Iraq’s Sectarian and Ethnic Violence and Its Evolving Insurgency

Developments through Spring 2007

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Executive Summary

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

Since its inception in the spring of 2003, the nature of the fighting in Iraq has evolved from a struggle between Coalition forces and former regime loyalists to a much more diffuse mix of conflicts, involving a number of Sunni groups, Shi’ite militias, and foreign jihadists. The insurgency is now dominated by Neo-Salafi Sunni extremists, seeking religious and ideological goals that extend far beyond Iraq.

In the process, however, the insurgency has created complex patterns of conflict that have become a broad struggle for sectarian and ethnic control of political and economic space. Open violence has become steadily more serious, but other forms of violence and intimidation now dominate. Sectarian and ethnic “cleansing” are dividing the country at every level, creating major refugee problems, and leading to the forced relocation of a significant amount of the population.

Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions increasingly organize to provide local security while seeking to push other factions out of areas where they have the majority. These problems have been compounded by de facto exclusion of many ex-Ba’ath members and professionals that form the secular and nationalist core of the country, and the slow purging of other nationalists who do not take a sectarian and ethnic side from Ministries and professions.

The War for Sectarian and Ethnic Control of Space

The various counts of attacks and casualties show a steadily rising pattern of violence, as do recent public opinion polls. A detailed analysis of the fighting makes it clear, however, that killing and casualties are only part of this story. The map of sectarian and ethnic violence is far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and the Iraqi government. There are no accurate or reliable counts of such dead and wounded because they cannot be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area. However, Iraq Body Count reported that a total of roughly 64,000 Iraqis civilians died since 2003.

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

Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations show a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflect the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it. Another measure of the level of conflict which goes beyond the data on killings is the number of refugees. At the end of 2006, the UN reported that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, with an average of 50,000 Iraqis leaving their
homes every month, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) stated that there were 41,189 newly displaced families in 2006.

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

The US now faces both an insurgency and complex mix of civil wars. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said, there are four conflicts occurring simultaneously: The Neo-Salafi Islamic extremist insurgency; Iraqi Sunni Arab versus Shi’ite Arab, Arab-Shi’ite versus Shi’ite, and Arab versus Kurd. In recent months, Sunni versus Sunni fighting in the west between Islamic extremists and tribal groups seems to have added a fifth conflict to this mix.

Each conflict involves a different level and mix of violence. Each also, however, involves political, ethnic, religious, and economic struggles for control of space and resources, as well as sheer political power. Each struggle will continue in some form almost indefinitely into the future, most regardless of the success or failure of US arms.

**The New Strategy**

The new strategy President Bush announced on January 10, 2007 calls for a significant increase in US troops, a major joint US and Iraqi effort to secure Baghdad, and major new efforts in political conciliation.

It is all too clear, however, that US success will not depend on an Iraqi-led effort, an effective mix of Iraqi security forces, success in Iraqi conciliation, or the US ability to create an effective economic effort to “build” in time for this offensive. It will depend on US ability to implement a new counterinsurgency doctrine, and on the nature of the Iraqi reaction.

The short-term result has already been to push elements of the insurgency and sectarian struggle outside Baghdad into mixed areas like Diyala. This has already forced the US to send 700 “surge” troops to the provincial capital of Baquba. The fighting has virtually become a city-by-city struggle for sectarian control in mixed cities, and a steady effort to consolidate power in areas where one sect or ethnicity dominates.

At the same time, the insurgency is adapting to fewer, large-scale bombings tailored to keep up the pressure for civil war. Sunni insurgents focus on large suicide and car bombings designed to provoke civil war and show that Baghdad cannot be secured, while pushing Shi’ites toward reprisal attacks. February and March 2007 saw a 50% decrease in sectarian execution-style killings, but a rise in car bombs.

US and Iraqi forces will not be fully deployed until May and probably June. The civilian aid component will take at least several more months to make fully active, and there is no clear calendar for political conciliation. It will be the late fall 2007 at the earliest before it is clear whether the US has secured even the part of Baghdad Province, and the history of counterinsurgency shows that any initial victory may prove illusory over the months that follow.
if the insurgents adapt and improve their tactics, or if tactical victories are not followed by political conciliation, economic progress, and lasting local security.

US officials and commanders caution that it will be months before they can be certain the effort to secure Baghdad is working, and that lasting military success depends on success in political conciliation. They do, however, point to the drop in sectarian conflict as evidence that the “surge” strategy is working thus far. US military officials say that they had captured or killed some 17,000 insurgents and 700 Mahdi Army militiamen. To deal with the larger number of detainees, the US sent 2,200 additional military police to Iraq. On March 16, 2007 the US Army announced that an aviation brigade of 2,600 would deploy to Iraq 45 days early, in May.¹ The President also authorized a total of 2,400 support troops for the “surge”, bringing the total number of troops to 28,700.²

Much depends on whether the Shi’ite militias actively resist the effort to secure Baghdad. Moqtada al Sadr has so far stood down his Mahdi Army, but his future decisions will clearly impact the success or failure of US strategy. The new Baghdad plan centers on Sadr and his loyalists being passive, and he had stood by while US forces arrested more extremist members of his Mahdi Army. He has, however, continued to oppose the presence of US troops and never supported the “surge.” In the early spring of 2007, Sadr seems content to let the US forces target his enemies – Sunni insurgents and rogue Shi’ite militiamen. He clearly benefits from engaging in a more peaceful struggle for economic and political power within the Shi’ite leadership, but it is far from clear if he can resist growing Shi’ite popular support for reprisals against continued Sunni attacks.

These problems in Baghdad and the Sunni and mixed areas in the north have been compounded by a decisive British defeat in the four oil-rich provinces in the southeast, which include Iraq’s only port and access to oil exports through the Gulf. The British are reduced to a largely symbolic effort to reform the police in Basra. Shi’ite factions continue to fight for control of economic and political power in the south, exemplified by violence in late March in Basra between Sadrists and the Fadhila Party.

Fortunately, sheer pragmatism, a desire for US support, hope for autonomy, and fear of Turkey, Iran, and Syria, have so far moderated Kurdish separatism and efforts to force the territorial issues in the area surrounding the ethnic fault line in the north. The “oil law” – approved by the Iraqi cabinet in late February 2007 - may or may not help, depending on whether it is passed by the Council of Representatives and the annexes that determine its practical value are agreed upon. There already, however, is growing tension in Kirkuk, Tall Afar and Mosul.

Iran is also a serious potential problem. The US continues to accuse Iran of instigating violence in Iraq; military officials showed evidence of Iranian-made explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) in Iraq. Iranian influence was clearly on the rise, but not only at the military level; Iran has promised Iraq $1 billion aid and provides electricity for many of the border towns.

**A National Struggle, not one for Control of Baghdad**

Just as the British confused Basra with a regional center of gravity in the south, the new strategy could confuse Baghdad with the center of gravity in a national struggle for the control of political and economic space that affects every part of the country. It is more than possible that if the Shi’ite militias continue to stand down, the net effect will be to have the US fight on the side of a
Shi’ite dominated government whose efforts at conciliation will be limited at best, and that will seek dominance over the nation’s Sunnis.

A new ABC News/USA Today/BBC News/ARD TV public opinion poll presents a grim picture of the reality in Iraq. A majority of Iraqis have been directly affected by the violence, only 26% feel safe in their neighborhoods – compared with 63% in 2005 – and 80% have experienced some form of attacks nearby. Iraqis are generally pessimistic about their lives and have little hope that the new security plan will work. Their economic conditions have sharply deteriorated. The difference between Sunni and Shi’ite approval of the Iraqi government, armed forces, and hope for the future is also more pronounced than in past years.

The patterns of violence in Iraq are national, not local. Winning security control of Baghdad and losing Iraq’s 11 other major cities and countryside to Iraq’s sectarian and ethnic factions is not victory in any strategic terms, it is defeat. The minimal requirement for a successful US strategy is a relatively stable and secure Iraq, not temporary US military control of Baghdad.

The US, its allies, the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi people need a strategy for all of Iraq, not a single city – particularly when a focus on control of Baghdad could mean leaving most of the country to divide on sectarian and ethnic lines. So far, the US failed to set forth a strategy and meaningful operational plan for dealing with Iraq as a country, even if it does succeed in Baghdad.

Any meaningful US effort in Iraq will be impossible, however, if US politics continue to press for early withdrawal before any form of US influence and action can lower the rising tide of civil violence, weaken the insurgency, move Iraq towards conciliation, and develop its capabilities for governance and to defend itself. The levels of violence have reached the point where at least several years of US support and aid are needed to have any hope of success.

