States to Huey-II configuration. The quality of the fleet was

questionable, having reportedly being described as "not secondhand but tenth-hand" by an Iraqi pilot.[184]

Development of Air Force personnel capabilities was also underway, with the establishing of Coalition Advisory Support Teams. Progress into early 2006 was reported as thus:[185]

> The coalition has established Advisory Support Teams to facilitate development of a capable Iraqi Air Force. Two teams are aiding in the reconnaissance mission, with one in Kirkuk and the other working at Basra. These teams have trained nearly 70 personnel, including 25 pilots, 41 aircraft maintenance engineers, and 3 administrators. Established basic, mission, and instructor upgrade syllabuses for Iraqi Air Force aerial reconnaissance pilots continue to be utilized. Training is being conducted both in the United States (pilot, navigator, maintenance officer, flight engineer, and loadmaster courses) and in Iraq (maintenance and aircrew personnel courses). Nearly 30 basic air-land qualified C-130 aircrew personnel have been trained, as well as the first complete mission-ready Iraqi crew.

A media report issued in June 2006, however, indicated that progress was minimal and not a real priority for US force development efforts in Iraq. The few pilots had served under the Saddam Hussein regime and had an average age of 48 years, and "when they leave, the air force will will vanish unless recruitment begins in earnest." Trainee pilots "went unpaid for months" and were hindered by technical problems with the aircraft. They also had to deal with intimidation and death threats from insurgents and militias, which drove some pilots to quit their jobs. For its part, the US seemed reluctant to allow Iraqis a significant role in controlling their own airspace. The US military denied Iraqi requests for flight missions and maintains most aircraft support facilities in Iraq for its own use, leaving the Iraqis with only one significant base.[186]

The one Iraqi air base, Muthana, was located within the US military compound that encircled Baghdad International Airport. It was a minimal location that included one runway, a large hangar, and aircraft. The planes available for flight by the Iraqi 23 Squadron were three C-130 planes and 30 helicopters for transport or operations missions. The Air Force had no fighting ability. The 23 Squadron was one of five units, but the other four had not yet been assigned bases.[187]

The members of the Muthana division would not allow their names to be printed or photos taken for fear of their lives. "We are afraid for our families," one colonel said. "There is no one to protect them." Another added, "They kidnap our children, they are trying to kill us." Despite this and the relatively few aircraft at the base, these pilots, many of whom had served under Saddam, were anxious to fly.[188]

As of May 2006, the Air Force had approximately 600 trained and equipped personnel. The following advancements were also reported:[189]

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

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

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

According to US Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Moseley, the Iraqi Air Force was "not yet developing an attack capability" as of June 2006.[190] Due to sectarian militia penetration of the security forces, the US is leery "of putting such formidable power in Iraqi hands." Iraqis were limited to reconnaissance near the borders, monitoring infrastructure, supply missions, and transporting government officials.[191]

Figure 12

Iraqi Air Force: April 2006

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Iraqi Air Force   │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                   │
        ┌──────────────────────────┼──────────────────────────┐
┌───────────────┐         ┌───────────────┐          ┌───────────────┐
│  23rd Sqdn    │         │  2nd Sqdn     │          │  70th Sqdn    │
│  3 C-130Es    │         │  5 Jet Rangers│          │  2 x CH-2000  │
│               │         │               │          │  2 Seekers    │
└───────────────┘         └───────────────┘          └───────────────┘
        │                         │                           │
┌───────────────┐         ┌───────────────┐          ┌───────────────┐
│               │         │  4th Sqdn     │          │  3d Sqdn      │
│  96th Sqdn    │         │  4 UH-1Hs     │          │  6 CompAir 7s │
└───────────────┘         └───────────────┘          └───────────────┘
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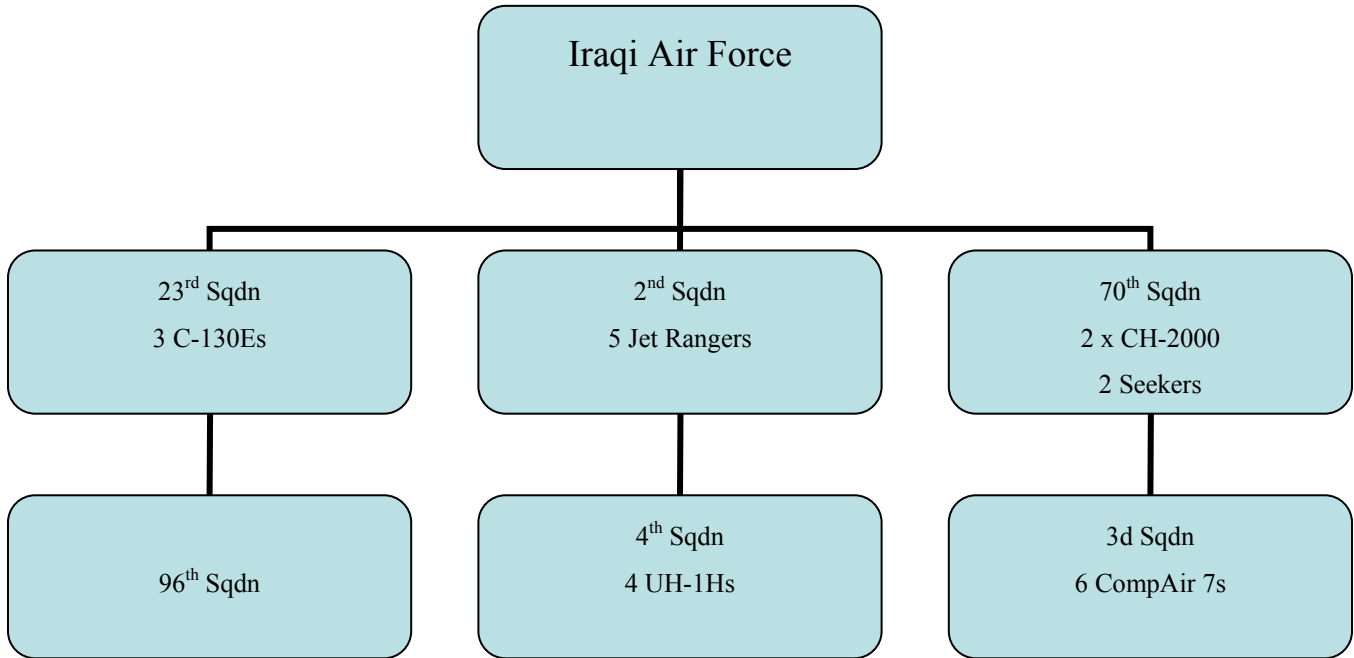
Aircraft Inventory (22)

Recce	6 CompAir 7s; 2 Seekers; 2 CH-2000s
Battlefield Mobility	4 UH-1Hs; 5 jet Rangers; (Mi-17s)
Airlift	3 C-130Es
Search and Rescue	none
Air Defense	none
Light Attack	none

Source: MNSTC-I, April 2006.

Ministry of Interior Forces

The ethnic, sectarian, and other problems that remained in the Iraq's Ministry of Interior and its forces in mid-2006 did not mean that they did not improve some aspects of their effectiveness. They also played an important role in supporting the regular military and in a wide range of security missions. Attacks on infrastructure declined by more than 60% between February and April 2006, and Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch claimed this was a direct result of the more than 250,000 Iraqi security forces conducting operations in the country.[192]

During the period before the new government took office, the force generation structure for MOI forces called for 195,000 trained and equipped personnel. In June 2006, US Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, commander of MNSTC-I, cited a target of 188,000 personnel for police, border patrol, and other units under MOI as on track to be trained by the end of the year.[193] Figure 13 summarizes manning levels and goals for MOI forces as of early 2006. Figure 14 provides more detail and compares goals against actual strength.