Even the best US effort may, however, fail in the face of Iraq’s current levels of violence and past US mistakes. Iraq’s factions also know that the US is involved in a war of attrition where these past mistakes have created a political climate where it appears to be steadily more vulnerable to pressures that either will make it leave, or sharply limit how long it can play a major role. One year increasingly seems “long” by American domestic political standards, but the actors in Iraq and the region can play for years. In fact, they have to play for years. They live there and they know the chances of true stability are negligible for years to come.

This presents a real risk that the steadily escalating levels of violence in Iraq could lead to full scale civil war, influence of outside nations in the form of direct intervention or the use of Iraqi proxies, and lead to broader struggles between Sunnis and Shi’ites. The nature of violence in Iraq does not as yet make this any kind of certainty, but it is a growing possibility. It is also a warning that the US must not leave Iraq without a strategy for dealing with either Iraq after major US force cuts or the overall security and stability of the region.
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The “War After the War”

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

Since its inception in the spring of 2003, the nature of the fighting in Iraq has evolved from a struggle between Coalition forces and former regime loyalists to a much more diffuse mix of conflicts, involving a number of Sunni groups, Shi’ite militias, and foreign jihadists. The insurgency is now dominated by Neo-Salafi Sunni extremists, seeking religious and ideological goals that extend far beyond Iraq.

In the process, however, the insurgency has created complex patterns of conflict that have become a broad struggle for sectarian and ethnic control of political and economic space. Open violence has become steadily more serious, but other forms of violence and intimidation now dominate. Sectarian and ethnic “cleansing” are dividing the country at every level, creating major refugee problems, and leading to the forced relocation of a significant amount of the population.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described the war as having four key conflicts: The Neo-Salafi Islamic extremist insurgency; Iraqi Sunni Arab versus Shi’ite Arab, Arab-Shi’ite versus Shi’ite, and Arab versus Kurd. This drift towards sectarian and ethnic conflict has been compounded by the de facto exclusion of many ex-Ba’ath members and professionals that form the secular and nationalist core of the country, and the slow purging of other nationalists who do not take a sectarian and ethnic side from Ministries and professions.

To try and stop the drift toward full-scale civil war, President Bush announced a new US strategy on January 10, 2007. The Baghdad security plan would send some 21,000 additional US troops to Iraq - most of which would go to the capital - and about 7,000 support troops. The “surge” forces would be fully in place by June 2007 and would be paired with a similar number of Iraqi forces.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and President Bush officially launched the start of the Baghdad security plan on February 13, 2007. US and Iraqi forces set up 19 Joint Security Stations throughout Baghdad – a total of 40 were planned – as the basis of the new counterinsurgency strategy. While the capital saw a reduction of the sectarian violence that had characterized the “war after the war” in 2006, Sunni insurgent attacks continued to push Shi’ites toward civil war.

The trends in attack patterns and fighting in the winter and early spring of 2007 underscored the need for a US strategy for all of Iraq, not just Baghdad. Insurgents fled the “surge” forces in the capital for the surrounding urban belt. Security deteriorated further in Diyala, Salah Ad Din, and eastern Anbar provinces. British strategic defeat also left southern Iraq openly sectarian and controlled by rivaling Shi’ite powers.

The success or failure of the new security plan will not be evident until at least the late fall of 2007. Four years after the start of the initial invasion, the US was still engaged in the “war after the war,” which had proved far more deadly for both US troops and Iraqis. The new strategy
emphasized the “hold and build” portions of “clear, hold, and build,” but falling American and Iraqi support for the US presence in Iraq meant that “success” would be judged in months not years.
I. Introduction: Developments through late-March 2007

The Iraqi government made some progress towards political conciliation and reducing the causes of sectarian and ethnic tension in early 2007. These steps included cabinet approval of a hydrocarbon law and Parliamentary approval of the 2007 budget. This progress was far more conceptual, however, than a matter of creating new facts on the ground. Key issues like local elections, de-Ba’athification, decentralization and regional issues, and Kirkuk, remained unresolved.

The deteriorating security situation and growing tension between Iraq’s major factions heightened sectarian rivalries while it decreased the chances of long-term political reconciliation. The “war after the war” had evolved into a complex set of conflict including Shi’ites versus Sunnis, Sunni insurgents versus the US, internal Shi’ite tensions, and Kurds versus Arabs. Sectarian conflict did decrease at the start of the new security plan in mid-February, but was primarily a result of Moqtada al-Sadr standing down his Mahdi Army. Sadr was the key figure in Iraq who remained unpredictable with uncertain goals and loyalties. It was far from clear what course Sadr would take in 2007 and if his militia would continue to answer his call for restraint.

The Sunni insurgency continued to use low-tech but innovative tactics to engage US forces in Baghdad and the surrounding urban belt and to try and incite Shi’ite reprisal attacks. According to US officials, car bombings reached an all time high in late February and early March 2007. It became increasingly likely that US and Iraqi forces would be stretched to maintain the “surge” presence in Baghdad while the insurgency strengthened in the surrounding provinces.

Tensions continued to grow in the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk, but the Kurds did not take further steps toward autonomy – part out of fear of Turkey, the potential of the draft oil law, and a desire for US support. Tensions also increased between the US and Iran, but Iraq and Iran strengthened economic and political ties.

MNF-I and Iraqi government reporting focused on the falling number of “body dumps” and the total number of car bombings. It was all too clear, however, that the key metric was now the relative level of political, security, and economic control that the Iraqi government and the various sectarian and ethnic groups had over the population, territory, and key economic and infrastructure facilities.

An ABC/USA Today/BBC/ARD poll conducted in late February and early March 2007 revealed the pessimism of Iraqis and a loss of patience with the Iraqi government and Coalition occupation. “Success” in a strategic sense – population security, the availability of basic resources, and some kind of national unity – of the President’s new 2007 plan would clearly take years to achieve; years that the American and Iraqi people might not be willing to wait. Insurgents, however, were willing to play the game for years to come.
II. Uncertain Progress in National Reconciliation

Despite the emphasis on the “surge” portion of the new security plan, Iraqi reconciliation at the national, regional and local level remained the key to achieving some level of future stability and national unity. Politics, however, were increasingly divided along sectarian lines. Sunni politicians were marginalized and few had much hope or desire for conciliation. The Constitution contained ambiguities on more than 50 issues, most of which had yet to be resolved. Internal fights for political control within the Shi’ite coalition added another complex layer to sectarian power struggles.

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

Political Developments Influencing the New Strategy

There was some progress at the national government level, as the Baghdad security plan got underway. On February 8, 2007 the Iraqi Council of Representatives approved the 2007 budget. Later in February the cabinet approved the draft oil law, giving the central government the authority to distribute oil wealth to provinces and regions based on population.

Political stalemate and a lack of conciliation, however, continued to drive Iraqi violence and characterize Iraqi politics. The President’s plan did include a new strategy for fostering political progress. The March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” Report to Congress noted a change in the way that the US would support Iraqi political reconciliation. The Pentagon described the difference in the President’s “New Way Forward” as follows:\(^3\)

The new approach adapts to new conditions by emphasizing the precondition of security in advancing meaningful reconciliation and setting realistic and achievable goals that are vital to stabilizing Iraq in the medium and long term. Whereas prior efforts had emphasized an all encompassing “national compact” as the vehicle for political progress, the coming months will seek to advance four specific national reconciliation goals—a hydrocarbon law, local elections, constitutional review, and de-Ba’athification reform—while also focusing more on political accommodations at the provincial and local levels.

The Politics of the New “Surge and Security Plan

The Council of Representatives debate on the new security plan exemplified the challenges facing Iraqi political development. On January 25, 2007 Prime Minister Maliki described the plan, saying that it offered no safe haven for militants and said that security forces would start arrested anyone who “took by force the house of a displaced family,” a promise that clearly could not be immediately fulfilled.

A Sunni politician told Maliki that he was lying and called for parliamentary oversight of the new security plan, and prompting the Prime Minister to threaten to arrest the lawmaker with evidence proving his was guilty of sectarian crimes. The speaker, Mashhadani, told the Prime Minister that his threats were unacceptable. By the end of the sessions, Mashhadani was so frustrated with the disorder that he threatened to quit, but Parliament did pass the security plan.\(^4\)

Maliki officially announced that start of the security plan in Baghdad on February 13, 2007. He assured the Iraqi public and the US that there would be no political interference with Iraqi
security force operations. MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell did say that in the past, Iraqi politicians would call directly to Iraqi security force commanders and tell them that they could not conduct operations in certain areas, or not to detain certain persons. Maliki and Caldwell were both certain that this political interference had ended.\(^5\)

However, a raid on Sunni politician Dhafir al-Ani’s home in March that found a large cache of weapons, including Kalashnikovs and a sniper rifle, and four cars with traces of explosives undermined Maliki’s argument. Al-Ani – a more conservative member of the Iraqi Consensus Front - said that the raid was politically motivated and that his guards had been tortured by Iraqi security forces.\(^6\)

On February 21, 2007 General Caldwell announced that the Iraqi Ministry of Finance hosted a conference to discuss support for the Iraqi budget and the new security plan. Caldwell said the key decisions at the conference were as follows:\(^5\)

The decision to open banks, more specifically, bank branches, to help revitalize neighborhoods where in fact operations are being conducted; also providing previously allocated funds to Tall Afar, Samarra, Najaf, and Al Anbar; and also to accelerate loans for the government of Iraq’s housing program to allow displaced families to return to Iraq.