Real versus Authorized Strength

Estimating the actual strength of MOI forces was, however, a major problem. US and Iraqi commanders had long criticized the policy whereby Iraqi soldiers could leave their units whenever they want to. The Iraqi army does not require its soldiers to sign contracts, so soldiers treat enlistments as temporary jobs. As Col. Alaa Kata al-Kafage said, "All the soldiers now, they don't care about the country. They care about the money...Under the military agreement, they can leave anytime. After (soldiers) get paid and save a little bit of money, they leave." This policy is at least partially responsible for draining Iraqi ranks to confront the insurgency by as much as 30% to 50%.[194]

This situation was far worse for the forces under MOI command than those under the MOD, and both MNF-I and Iraqi sources had to admit that in most cases there was no reliable reporting on the manpower actually present. In May 2006, the Iraqi police force was estimating that it lost several hundred recruits every month. One such recruit, a 23 year old named Alah, simply made a "career move" and left the Iraqi police shortly after graduation and joined the Mahdi Army. The reasons he noted were fairly simple: The pay was better and there was a smaller chance of getting killed.[195]

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

Yet, there were still fewer defections and personnel abandoning their positions than during the early efforts to train such Iraqi forces, and in fact when leaves were canceled after the bombing of the Golden Shrine, the vast majority of soldiers reported for duty. Still, soldiers are still contractually permitted to leave their units whenever they would

like without punishment and the MOI dealt with many of its problems by turning a blind eye.

Figure 13

Manpower: MOI Forces: January 4, 2006 vs. May 31, 2006

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

* Unauthorized absence personnel are included in these numbers. Source: Iraq Weekly Status Report, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, US Department of State: January 4, 2006 and May 31, 2006 issues, p. 7.

Figure 14

Manning Realities vs. Goals February 2006

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

Source: Adapted from US Department of Defense, <u>Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq</u>, Report to Congress, February 2006, pp. 49-54.

Ministry of Interior "National Police": Special Security Forces and Police Commandos

Previous plans had authorized more than 11,800 commandos, which MNSTC-I had planned to have fielded by December 2006. Nearly 9,000 were trained and equipped as of early 2006. Training consisted of six weeks at the police commando academy in northern Baghdad, with instruction in the following topic areas:

- Urban patrolling
- Unarmed combat apprehension
- Use of force
- Human rights and ethics policing
- Introduction to Iraqi law
- Vehicle checkpoints
- IED characteristics and recognition
- Weapons qualification

After two years of establishing the training program, Coalition forces still found that "many of the early troubles" with Iraqi national police forces remained: "weak discipline,

divided loyalties, failure to complete tasks, [and] the tendency to fire wildly in every direction at the first sign of danger."[196]

Build-Up in 2006

Figure 15 shows that the resulting build-up of MOI special security and commando forces and units continued to be significant in 2006. The *New York Times* reported on January 16, 2006 that about 80,000 local police officers across Iraq were certified as trained and equipped, more than halfway toward the goal of 135,000 by early 2007.[197]

As of February 20, 2006, Multinational Forces spokesman Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch said that Iraq's growing security forces planned and carried out more than a quarter of all counterinsurgency operations in Iraq in January, a total of 490 Iraqi-run missions, nearly a 50% increase over the September 2005 figure.[198] The Coalition also worked with the Iraqi Public Order Special Police who served as a bridge between local police and the Iraqi army in handling terrorist and insurgency threats. Numbering about 9,000 as of February 2006, the public order police operated primarily as a light urban infantry.

As of May 2006, there were around 22,700 trained and equipped National Police (formerly know as "Special Forces" and Commandos") personnel, an increase of 4,000 since the previous DOD report to Congress in February 2006:[199]

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

The problem with this build-up was that some of these forces were responsible for serious abuses, and became a de facto part of the problem rather than the solution. Colonel Gordon Davis stated in February 2006, the composition of these forces was about 20% Sunni, many of whom are officers, and claimed this made it unlikely that the group could be infiltrated by vigilantes who carry out ethnic-based attacks. "There are a heck of a lot of strongly willed patriots amongst that group, and if they believed one of their own may be an insurgent or terrorist, then they would pick them out right away because that puts their own lives on the lines, as well as those of their families."[200]

In an April 6, 2006 report to Congress, the DOD addressed the overall progress in the force structure of Iraq's Interior Ministry as follows:[201]

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

The report went on to outline progress and the outlook for training and equipping the Iraqi police forces:[202]

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

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

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

Coalition military leaders reported in August 2006 that the Iraqi Interior Ministry forces had 92 percent of a planned strength of 188,000. Within that total were regular police, described as 90 percent trained and 83 percent equipped, and the National Police, described as 98 percent trained and 92 percent equipped. The Border Enforcement police were reportedly 92 percent trained and 56 percent equipped, due to the diversion of resources to forces in "contested areas."[203]

Figure 15

**Estimated MOI National Police Force Capabilities Before the Spring 2006
Reorganization**

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

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

Reform and Persistent Problems in Spring and Summer 2006

By early 2006, Ministry of Interior forces earned a black reputation among many in Iraq, particularly among Iraq's Sunni population. So poor was the force's reputation that after the bombing of the Askariya shrine in Samarra on February 22, many Sunnis claimed that the perpetrators of the act were MOI forces seeking a pretext for civil war.[204] Among the forces that had gained the mixed reputation as among the most effective, but also the most feared, were the MOI's special security forces and police commandos.

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

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

Indeed, much attention in spring 2006 was placed on re-orienting the special MOI forces toward being a more positive force, and reducing divisive behaviour and the interloping influences of sectarian actors. Some of the actions taken were largely cosmetic. The elite

"Wolf Brigade," for example, was renamed the "Freedom Brigade." Meanwhile, MOI special forces and commandos were collectively renamed, simply, the "National Police."

Other steps taken by American commanders in Iraq were more significant. To allay fears of mistreatment by MOI elite forces in the Iraqi population, for example, in April 2006 US soldiers handed out thousands of cards to encourage residents to call the authorities if they saw commandos, or fighters posing as commandos, on suspicious missions without US troops.[205] By early summer, however, the future of the MOI remained uncertain, with militia loyalties and Badr Organization involvement still concerns.

With sectarian killings on the rise in mid-July, MOI issued new orders to its anti-crime units requiring notification of headquarters of all operations. Seeking to curb "kidnappings by men in uniform," MOI also urged Iraqis to "demand identification before following orders by officials claiming to be police."[206]

Some Baghdad neighborhoods actually tried to ban national police units from entering after several incidents of citizens being kidnapped and killed by men wearing national police uniforms.[207]

Interior Minister Jawad Bolani insisted that "Interior Ministry troops who had been reportedly seen robbing armored cars and kidnapping dozens were not representative of the force."[208] He announced that "new uniforms and identification cards would be supplied to hobble those 'who carry out bad activities under the cover of this institution.'" 25,000 new uniforms were on order, made "with imported camouflage cloth and intricate patches and insignias…designed to be difficult to copy." However, a young Iraqi tailor selling copies of security force uniform for the equivalent of about $33 estimated it would take "a day" for the new uniforms to be copied by enterprising tailors.[209]

On August 14, the new uniforms for the national police were unveiled by US military officials. "The bluish-gray uniforms, to be issued in October, have a stamp-size Iraqi flag printed into the cloth."[210] Additionally, the US military announced "standardized vehicle markings" and "Iraqi-led inspection boards" as part of a plan to rein in violent activity by rogue police officers and those impersonating officers.[211]

The Regular Police

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

By early 2006, over 80,000 IPS personnel had been trained and equipped, an increase of 13,000 since October 2005. As of early 2006, MNSTC-I was projecting to complete force generation by February 2007.[212]

Increases in Police Strength

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

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

The end result was that the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) had trained and equipped approximately 101,200 IPS personnel as of May 2006, an increase of 18,800 since the previous report. As of May 2006, the CPATT anticipated that it would train and equip the total authorization of 135,000 personnel by December 2006. More than 225 Iraqi Police stations had been constructed and refurbished, 80 more than in February 2006. The CPATT projected that another 225 police stations would be completed by December 2006.