Another political development was that Ahmed Chalabi – onetime US favorite to lead Iraq after the initial invasion – was given a new important role. Chalabi’s new post required him to serve as a mediator between the Iraqi population and US/Iraqi security forces as part of the new Baghdad security plan. He planned to create district committees that would work with Coalition forces to urge popular support for the security plan.

Chalabi’s critics doubted that he could serve in his new role without following his own sectarian political agenda, in part, because he would also continue on as head of the de-Ba’athification committee. However, in early 2007 Chalabi had stated that he was changing course and considering bringing ex-Ba’athists back into the Iraqi government. Sunni lawmakers also said that Chalabi only got the position because of his close relationship with the Prime Minister and Moqtada al-Sadr.\(^8\)

**Potential Areas of Progress**

There was political progress on some key issues, including cabinet approval of the draft oil law. The draft law allowed the central government to distribute oil revenues to provinces and regions based on population. Regional oil companies or regional governments – a reference to the Kurdistan Regional Government – retain the right to enter into oil contracts with foreign companies for the development of fields. Analysts, however, said that the law was still vague on the rights that those foreign companies would have in Iraq, which could deter investment.

The law also recreated the National Oil Company, which would provide state-run oversight for distribution. Approval by the Iraqi cabinet showed a promising level of compromise and conciliation. The Kurdistan Regional Government also put out a statement saying that they supported the draft law in its current form. The law still needed Parliamentary approval.\(^9\)

US and Iraqi forces also sought to weed out corrupt health ministry officials, many of whom had ties to the Sadr’s Mahdi Army. In early February, US and Iraqi forces raided the Health Ministry building in central Baghdad and arrested Hakim Zamili, the deputy health minister, a ministry spokesman and witnesses said. Sadr – believed to be in Iran - had the authority to replace Zamili and did not react to the arrest.
Another benchmark in political progress occurred on February 8, 2007 when the Council of Representatives passed the 2007 Iraqi budget. The budget included approximately 8 million dollars that the Iraqi government failed to spend in 2006, much of which was flagged for reconstruction projects.

**Uncertain Future Benchmarks and New Political Challenges**

US officials in Baghdad pressed the Iraqi government to meet other important benchmarks set forth in the fall of 2006. American officials said, however, that reversal of de-Ba'athification laws would take longer than originally expected. There were three plans from various Iraqi political groups that addressed the issue. The US appeared to favor one plan that Iraqi President Jalal Talabani helped create, but it was clear that it would be some time before any final decision was made.\(^{10}\)

The DoD “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report noted the lack of political progress between November 2006 and February 2007 in several key areas, including de-Ba'athification:\(^{11}\)

The [Council of Representatives] CoR failed, however, to move forward on other critical pieces of legislation, including a law to reform the de-Ba’athification system and a law to clarify the powers of provinces that are not part of regions. On de-Ba’athification, there are currently three different proposals—one from the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, one from the cross-sectarian Iraqiyya Party, and one from the CoR De- Ba’athiﬁcation Committee. Iraqi leaders are working to synthesize these drafts and reach an agreeable compromise position, with the three-member Presidency Council taking a leading role on this issue. On the provincial powers legislation, a draft law has been read twice on the floor of the CoR and appears headed for passage, though key issues, such as a date and structure for local elections, remain unresolved.

On March 27, 2007 Prime Minister Maliki and President Talabani did say that they sent a draft of a new de-ba'athification law – called an Accountability and Reconciliation Law – to the Iraqi cabinet and Parliament for approval. If accepted, the bill would offer ex-Ba’athists immunity persecution, the opportunity to return to government jobs, and the availability of pensions after a six-month period during which any Iraqi could file a lawsuit against the individual. It was not clear when the cabinet, which met once a week, would begin debating the bill.\(^{12}\)

Controversy within the large Shi’ite political bloc also continued to contribute to political stalemate. On March 8, 2007, a small political faction broke with the Shi’ite United Iraq Alliance. The al-Fadhlia Party, which held 15 seats, said that it broke with the alliance to defuse sectarianism. Party official Nadim al-Jabiri said, “The first step to save Iraq from its present crisis is to dismantle this bloc and not to allow the formation of any sectarian blocs in the future.” It was not clear that any other Shi’ite political groups planned on following suit.\(^{13}\)

At the same time, former Prime Minister and secular member of Parliament Ayad Allawi announced that he was forming a new coalition to overrule Maliki on several issues. He said that he wanted to impose martial law for two years, purge the Interior Ministry, and allow former Ba’ath Party members to hold government jobs. He had little support when he announced his agenda, but Kurdish lawmakers said they would consider joining if they saw more action than words. A Shi’ite representative said he grew concerned about the coalition when he saw Allawi traveling to the Kurdish city of Erbil with US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.\(^{14}\)

In late March, the Iraqi Minister of Justice, Hashem al-Shelby, also broke with the Maliki government. Shelby resigned from his position in the Cabinet, citing differences with the government. He was a member of the secular National List Party, and was the first Minister to leave office since Maliki became Prime Minister almost a year before.\(^{15}\)
At the local level, the security crisis also hindered political progress. US and Iraqi forces in Baghdad had been working for months to invigorate neighborhood councils in Baghdad. The councils acted as local arbitrators and intermediaries between Iraqi/US forces and the population. Members of the local councils, however, were constantly targeted, particularly in Sunni areas. For example, on March 14, 2007 the head of the Adhamiya District Council was killed on his way to work, just as his predecessor had been four months before. He was targeted by Sunni insurgents that opposed cooperation with the central Iraqi government and US forces.\(^{16}\)

There was, however, some progress toward holding new provincial elections. On January 23, 2007 the Council of Representatives passed a law creating the “Independent Higher Election Commission.” The Pentagon’s March 2007 report on Iraq said of the importance of local elections as follows:\(^{17}\)

> The CoR must now appoint commission members and pass legislation to set a date for provincial elections. Successful local elections and a possible constitutional referendum will require sufficient Iraqi and international resources, and the United States will be working through diplomatic channels to take the necessary steps to help ensure that these electoral events—like the electoral event in 2005—are genuine and credible.

Overall progress in Iraq was tied to the ability of Iraqi lawmakers to reconcile at both the national and local levels.

**Federation, Dividing, or Segregating the Country**

The issue of autonomous regions remained a key issue dividing the country, but any official separation was postponed until 2008. This did not, however, defuse Sunni versus Shi’ite concerns over nationalism versus federation, Kurdish-Arab tensions over Kurdish autonomy, or Shi’ite versus Shi’ite tensions over defining any area to be federated and over control of Shi’ite dominated territory.

In late January 2007 Abdul Aziz al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) reaffirmed the necessity to create separate regions in Iraq based on sect. He said, “I reaffirm that the establishing of regions will help us in solving many problem that we are suffering from. Moreover, it represents the best solution for these problems. We affirm the necessity of establishing the south and center and Baghdad regions after the people vote on it.” He called for cessation of killing between Sunnis and Shi’ites and urged Shi’ites not to retaliate against insurgent attacks.\(^{18}\)
III. Iraq’s “Four Wars”

As security conditions worsened, so did expectations for future improvement in the conditions of life – an especially troubling result, since hope for a better future can be the glue that holds a struggling society together. In 2004 and 2005 alike, for example, three-quarters of Iraqis expected improvements in the coming year in their security, schools, availability of jobs, medical care, crime protection, clean water and power supply. Today only about 30 to 45 percent still expect any of these to get better.

The March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report included polls conducted by MNF-I in December 2006. The samples included 5,000-12,000 respondents nationwide. These polls found that Iraqis saw increasing tensions in their immediate surrounding areas and the country as whole, but still had faith in Iraqi security forces. However, these polls were not broken down by sect or region, and therefore do not present a complete picture.

A more comprehensive poll was conducted by ABC News, in conjunction with USA Today, BBC News, and ARD German TV. The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007. It was the third in a series of polls that started in 2004.

This poll presented a grim picture of conditions in Iraq at the start of the President’s new Baghdad security plan. A majority of Iraqis had been personally affected by the violence and close to half thought that Iraq was in a state of civil war. Iraqis – and particularly Sunnis – were increasingly pessimistic and less than half of Sunnis and Shi’ites thought the new security plan would work. The trend from 2004 to 2005 and into 2007 showed a steady decline of public opinion of the security situation, the US forces, and the Iraqi government. The sharpest decline over time took place in Baghdad, where 100% of respondents had witnessed some form of violence and 31% had experienced ethnic cleansing.