The "Year of the Police"

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

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

President Bush identified these problems in a March speech, he proposed three solutions:[213]

- First, to increase partnerships between US and Iraqi battalions in order that Iraqi units cannot only learn tactical lessons but also that the US forces can "teach them about the role of a professional police force in a democratic system" so that they can conduct their operations "without discrimination."[214]

- Second, he called for further efforts by Iraqi officials in conjunction with their US partners to identify and remove leaders within the police ranks who demonstrate loyalty to a militia. He claimed one success story in this area already. In December 2005, after receiving reports of abuses, the MOI dismissed the Brigade commander of the Second Public Order Brigade. His replacement subsequently removed more than 100 men with ties to militias.[215]

- Third, to recruit a greater number of Sunni Arabs into what is seen by many as a predominately Shi'ite police force. President Bush noted that a basic training class that graduated in October 2005 was less than 1% Sunni. Although it is unclear how much progress has been made in diluting

the Shi'ite majority within the ranks, Bush subsequently remarked that the class graduating in April 2006 "will include many more Sunni Arabs."

More than 200 police transition teams were established at the national, provincial, district, and local levels that provided Coalition oversight, mentorship, and training to the police forces.

Rebuilding the police force in the predominantly Sunni Anbar province continued to be unusually difficult and time-consuming. It was a "major challenge" to find "recruits willing to serve. According to statistics that were gathered at the end of June by the Marine command that oversees the province, there were about 5,200 policemen for an area roughly the size of Louisiana." US commanders hoped to have 11,000 police officers serving in Anbar. Fallujah had 1,700 policemen and the towns of Baghdadi and Qaim had 250 and 700 police officers, respectively. Yet other towns in the province, such as Hit, Rutba, Ana, and Haditha, had no police presence at all at the end of June 2006.[216] In August, up to "half of Fallujah's 1,700 member police force had failed to report to work" in the face of insurgent death threats.[217]

Reform of the Police

The initiative led to the deployment of Coalition Police Assistance Training Teams (CPATTs), under MNSTC-I, to lead the MNF-I "Year of the Police" initiative, and partnering with MOI to plan, coordinated, and execute the necessary measures to develop the ministry. Training increasingly focused on leadership development. The MOI also improved its internal investigative capability with the Internal Affairs section graduating another group of students, bringing the total number of trained Internal Affairs specialists to 25 as of May 2006.

Following the April 1, 2006 reorganization, National Police recruits were to finish basic training programs at the National Police Force Training Academies. Training focused on leadership development and "train the trainer" courses to facilitate the transition to an Iraqi lead in all areas. The training academy in northern Baghdad accommodated 300-500 students for six weeks of intense training in weapons qualification, urban patrolling techniques, unarmed combat apprehension, use of force, human rights and ethics in policing, introduction to Iraqi law, vehicle checkpoints, and improvised explosive device characteristics and recognition.

Also effective April 1, 2006, National Police Transition Teams (NPTTs) were reassigned to MNC-I to ensure an integrated approach to command and control for the transition teams. This was meant to help ensure a more synchronized effort between Iraqi forces and operational Coalition units. NPTTs provided daily mentorship to the National Police forces in the field to help develop leadership, plan and execute operations, and otherwise professionalize the force, while emphasizing the importance of human rights and the rule of law. US CENTCOM commander General John Abizaid commented on July 21, 2006 that reforming the police presented a continuing problem that needed to be dealt with to halt an upsurge of sectarian violence. "Definitely one of the things that is not going well is the national police and police reform, and it needs to be looked at carefully, he remarked. "You can't allow sectarian politics to influence the ministries."[218]

In a July 30 statement before Parliament, Interior Minister Jawad Bolani vowed to "clean up" Iraq's law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, who had been implicated in various sectarian-motivated killings and abductions during the summer of 2006. A ministry spokesman acknowledged that "there are extremists who are abusing their position."

Bolani stated that he had "launched 13 investigations of police officers charged with crimes ranging from improper detention of suspects to shaking down people for bribes." Other measures included "recalling police vehicles assigned to political leaders" as well as "issuing difficult-to-forge badges for officers and vehicles, new uniforms, special paint for police cars and a new program for licensing weapons." Bolani declared, "The ministry is unwilling to keep those individuals who mishandle authority and violate human rights."[219]

Equipment and Training

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

Deliveries, however, were even lighter than for the regular forces. Equipment deliveries for all MOI forces in the final quarter of 2005 included the following:[220]

- More than 10,000 AK-47 rifles

- 16,000 pistols

- 800 light and medium machine guns

- 4,000 sets of individual body armor

- 700 Kevlar helmets

- More than 65,000 cold weather jackets

Police in the Najaf province received 40 new US-manufactured four-wheel-drive trucks from the coalition in July 2006.[221]

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

Facility Construction

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

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

By April, construction was also completed on the following military facilities:[222]

- Camp India Base, which will support 2,500 Iraqi soldiers in the 4th Brigade of the 1st Division

- Samawah, which will support 750 Iraqi soldiers in the 2nd Brigade of the 10th Division

- Naiad, which will support 250 Iraqi soldiers in the 1st Brigade Headquarters of the 8th Division

Figure 16 shows the status of IRRF 2-funded projects by subsector as of April 2006. Figure 17 shows military base projects and police facilities constructed from Feb. 13, 2006 through May 26, 2006.

Figure 16

Status of IRRF 2-Funded Projects by Subsector

Project	Funds	Number of Projects
Military Facilities (173)	$962M	80
Police Stations (390)	$181M	294
Police Training (27)	$139M	5
Border Enforcement (261)	$135M	151
Prisons (3)	$124M	N/A
Courts (36)	$80M	20
Security Communications (3)	$59M	1
Fire Facilities (81)	$27M	63
Points of Entry (11)	$22M	9
Witness Protection (5)	$14M	N/A

Investigations of Crimes Against Humanity (28)	$4M	27
Miscellaneous (1)	$3M	N/A
Construction & Repair (1)	$0.5M	N/A
Emergency Force Protection (1)	$0.2M	N/A

Source: Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, <u>April 2006 Report to Congress</u>, p. 23.

Figure 17

Iraqi Military and Police Facilities Constructed Feb. 13, 2006 - May 26, 2006
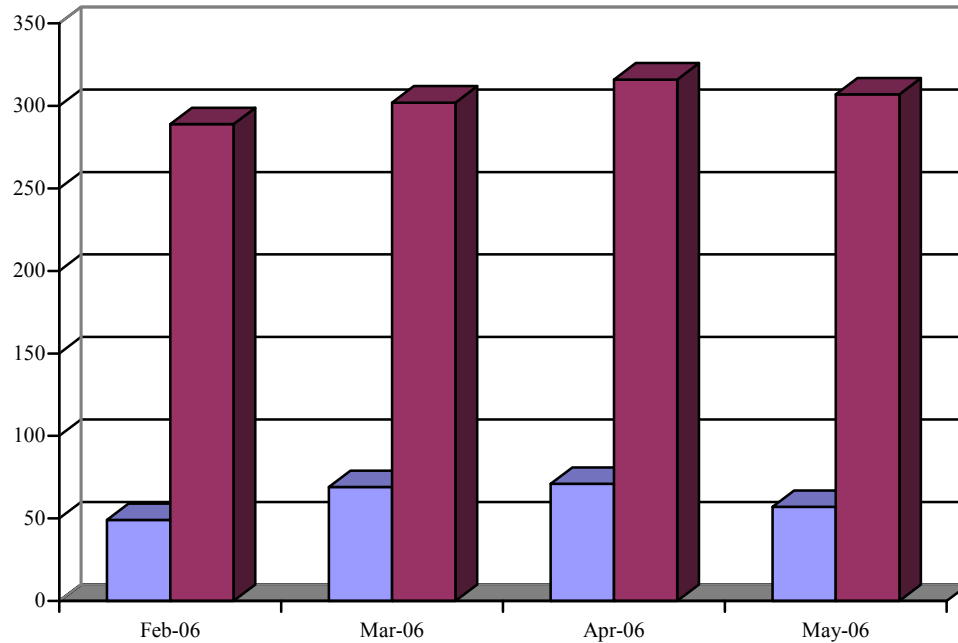
	13-Feb-06	16-Mar-06	20-Apr-06	26-May-06
Military Base Projects	49	69	71	57
Police Facilities	289	302	316	307