Given this background, it is not surprising that US official discussion of the patterns of civil violence in Iraq became far more frank in early 2007. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described this violence as four interrelated struggles or conflicts. Secretary Gates said at a March 7, 2007 media roundtable with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Peter Pace:19

I think that the words “civil war” oversimplify a very complex situation in Iraq. I believe that there are essentially four wars going on in Iraq. One is Shi’a on Shi’a, principally in the south; the second is sectarian conflict, principally in Baghdad, but not solely; third is the insurgency; and fourth is al Qaeda, and al Qaeda is attacking, at times, all of those targets. So I think I just -- you know, I -- it’s not, I think, just a matter of politics or semantics. I think it oversimplifies it. It’s a bumper sticker answer to what’s going on in Iraq.

Each of these conflicts involved political, ethnic, religious, and economic struggles for control of space and resources, as well as sheer political power. Each struggle would continue in some form almost indefinitely into the future - most regardless of the success or failure of US arms.

Redefining the Nature of the Conflicts in Iraq

A January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq described the complex patterns of violence in Iraq. The grim assessment said that unless current conditions were reversed in the following 12-18 months, the security situation would continue to deteriorate at the same rapid rate as the end of 2006. It concluded that “the term 'civil war' accurately described key elements
of the Iraqi conflict.” It added, however, that the term civil war “does not accurately describe the complexity of the conflict in Iraq,” indicating that the conflict involved more actors and struggles than that term suggested.  

The NIE stated the following complex challenges facing Iraq in the unclassified text:  

- Decades of subordination to Sunni political, social, and economic domination have made the Shi’a deeply insecure about their hold on power. This insecurity leads the Shi’a to mistrust US efforts to reconcile Iraqi sects and reinforces their unwillingness to engage with the Sunnis on a variety of issues, including adjusting the structure of Iraq’s federal system, reining in Shi’a militias, and easing de-Ba’athification.  
- Many Sunni Arabs remain unwilling to accept their minority status, believe the central government is illegitimate and incompetent, and are convinced that Shi’a dominance will increase Iranian influence over Iraq, in ways that erode the state’s Arab character and increase Sunni repression.  
- The absence of unifying leaders among the Arab Sunni or Shi’a with the capacity to speak for or exert control over their confessional groups limits prospects for reconciliation. The Kurds remain willing to participate in Iraqi state building but reluctant to surrender any of the gains in autonomy they have achieved.  
- The Kurds are moving systematically to increase their control of Kirkuk to guarantee annexation of all or most of the city and province into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after the constitutionally mandated referendum scheduled to occur no later than 31 December 2007. Arab groups in Kirkuk continue to resist violently what they see as Kurdish encroachment.  
- Despite real improvements, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)-particularly the Iraqi police-will be hard pressed in the next 12-18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities, and particularly to operate independently against Shi’a militias with success. Sectarian divisions erode the dependability of many units, many are hampered by personnel and equipment shortfalls, and a number of Iraqi units have refused to serve outside of the areas where they were recruited.  
- Extremists-most notably the Sunni jihadist group al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) and Shi’a oppositionist Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM)-continue to act as very effective accelerators for what has become a self-sustaining inter-sectarian struggle between Shi’a and Sunnis.  
- Significant population displacement, both within Iraq and the movement of Iraqis into neighboring countries, indicates the hardening of ethno-sectarian divisions, diminishes Iraq's professional and entrepreneurial classes, and strains the capacities of the countries to which they have relocated. The UN estimates over a million Iraqis are now in Syria and Jordan.  

The Department of Defense March 2007 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report to Congress reached a similar conclusion. The Pentagon defined the conflict in Iraq at the start of the President’s new plan as follows:  

The term “civil war” does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, which includes extensive Shi’a-on-Shi’a violence, al-Qaida and Sunni insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, and widespread criminally motivated violence. Some elements of the situation in Iraq are properly descriptive of a “civil war,” including the hardening of ethno-sectarian identities and mobilization, the changing character of the violence, and population displacements. Illegally armed groups are engaged in a self-sustaining cycle of sectarian and politically motivated violence, using tactics that include indiscriminate bombing, murder, and indirect fire to intimidate people and stoke sectarian conflict. Much of the present violence is focused on local issues, such as sectarian, political, and economic control of Baghdad; Kurdish, Arab, and Turkomen aspirations for Kirkuk; and the political and economic control of Shi’a regions in the south. Although most attacks continue to be directed against Coalition forces, Iraqi civilians suffer the vast majority of casualties.
On February 27, in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, also said that the dynamics of the conflict in Iraq had notably changed. He described the war as follows:

The perception of unchecked violence is creating an atmosphere of fear, hardening sectarianism, empowering militias and vigilante groups, hastening a middle-class exodus, and shaking confidence in government and security forces. The sectarian violence, an inexperienced and weak central government, immature institutions, problems in providing basic services, and high unemployment are encouraging more Iraqis to turn toward sectarian groups, militias, and insurgents for basic needs, threatening the unity of Iraq. Moreover, robust criminal networks act as insurgent and terrorist force multipliers. Many Sunni Arabs, motivated by fear, financial incentive, perceptions of marginalization, and exclusion from Iraqi government and security institutions, act as insurgent sympathizers, capable of supporting the insurgency.

Since 2003, the fight to define post-Saddam Iraq has been primarily an intra-Arab conflict to determine how power and authority will be distributed. We note that conditions for the further deterioration of security and stability exist within this ongoing struggle. Although a significant breakdown of central authority has not occurred, Iraq has moved closer to this possibility because of weak governance, increasing security challenges, and the lack of a national compact.

Conflict in Iraq is in a self-sustaining cycle in which violent acts increasingly generate retaliation. Insecurity rationalizes and justifies militias, in particular Shia militias and increases fears in the Sunni Arab community. The result is additional support, or at least acquiescence, to insurgents and terrorists such as AQI. Shia militants, most notable Jaysh al-Mahdi, account for some of the increases in violence. Baghdad is the center of the Shia and Sunni Arab conflict as both groups fight for territory and political influence. Sectarian attacks constitute most of the violence in mixed-ethnic areas in and around the capital, while Coalition Forces remain the primary target in the Shia South and Sunni West.

This assessment recognized that without some fundamental change in conditions, the situation in Iraq would continue to deteriorate. However, it also indicated the belief of some US officials that Baghdad was the center of violence in the country. In reality, increased insurgent attacks in Diyala and Salahaddin Provinces at the start of the Baghdad security plan and soft sectarian cleansings in the north and south of the country showed the center of gravity was the entire map of Iraq.

The Pentagon described the geographical spread of the conflict in the Department of Defense’s Quarterly Report on “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” issued in March 2007:

Consistent with previous reports, more than 80% of the violence in Iraq is limited to four provinces centered around Baghdad, although it also exists in other population centers, such as Kirkuk, Mosul, and Basrah. Sectarian violence and insurgent attacks still involve a very small portion of the population, but public perception of violence is a significant factor in preventing reconciliation on key issues. The conflict in Iraq remains a mosaic and requires maximum flexibility on the part of the Coalition and the GOI to uproot the main drivers of violence in different areas of the country…

The conflict in the north is characterized by sectarian tensions, insurgents and extremist attacks, and competition among ethnic groups (Kurd, Arab, Turkomen) for political and economic dominance, including control of the oilfields centered around Kirkuk. Violence remained focused primarily in and around the northern cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, and Tal’Afar, where ethnic competition for power is exacerbated by violence from Sunni extremists.

Violence in Anbar is characterized by Sunni insurgents and AQI attacks against Coalition forces. AQI and affiliated Sunni extremists are attempting to intimidate the local population into supporting the creation of an Islamic state. However, in a positive development, these efforts are provoking a backlash among some tribal figures and Sunni insurgent leaders, who are encouraging local opposition to AQI, particularly in al-Ramadi. Local Sunni sheikhs are leading this opposition and have strengthened recruiting efforts for local police forces.
Violence in Baghdad, Diyala, and Balad is characterized by sectarian competition for power and influence between AQI and JAM, principally through murders, executions, and high-profile bombings. AQI and JAM elements rarely clash directly; most of their reciprocal violence is against Shi’a and Sunni civilians through high-profile bombings or campaigns of sectarian cleansing. The conflict in the southern provinces is characterized by tribal rivalry; factional violence among the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)/Badr Organization, the Office of the Martyr Sadr/JAM, and smaller militias for political power; and attacks on Coalition forces.

The rising spread of violence between 2006 and 2007 is also clear from Figure 3.1, which shows the result of a poll reported in the March 2007 report. The rising intensity of the violence is shown in Figure 3.2. The data in Figure 3.2 show that the expansion of the fight was accompanied by a sharp rise in attacks on both Iraqi civilians and the Iraqi security forces and that average daily civil casualties nearly doubled after new Iraqi government was established in May 2005.

**Figure 3.1: The Geographic Spread of Violence in Iraq: 2006 versus 2007**
Figure 3.2: Trends in Average Weekly Attacks and Daily Casualties: April 2004-February 2007

Average Weekly Attacks
April 1, 2004 – February 9, 2007

Source: MNC-I

Average Daily Casualties*
April 1, 2004 – February 9, 2007

* Casualty data reflect updated data for each period and are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by coalition elements responding to an incident; the incondutivity of these numbers contrains them to be used only for comparative purposes.

Source: MNC-I
The Broader Nature of Violence in Iraq

Figures 3.1 and 3.2, however, tell only part of the story. US and MNF-I reports that focus on the numbers of Iraqis killed or the number of sectarian incidents sharply underestimated the civil military challenge. MNF-I, US and Iraqi government statistics on violence in Iraq fail to make a serious effort to estimate threats, kidnapings, woundings, intimidation, or sectarian and ethnic crimes. These ‘lower’ forms of violence became far more common in Iraq than killings, and represent the bulk of the real-world challenge to the ISF.

Iraqi Perceptions of Violence and Civil War

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show how Iraqis perceived the growing level of violence. They reflect the result of an ABC News poll conducted in February and March 2007 that found,\(^{25}\):

Widespread violence, torn lives, displaced families, emotional damage, collapsing services, an ever-starker sectarian chasm – and a draining away of the underlying optimism that once prevailed. Violence is the cause, its reach vast. Eighty percent of Iraqis report attacks nearby – car bombs, snipers, kidnapings, armed forces fighting each other or abusing civilians. It’s worst by far in the capital, Baghdad, but by no means confined there. The personal toll is enormous. More than half of Iraqis, 53 percent, have a close friend or relative who’s been hurt or killed in the current violence. One in six says someone in their own household has been harmed. Eighty-six percent worry about a loved one being hurt; two-thirds worry deeply. Huge numbers limit their daily activities to minimize risk. Seven in 10 report multiple signs of traumatic stress.

The poll found that while 63% of Iraqis said they felt very safe in their neighborhoods in 2005, only 26% had said this in early 2007. One in three did not feel safe at all. In Baghdad, home to a fifth of the country’s population, eighty-four percent feel entirely unsafe. Even outside of Baghdad, just 32% of Iraqis felt “very safe” where they lived, compared with 60 % a year and a half ago.\(^ {26}\)

Nationally, 12 % of all Iraqis surveyed reported that ethnic cleansing – the forced separation of Sunnis and Shiites – has occurred in their neighborhoods. In mixed-population Baghdad, it’s 31%. This is not desired: In rare agreement, 97 % of Sunni Arabs and Shiites alike oppose the separation of Iraqis on sectarian lines. Nonetheless, one in seven Iraqis overall – rising to a quarter of Sunni Arabs, and more than a third of Baghdad residents – said they themselves have moved homes in the last year to avoid violence or religious persecution.
Figure 3.3: Iraqi Perception of Civil War


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
**Figure 3.4: Iraqi Perceptions of Local and National Tensions; January 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Neighborhood Tensions (Scale of 1-10)</th>
<th>Country Tensions (Scale of 1-10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad Din</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamin</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadisiyah</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maysan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptions of the Nature and Causes of Violence

The ABC poll asked about nine kinds of violence that broke down the security problems Iraqis and ISF forces faced into far more detail than the Coalition and US have publicly reported (car bombs, snipers or crossfire, kidnappings, fighting among opposing groups or abuse of civilians by various armed forces). These results are reflected in Figure 3.5.

Most Iraqis in Baghdad said at least one of these had occurred nearby; half reported four or more of them. Some 53% of Iraqis said a close friend or immediate family member had been hurt in the current violence. That ranged from three in 10 in the Kurdish provinces to nearly eight in 10 in Baghdad. Even outside Baghdad, 74% reported at least one form of violence, and 25% reported four or more (34% including the Kurdish area, which was far more peaceful than the country overall.)

Iraqis living in Baghdad experienced the most intense and diverse forms of violence, according to the ABC News poll. In all of Iraq, 40% said that a kidnapping for ransom had occurred near them, 32% said car bombs or suicide bombings occurred nearby, 30% witnessed snipers, and 25% experienced sectarian fighting. The most common form of violence reported, however, was unnecessary violence by US/Coalition forces. Figure 3.5 also shows the techniques that Iraqis used to avoid the excess violence.

In addition, Figure 3.6 shows that those Iraqis who did report acts of violence saw US and Coalition forces as the most serious cause of the violence in their country. That response was most common among Sunni Arabs, however, while Shi’ites and Kurds tended to blame Al Qa’ida and foreign jihadis.
Figure 3.5: Kinds of Violence Iraqis Reported as Occurring Nearby and the Civil-Military Reaction in Early 2007

(In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violence Encountered</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdistan</th>
<th>Rest of Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kidnappings for ransom</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t/anti-gov’t fighting</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car bombs, suicide attacks</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snipers, crossfire</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectarian fighting</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceive Unnecessary Violence by: (Percent reporting)

| U.S./coalition forces        | 44  | 59      | 9         | 47           |
| Local militia                | 31  | 44      | 2         | 32           |
| Iraqi police                 | 24  | 44      | 1         | 22           |
| Iraqi Army                   | 24  | 44      | 0         | 22           |
| Any of these                 | 80  | 100     | 12        | 86           |
| Four or more of these        | 37  | 70      | 1         | 34           |
| Friend/family member harmed  | 53  | 77      | 29        | 49           |

Focus of Efforts to Avoid Violence: (Percent who try to avoid)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Shiite</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S./coalition forces</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing through checkpoints</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public buildings</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets/crowds</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving home</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to/applying for work</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending children to school</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Figure 3.6: Who is Responsible for Violence in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Shiite</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US/Coalition Forces</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Bush</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Government</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Police</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni militia/s/leaders</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite militia/s/leaders</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectarian disputes</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qaeda/foreign jihadists</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Criminals</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ansar al Sunna</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Rising Levels of Sectarian Violence

The trends in the sectarian aspects of violence in Iraq are shown in Figure 3.7. They reached a high in mid-2006 and then leveled off. The level of sectarian violence decreased in the first several weeks of the President’s Baghdad security plan. This was not, however, an indication that the “surge” had succeeded or that Iraq was on the path to reconciliation. Moqtada al Sadr had stood down his Mahdi Army and did not appear likely to take on US and Iraqi forces.

The Sunni insurgency, however, was more public and had little to gain from political compromise. On January 30, 2007 bomb attacks killed dozens of Shi’ite pilgrims visiting holy sites in Karbala, Baghdad, and Najaf during the Shi’ite Ashura festival. In Balad Ruz, Diyala Province, a suicide bomber killed 17 and wounded 57 when he walked into a Shi’ite mosque. In Baghdad the death toll for the day was 27, with 53 people wounded.29

Another sequence of attacks against Shi’ite pilgrims occurred in the days before the Arbaeen festival in early March. On March 6, 2007: a bomb targeting an Iraqi army checkpoint killed four soldiers and wounded one civilian in eastern Baghdad’s Ubaidi district; a car bomb in Baghdad killed five Shi’ite pilgrims and wounded 10 others as they were marking a religious event by walking to Karbala; a car bomb killed two pilgrims and wounded 10 others when it targeted a group of pilgrims passing through southern Baghdad's Dora district; another car bomb targeting pilgrims killed one and wounded three others in western Baghdad; a roadside bomb exploded near pilgrims, wounding two in northern Baghdad's Sulaikh neighborhood; and a roadside bomb targeting pilgrims wounded two in the Ilaam district of southern Baghdad. A total of 220 Shi’ite pilgrims were killed in the week long series of attacks.

Another significant attack occurred on March 14, 2007 –one month after the start of the Baghdad plan. In Baghdad, gunmen ambushed the convoy of Sadr City’s mayor, Rahim al-Daraji, seriously wounding him. The director of the Sadr City police station, Lt. Col. Muhammad Motashar, was killed in the attack. Daraji had acted as an intermediary between US military officials and Sadr’s Mahdi Army, and supported the establishment of two Joint Security Stations in Sadr City.30

Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister, Salam al-Zobaie, was also seriously wounded after a suicide bomber attacked him at his home on March 23, 2007. Zobaie was a secular Sunni politician, and US and Iraqi officials suspected Al Qaeda in Iraq of carrying out the attack.