Note: Project numbers include projects funded by the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) and the Development Fund Iraq (DFI) and managed by GRD/PCO. Source: <u>Iraq Reconstruction Update</u>, Weekly Publication of the US Department of the Army: Issues 02/13/06, 03/16/06, 04/20/06, 05/26/06.

Facilities Protection Forces, Private Security Personnel and "Ministry Armies"

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

The Facilities Protection Services

L. Paul Bremer, former head of the CPA, established the FPS in September 2003 to free US troops from guarding Iraqi government property and to prevent the kind of looting that erupted with the entry of US forces and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Bremer's order put the FPS under the command and pay of the ministries they protected, not of the interior and defense ministries, which handle the rest of Iraq's security forces. The order also allowed private security firms to handle the contracting of FPS guards for the ministries.[223]

US and MOI officials increasingly described the FPS units as militias that answer only to the ministry or private security firm that employs it. US officials acknowledged that they have no more control over the FPS than the Interior Ministry does. "Negative. None. Zero," said Lt. Col. Michael J. Negard, a spokesman for the US training of Iraqi forces. Even Interior Ministry Bayan Jabr said in April 2006 that the FPS was "out of control."[224]

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

On May 6, the private security companies that employed the FPS members agreed to several Interior Ministry proposals intended to bring some measure of central control and oversight to the paramilitary units. The ministry was to issue badges and distinctive seals for FPS vehicles and supervise FPS weapons. Agents of the security companies and the ministry clarified that FPS members were liable for prosecution for any crimes. The security companies also agreed to bring the FPS under ministry supervision, but General Raad al-Tamimi of the Interior Ministry did not disclose any details.[225] On July 6, in a blunt acknowledgement of security force corruption, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki singled out the FPS by announcing:[226]

> …a police force with thousands of members assigned to protect government buildings and other installations was filled with criminals and murderers. The declaration was an unusually blunt acknowledgment of the corruption that has plagued the Iraqi security forces. "It didn't really protect the ministries," he said of the force, called the Facilities Protection Service. "On the contrary, it turned into a partner in the killing."

The Prime Minister's statement indicated that the FPS remained something of a rogue element within the security forces and lacked much credibility even within the government. On July 27, for example, FPS reported the robbery of 2 billion Iraqi dinars from one its armored cars in Baghdad by people dressed in army uniforms. The Interior Ministry's reaction was that it was "not sure if that was true or the FPS made it up to take the money."[227]

By August 2006, the FPS was 140,000 strong and lacked accountability mechanisms that were being applied to police and military forces. US efforts to reform the security forces were not applied to the FPS, which was still described as "unaccountable to police, the army, or the US military."[228]

The Infrastructure Protection Forces

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

While Prime Minister Maliki referred to such forces as having some 150,000 men in May 2006, many were phantom employees, deserters, or virtually inactive. Such units also often sold their uniforms, weapons, and equipment. They also generally reported in de

facto terms to another ministry, even when they were formally under the control of the Ministry of Defense.

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

- The SIBs fielded more than 3,400 trained personnel to guard Iraq's critical oil infrastructure, particularly the vast network of pipelines, as of April.

- The OPF, managed by the Ministry of Oil, was responsible for guarding all other Iraqi oil industry assets and facilities.

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

> More than 3,400 soldiers have completed training in this area, and training for a second group has already begun. Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure account for only a small portion of total attacks. According to DOD, attacks on infrastructure during this quarter are down by 60%. But, combined with other variables, attacks on critical infrastructure are still expected to have a significant impact on:
>
> - oil and fuel production
>
> - revenues derived from crude exports
>
> Additionally, although the number of infrastructure attacks has recently decreased, the complexity of the attacks has increased: insurgents have become more proficient at targeting critical infrastructure nodes, as well as intimidating personnel who deliver essential services.