A series of bombings and sectarian reprisal attacks in the northern city of Tall Afar in the last week of March underscored the broad scope of sectarian conflict. Tall Afar is a majority ethnic Turkoman city, with about 70% Sunnis and 25% Shi’ites. One of the suicide bombs was detonated by a suicide bomber who lured victims to his truck to buy wheat, the town’s mayor and police chief said. The second was in a used car lot. Most of the 152 killed and 300 wounded were Shi’ites, which spurred reprisal attacks by the majority Shi’ite police.

At least twelve policemen were detained after witnesses said that they went into a Sunni neighborhood in Tall Afar, dragged residents from their homes, and shot them. The Iraqi Army, which eventually stopped the killing, estimated that 70 Sunnis were killed and another 40 injured in the reprisal attacks. Reporting on the incident noted that numerous Sunnis in the Tall Afar police force had recently been dismissed and replaced with hundreds of untrained Shi’ite policemen.31
The number of attacks, however, was less relevant than the fight for control of political and economic space. Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations showed a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflected the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it.

The March 2007 DoD quarterly report to Congress reported on these trends as follows:

The conflict in Iraq has changed from a predominantly Sunni-led insurgency against foreign occupation to a struggle for the division of political and economic influence among sectarian groups and organized criminal activity. The level of violence in Iraq continued to rise during this reporting period as ethnic, tribal, sectarian, and political factions seek power over political and economic resources.

Reporting out of Baghdad also began to note the difference between the security and availability of basic services between Sunni and Shi’ite areas. In the poor Shi’ite area of Sadr City, markets were open most of the day, there was no nightly curfew, and citizens had access to at least one generator for power. Residents in Sadr City credited the Mahdi Army with the security and Moqtada al-Sadr for providing aid and political progress.

In contrast, markets in Sunni neighborhoods were all but deserted, residents were lucky to receive two hours of power a day, and Sunnis were continually threatened into cooperating with insurgents. Insurgents would kill US or Shi’ite security forces working on reconstruction projects as well as Sunni workers who were seen as collaborating with the enemy. Increasingly, Iraqi government workers refused to enter Sunni neighborhoods, leaving piles of trash on the street and water and electricity lines unrepaired. Many residents even had difficulty collecting their daily food rations.32

Pressure was also mounting within mixed families throughout the country. Approximately one-third of Iraqi marriages were mixed, but increasingly, family members from both sects were urging couples to divorce or flee the country. In many cases, family members were forced to live in separate neighborhoods and rarely saw each other for fear of reprisal attacks. In the past, mixed marriages were seen as the unifying factor that would spare Iraq from civil war.33

The trend of the violence in the early spring of 2007 was US and Iraqi offensives targeting the Sunni insurgency and rogue Shi’ite militia members in Baghdad and the surrounding urban belt. The insurgency would continue to put pressure on the Shi’ites to restart the cycle of violence. The insurgency also appeared to be trying to stretch US and Iraqi forces by expanding their attacks and bases outside of the capital. Time was on the side of the Sunni insurgency against US forces, however, and it could easily outwait the Coalition presence while continuing to incite sectarian violence.
**Figure 3.7: Trends in Sectarian Violence and Killing**

![Graph showing trends in sectarian violence and killing]


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

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

**Iraqi Views on Security and Sectarianism**

Public opinion polls conducted during the winter and early spring of 2007 revealed that Iraqis saw their security rapidly deteriorating and had increasingly less hope that the security situation would improve.

Polls included in the March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report found that two-thirds of the Iraqi public “expresses a sense that conditions for peace and stability are worsening.” Two –thirds also felt “personally powerless to do anything to stop the violence.”

Polls did continue to show that Iraqis generally rejected greater control by sectarian militias, but these results differed sharply by sect. The DoD report stated that roughly 80% of Iraqis thought “militias should be dissolved, with more than half reporting that they thought militias make conditions more dangerous,” but this poll was not broken down by sect. Soft sectarian cleansing and steady segregation of the population on a sectarian basis meant that “overall” polls did not...
reflect the reality of public opinion. As Figure 3.1 has already shown, the perception of security in majority Sunni provinces – Anbar, Diyala, and Salah Ad Din – was much lower than in Shi’ite areas. Further, Iraqis in almost every province, including the northern Kurdish areas – recognized that tensions in the country were extremely high.

**The Growing Impact of “Soft” Sectarian and Ethnic “Cleansing” and Displacement**

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) became a steadily more critical aspect of Iraq’s “four wars.” Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had now fled the country, and the UN reported that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, with an average of 50,000 Iraqis leaving their homes every month at the end of 2006.

“Soft” sectarian and ethnic cleansing were common tactics used by sectarian and ethnic groups to intimidate members of opposing ethnic groups and sects, as well as nationalists who refused to take a side in the civil conflict. Locally armed groups could win the support of communities by forcing individuals from minority sects to leave their homes through threats or killing of family members, leaving only members of one ethnic group.

The ABC Poll asked Iraqis whether they had experienced ethnic cleansing in their area, shown in Figure 3.8 below. In all of Iraq 12% said they had experienced ethnic cleansing and 15% were internally displaced. In Baghdad, however, those numbers were much higher; 31% experienced ethnic cleansing and 35% had moved their homes to avoid violence. Out of the sample of Sunni Arabs, 26% had been internally displaced. Some 30% of those polled said they would leave Iraq if they could. Similarly, 42% thought Iraq was in a state of civil war in 2007 and 24% thought one was likely, as show in Figure 25.

In addition, roughly 75% said they “lack the freedom to live where they wish without persecution, or even to move about safely.” In 2007, 48% of all those polled cited security as their biggest problem in their lives, an increase over the 18% in 2005. Less than half of Iraqis, 42%, thought that life was better in 2007 than under Saddam Hussein.

This trend had built up steadily since early 2006. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) stated that there were 41,189 newly displaced families in 2006.

- **Figure 3.9** shows the largest number of refugees fled to Baghdad, followed by Ninewa Province, Anbar Province, and Babylon (Babil) Province. The IOM noted that the actual number of displaced families in Anbar was closer to 6,600.

- **Figure 3.10** shows the places of origin of internally displaced persons in 2006 according to the IOM. By far the majority – 69% - left Baghdad for other provinces. Another 12% left Diyala Province and 9% left Anbar Province. Baghdad and Diyala, arguably the two most highly contested Provinces along sectarian lines, accounted for 81% of Iraqis leaving their homes.

- **Figure 3.11** indicates that 90% of those displaced in 2006 were Arab, 7% were Christian, and less than 1% were Sabean Mandeans, Yazidi, Jewish, or other religions. Among displaced Arab families, 64% were Shi’ite and 28% were Sunni. MOI stated that the general trend was Shi’ite families fleeing the center of the country to the south and Sunni families fleeing the south to the center and west.

March 2006, the month following the bombing of the mosque in Samarra, saw a major new wave of migration in Iraq, as shown in **Figure 3.12**. The summer of 2006 also saw a spike in movement. The MOI said that most internally displaced Iraqis fled their homes because they feared for their lives. Soft sectarian cleansing was the primary motivation for migration in 2006.
The majority interviewed by MOI said that they left due to direct threats on their lives, which included abductions, assassinations of individuals or their families, or other intimidation threats. The second most popular reason for relocating was “generalized fear.” In Anbar Province, some IDPs also cited armed conflict. Conventional armed conflict, such as that between Sunni insurgents and US forces in Anbar, only accounted for a small percent of internal migration.37

The MOI reported in January 2007 that the majority of IDPs felt well received in their new communities, which was because most fled from mixed communities to areas in which their sect was the majority. However, in the last months of 2006 the large numbers of IDPs in some communities and the poor economic conditions created tensions between IDPs and host communities:38

Local authorities decided to close the governorate’s borders to all IDPs except those who were originally from Kerbala, and even most of these were restricted from entering. Najaf also reportedly restricted settlement in Najaf city. These restrictions were attributed to a strain on the health sector, overcrowding of schools, and a lack of infrastructure to accommodate the influx of IDPs.

In some governorates, the recently-displaced were blamed for an increase in violence. Local authorities in many governorates required security checks for any Iraqi who arrived registered with MoDM, IRCS, or other entities.

The IOM 2006 “Year in Review” report also said that 45% of IDPs in Iraq wanted to return to their original homes when the security situation improved. The highest number of IDPs wanted to return to their places of origin had relocated to Ninewa, Diyala, Baghdad, and Anbar. Another 25% of IDPs decided to integrate into their new communities. This response was most common in the majority Shi’ite south (Basra 91%, Kerbala 82%, and Missan 76%). Finally, 28% of IDPs planned on moving on to a third location. This latter response was most common in Babylon (Babil) 77%, Qadisiyah 63%, and Wasit 64%.39 Only 1% of IDPs did not feel safe in their new location.40

As Figure 3.13 shows, finding shelter was the highest priority of IDPs in 2006. The majority of IDPs, 57% rented shelter of some kind in their new location, and 22% stayed with family or friends. A large number of those families who originally rented buildings, however, could no longer afford to pay rent after a time and moved into abandoned buildings or makeshift camps. The MOI estimated that 10% of IDPs in 2006 lived in unoccupied or abandoned public buildings. An additional 7% lived in “collective settlements or towns.” Regardless of where IDPs found shelter, most cited a lack of essential services and sanitation. Further, 68% of IDPs listed access to work as their priority need, reflecting the rising unemployment rate in Iraq.41

These problems were made worse by the fact that Jordan and Syria became increasingly stringent as to who they allowed across the borders. Jordan accepted hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, and publicly said that it still turned no one away, but the majority Sunni country clearly faced growing security concerns as the sectarian conflict in Iraq spread out from Baghdad.42 Large numbers of Iraqis were stuck in a grey zone in refugee camps at both borders, after having been refused entrance for “security reasons”. A travel agent in Baghdad said that 50 to 60 families were leaving on buses each day, and most were heading to Syria.

Internally displaced persons also fled sectarian violence to the northern area of Kurdistan. About 160,000 Iraqis had fled north, according to Refugees International. Prospects for Arabs living in Kurdish areas, however, were grim. There were few job opportunities, and ethnic violence had steadily increased in the large cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. The report concluded that IDPs in
Kurdistan “are struggled to survive, the victims of inattention, inadequate resources, regional politics and bureaucratic obstacles.”

The Kurdish authorities required that IDPs provide the name of a Kurdish guardian with whom they would be staying. Refugees International found that Christians generally had an easier time entering the region than Muslim Arabs. Another key problem was language; few schools in the north taught Arabic and there were very limited job opportunities for Arabic speakers. It was clear that Kurdistan did not want the sectarian violence in the rest of the country to travel north. Aspirations of Kurdish autonomy also limited sympathies for Iraqi Arab refugees.43

Iraqi government officials made it clear in the early days of the new Baghdad security plan that returning internally displaced persons to their homes was a priority. US military officials, however, were more cautious. Iraqi military spokesman Qasim al-Mousawi announced in early March that some 1,000 families had returned to their original homes in Baghdad. In return, the government offered the families $200 in moving expenses. Other sources put the compensation price as high as $750.44 Only a week later, al-Mousawi said that 2,000 families had returned to their homes in the capital.45

A US commander in west Baghdad, however, told his troops, “We’re not going to get into the repopulation. That is a political problem. When people call, what we need to tell them is it is not safe to resettle. That is my line right now. It is not safe.” Sectarian murders in Baghdad fell sharply during the first few weeks of the President’s new plan, but US commanders reiterated that real security for the population would take several more months to achieve.46

Iraqis who did return to their homes in Baghdad also reported that the neighborhoods were not as safe as the Iraqi government implied. Sunni and Shi’ite families interviewed by the New York Times moved back to their homes in early March, only to be forced out again. Others were so tired of moving around that they said they would simply fight insurgents instead of relocating. Further, officials at the Iraqi Ministry of Migration said that they were not telling people to return home because they “could be the reason behind the killing of a family.”47
Figure 3.8: Percentage of Iraqis Affected by Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Figure 3.9: Total Number of Internally Displaced Families by Province in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Number of Internally Displaced Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>3,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>3,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>6,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>1,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>3,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbala</td>
<td>2,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missan</td>
<td>2,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>2,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewa</td>
<td>3,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadissiya</td>
<td>1,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad-Din</td>
<td>3,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tameem/Kirkuk</td>
<td>1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi-Qar</td>
<td>2,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wassit</td>
<td>3,822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.10: Places of Origin of Internally Displaced Families in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province Fled</th>
<th>Number of Families; Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>3,631; 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>380; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>28,254; 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>1,153; 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>3; .01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>4,925; 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erbil</td>
<td>7; .02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbala</td>
<td>3; .01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missan</td>
<td>2; .01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>1; .01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewa</td>
<td>567; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadissiya</td>
<td>6; .02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad ad-Din</td>
<td>1,565; 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temeem/Kirkuk</td>
<td>580; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi-Qar</td>
<td>22; .06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wassit</td>
<td>66; .16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.11: Religion/Sect of Internally Displaced Persons in 2006


Figure 3.12: Percentage of Total Persons Displaced per Month in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month 2006</th>
<th>Percent Displaced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.13: Priority Needs of Internally Displaced Persons in 2006
(By Percent of Response)

**Views on the Iraqi Government and the Impact of Conflict on the Future**

Iraqi views of the government’s ability to effectively govern and bring security to the country fell, despite Prime Minister Maliki’s announcement of the new Baghdad security plan.

The DoD March Quarterly Report stated, “The population is roughly split on whether the government is moving in the right or wrong direction to quell the violence.” The Pentagon concluded, “Overall, confidence in the GOI to provide protection has improved nationally. Iraqis indicate a steady increase in confidence in their security forces, both Army and police. This national improvement is reflected in the confidence in the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police to improve the situation.” However, the report did note that the results varied widely by province.

The ABC News poll, however, found that overall confidence in the government fell since the last poll in 2005. In 2005, 41% of the population was not confident in the government, compared with 51% in 2007. As shown below in Figure 3.14, the majority of Sunnis expressed not much or no confidence in the government (92%), leaving little hope that they would seek reconciliation. In contrast, 72% of Shi’ites had a great deal or a lot of confidence in the government. In addition, Figure 3.15 shows that 96% of Sunnis disapproved of Shi’ite Prime Minister Maliki, along with 33% of Shi’ites and 40% of Kurds.

Figure 3.16 shows expectations for the future of Iraq. In 2007, only 58% thought that Iraq should remain a unified with a central government in Baghdad. This was still the most popular answer with Sunnis -- 97% -- followed by 41% of Shi’ites and 20% of Kurds. This drop from 70% in 2005 and 79% in 2004 showed the increased disappointment with the central Iraqi government and the growing sectarianism and segregation of the southern and northern regions. Consequently, 28% thought Iraq should end up a group of regional states with regional governments and a less powerful government in Baghdad, compared with 18% in 2005 and 14% in 2004. Another 14% thought Iraqi should be divided into separate states (1% Sunni, 19% Shi’ite, and 30% Kurd), a rise from 9% in 2005 and 4% in 2004.

There was a difference, however, in the measure of what government Iraqis thought their country should have in the future, and what they thought it would have. Only 43% thought that Iraq would remain a unified with a central government (75% Sunni, 27% Shi’ite, and 20% Kurd). Another 34% thought it would have regional and federal governments (14% Sunni, 48% Shi’ite, and 37% Kurd). Finally, a significant 23% thought that Iraq would break into separate states (10% Sunni, 25% Shi’ite, and 41% Kurd). This large number of Shi’ites and Kurds who thought Iraq would break into independent states was significant because it reduced the likelihood that these sects would work to incorporate Sunni concerns by compromising on key issues such as de-Ba’athification and federal distribution of oil wealth.
Figure 3.14: Confidence in the Iraqi Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Not Much</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Figure 3.15: Approval of Prime Minister Maliki


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.

Figure 3.16: Political Structure that Iraq should have in the Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One unified Iraq with central</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government in Baghdad</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A group of regional states with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their own regional governments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And a federal government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Baghdad</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dividing the country into separate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent states</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Views on Other Areas of Life

Iraqis also expressed increasingly pessimistic views on the status of their overall life in Iraq, economic conditions, and stress levels.

**Figure 3.17** shows that between 2005 and 2007 Iraqis saw a major reduction in their quality of life as well as increasingly pessimistic views that their lives should be better. **Figure 3.18** shows that over the two year span, Iraqis’ perception of their basic needs dropped substantially. In 2007, 80% of those polled thought there were not enough jobs available, compared with 58% in 2005. In addition, 88% gave the “availability of power” a negative rating at the start of the President’s new strategy, compared with 54% in 2005. **Figure 3.18** also shows that expectations for improvement of basic services fell below 50% for all categories, indicating disappointment in the Iraqi government and US efforts.

The deteriorating security conditions also had a serious effective on the mental health of Iraq almost four years after the initial US invasion. **Figure 3.19** shows the results of such “strife – related stress” that the ABC News poll found in 2007. Among those polled, Sunnis living in Anbar Province and mixed populations in Baghdad experienced the highest degree of stress.

---

**Figure 3.17: Overall Quality of Life in Iraq**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov-05</th>
<th>Mar-07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Life: Going Well</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Life: Expect Better</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Neighborhood: Not Safe</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
### Figure 3.18: Expectation for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative Rating</th>
<th>Expect Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Power</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Jobs</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Water Supply</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Situation</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Care</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Basic Goods</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Protection</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Schools</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Figure 3.19: Measuring the Emotional Effects of War: Strife-Related Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes Net</th>
<th>Yes, great deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of Anger</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of Depression</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble Sleeping</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Concentrating</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any 3-4 NET</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
IV. Looking at the Numbers: Overall Attack Patterns and Levels of Violence Before the New Strategy in 2007

Attack numbers, killings and casualties can at best only tell a small part of the story in Iraq. As Chapter III has made all too clear, the intensity and distribution of sectarian and ethnic violence had become far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi government began to indicate. There was no accurate data on the number and types of attacks, or dead and wounded, because these could not (or were not publicly) counted with reliability even in the Baghdad area.