These forces had serious problems, however, and were generally ineffective and could not be trusted. In early March 2006, DOS reported that Iraqi police had arrested several SIB guards on suspicion of aiding insurgents in targeting the oil pipeline system. This was the second recent incident in which SIB personnel were arrested in connection with insurgent plots against the oil pipeline infrastructure.[229]

In April 2006, Interior Minister Byan Jabr accused the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) of carrying out some of the killings largely attributed to death squads operating within MOI forces.[230] That same month, oversight of expansion and training of these forces raised further uncertainty. An inspector general was assigned to audit the $147 million US-overseen FPS program. The report reflected a lack of transparency:[231]

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

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

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

On July 9, insurgents sabotaged a pipeline from northern Iraq to Turkey, necessitating over two weeks of repairs. The same 400-mile long pipeline had bee n bombed on multiple occasions before and had previously been out of commission for seven months, demonstrating an inability "to provide full security to the pipelines."[232]

Conclusions

Iraqi force development faced the challenge of an insurgency that continued to show it could strike at the sectarian and ethnic fault lines in Iraq, and could exploit the lack of an effective Iraqi government and leadership to push the country towards civil war. At the same time, sectarian and ethnic militias and security forces became a steadily more serious problem, rivaling the insurgency as a threat to Iraqi security.

During these developments, the Iraqi regular military forces under the Ministry of Defense steadily expanded in size and capability, and expanded their military role. They remained largely unified and "national" in character. The lack of an Iraqi government did, however, allow a continuing drift in setting clear Iraqi force goals, and in creating plans that would create forces that could both sustain themselves in combat and eventually acquire enough major weapons and combat equipment to deter foreign threats and defend the country.

The situation was far more difficult in the case of the forces under the Ministry of Interior, including the special security units and police. Some elements of these forces became tied to Shi'ite militias, attacks on Sunnis, and other abuses. This forced the reorganization of all of the forces under the MOI, and it is still unclear how successful this reorganization will be.

MNF-I and the Iraqi government seem to be committed to giving Iraq effective internal and security police forces that will serve the nation, not given sects and ethnic groups. There has been no in-depth reporting about progress in this effort, and it faces major challenges in the form of militias, police, and other security forces that are effectively under the control of regional or local leaders, most with ties to given sects and factions.

The "Year of the Police" that MNF-I and a number of Iraqi leaders called for in late 2005 has to some extent been delayed by political instability. The broader issue affecting Iraqi progress, however, is that Iraqi force development can only succeed if Iraqi political leaders can create effective and lasting political compromises that bring Arab Shi'ite, Arab Sunni, Kurd, and other Iraqi minorities together in a coalition government and create the political forces necessary to engender political unity.

Equally important, Iraq must make progress in two other critical areas that are not directly related to Iraqi force development, but are critical to giving it meaning. One is to show that the Iraqi government can establish a lasting presence throughout Iraq, provide government services, and support its security efforts to deal with the insurgency with equal efforts to deal with militias, private and local security forces, and crime. One key to

such success is to deploy both effective police forces and a working criminal justice system.

The second factor is that the government must be able to create a climate where economic progress can and does take place, where real jobs are created, where investment is made and new businesses actually start to operate, and where the government maintains effective services and infrastructure.

Without these steps, the new government will lose momentum and credibility, the country will drift back into increasing sectarian and ethnic violence, Iraqi forces will increasingly divide along sectarian and ethnic lines, and the nation may well devolve into civil conflict or sectarian and ethnic "federalism."

Finally, the creation of a full Iraqi government raises two other issues. One is the future status of US and Coalition forces relative to Iraq forces in terms of command, status of forces arrangements, and operational planning. The second is the need for far more concrete plans to create Iraqi forces balanced and heavy enough to allow the departure of most MNF-I forces by some period in 2008, or as soon as feasible.

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