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

Even so, the data on attack numbers and patterns still have value, as do those on casualties, and show that patterns of violence in Iraq grew steadily more complicated during late 2006 and early 2007.

The broad trends in Iraqi violence have already been discussed in Chapter III, but more detail pattern analysis is provided in Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4.

- **Figure 4.1** shows the steady increase in weekly attacks since 2004. January and early February 2007 – before the start of the Baghdad security plan - had the highest number of weekly attacks thus far.

- **Figure 4.2** shows that Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, and Salah Ad Din Provinces accounted for 80% of total attacks, but had only 37% of the population.

- **Figure 4.3** shows trends in sectarian violence compared with the number of execution style killings, which were generally attributed to Shi’ite militias. In December 2006 and January 2007, before the President’s new plan got underway, there was a significant gap between the number of sectarian incidents and the number of executions. Finally,

- **Figure 4.4** shows trends in attacks on Iraqi infrastructure.
Figure 4.1: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – February 2007


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

Note: The May, August, and November 2006 documents did not include a “Baseline” period.
Figure 4.2: Total Average Attacks by Province: May 2006-February 2007


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.
Figure 4.3: Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January 2006 – January 2007


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

Note: Ethno-sectarian incidents and execution recorded in MNC-I Significant Activities Database. Ethno-sectarian incidents are threats and violence with apparent sectarian motivations. Multiple casualties can results for a single incident. Ethno-sectarian executions are murders with distinct characteristics, and are a subset of total civilian casualties.
Figure 4.4: Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003-December 2006

IED, VBIED, and Suicide Bombing Attacks

Suicide bombings and IED attacks continued against Coalition/Iraqi forces and civilians. All types of IEDs continued to be the primary cause of death for US troops in Iraq. The trend in US IED deaths since the start of the war is shown in Figure 4.5. Defense Secretary Gates stated that IEDs caused 70% of deaths and wounds by 2007. Through the end of January 2007, 1,337 US troops were killed by IEDs and 11,871 were wounded.48

However, the US military also became better at finding and defusing IEDs. The Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) stated that by early 2007, US troops were finding and clearing roughly half of all IEDs. The numbers of IEDs defused increased five or six-fold since 2004, according to the JIEDDO. Further, the number of IEDs doubled in 2006, but less than 10% caused casualties, which the JIEDDO attributed to better jamming devices and improved vehicle armor.49

The US military said that explosively formed projectile (EFP) bombs were increasingly found in Iraq. EFPs were made from a pipe filled with explosives and capped by a copper disk. When the explosives detonated, they transformed the disk into a molten metal capable of penetrating armor.

EFPs were first used by the Provisional Irish Republican Army in the 1970s and their use proliferated in the 1990s as one of Hizbollah’s primary weapons. EFPs were first used with regularity in Iraq beginning in May 2004 in Basra. The Sadrist used EFPs during the 2004 summer and fall uprisings against Coalition forces.50

EFPs only accounted for 2.5% of all IEDs in January 2006.51 However, MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell stated that since 2004, 170 US troops had been killed by EFPs and 620 wounded; the rate of EFPs in Iraq went up 150% since January 2006.52

A US military expert on IEDs, Maj. Marty Webber, said that the EFPs were made in Iran and smuggled into Iraq, which President Bush affirmed in a Press Briefing on February 14, 2007. It was far from clear, however, that the Iranian government knew about the smuggling efforts.53

Accusations that the EFPs came from Iran insinuated that they were sophisticated and difficult to make, and thus meant that insurgents had crossed a technology threshold. Further, it meant that insurgents were relying on outside help to carry out attacks, which would point to a marked change from using materials already inside Iraq.

The Los Angeles Times, however, reported that EFPs were, in fact, very simple to make; “Far from a sophisticated assembly operation that might require state supervision, all that is required is one of those [copper, 5 inch diameter] disks, some high-powered explosive (which is easy to procure in Iraq) and a container, such as a piece of pipe.” The total cost of creating an EFP was roughly twenty dollars, according to a Pentagon specialist. What made them unique and difficult to spot was their small size and ability to “punch a hole through the armor of an M-1 tank.”54

In his analysis for Jane’s Intelligence Review, Washington Institute for Near East Policy analyst Michael Knights wrote, “There is a strong prima facie and circumstantial evidence to believe that Iranian based support included the facilitation of collaboration between Hizbullah bomb makers and Iraq Shi’a militants.” Knights adds that if collaboration between the two Shi’a armed groups did take place in the making of EFPs, it most likely occurred in Lebanon or Iran.
The majority of EFPs used by the Mahdi Army after 2004 were done so by professional bomb makers who broke with Sadr’s political wing when he entered the Iraqi government. Several of these Iraqi Shi’a bomb makers were captured in the south in 2005. Other Shi’a suppliers were “middle-men” who imported key EFP making materials and sold them to high end users. By 2005 these middle-men had created large scale networks spreading from Maysan province – bordering Iran – into northern Iraq. In Baghdad, EFP attacks increased in 2005 from five in April to 15 in September. By January 2006, half of all IED attacks involved EFPs, which “frequently employed between seven and nine warheads... sustained by the development of fabrication networks in Shi’a eastern Baghdad.”

However, Knights wrote that far less was known about Sunni use of EFPs, which contributed to US casualties in late 2006 and early 2007. Sunni insurgents relied more heavily on shaped charges, because they lacked the formal training that Shi’a groups had gained from Hizbollah. However, US military commanders reportedly found Hizbollah training manuals with captured insurgents, which could explain the rise in Sunni use. Even so, Knights said, “As Iraq’s Sunni insurgents have displayed tremendous ingenuity in other fields such as the design, emplacement and initiations of conventional IEDs, or the delivery of suicide munitions, their failure to adopt explosively formed projectiles is likely to be an operational choice rather than a failure to innovate.”

To combat the problem of IEDs, and particularly EFPs, the US military invested $9.4 million to buy armored vehicles with V-shaped hulls that defused the blast from the bombs. Each US military humvee was also equipped with two $100,000 jammers, created by JIEDDO in 2006. Unfortunately, insurgents started using wire detonators or infrared systems immune to the jammers. Moreover, one hundred towers with remote cameras, costing $12 million each, watched the roads most traveled by US forces to stop insurgents planting bombs.

MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell also stated that US forces would begin moving outside the “surge” area of Baghdad to shut down VBIED “factories.” Caldwell said that VBIEDs were assembled in makeshift insurgent factories in the urban belt outside the capital, which included part of the Sunni triangle as well as Baquba, the provincial capital of Diyala province. He added that in the first month of the new security plan, Iraqi and US troops had destroyed “two or three” such factories. His comments underscored the fact that the US needed a strategy for all of Iraq, not a single city – particularly when a focus on control of Baghdad could mean leaving most of the country to divide on sectarian and ethnic lines.

Despite the increased volatility of EFPs, the US military said that IED attacks dropped 20% in the first several weeks of the new security plan. At the same time, however, the military found material in Baghdad for making some 150 EFPs. The total number of VBIED attacks increased during the period February 13 – March 1 from an average of 1.2 a day to 1.7. Further, the number of people wounded from IED/VBIED/suicide bombing attacks rose from 40.4 a day to 51.2 during the same period. Sectarian murders did drop to their lowest point in a year. The number of average bodies dumped per day fell from 22.8 to 14.3.

The US military stated that tips from Iraqi citizens contributed to their ability to disarm roadside bombs before they could detonate. Tips increased from 4,250 in August 2006 to 10,070 in January, defense officials said. Gen. Montgomery Meigs, head of JIEDDO, this had contributed to that fact that only one in five IEDs found detonated and caused American casualties at the start of 2007. It was not clear, however, the extent to which Iraqi tip increases simply reflected
an increase in the number of IEDs planted.\textsuperscript{59} Figure 4.6 shows the number of hotline tips received by MNF-Iraq from August 2006-January 2007.

On March 14, 2007, a month after the start of the President’s Baghdad security plan, Gen. Caldwell stated that February was an “all time high” for car bombs. A total of 77 car bombs exploded in February, 44 of which were in Baghdad.\textsuperscript{60}

Suicide bombings also continued in the late winter and early spring of 2007. They remained a key tactic of Sunni insurgents seeking to provoke sectarian violence. Suicide bomb attacks in February and March included:

- February 1, 2007: Six people were killed and 12 wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a minibus in the central Baghdad district of Karrada.
- February 3, 2007: A suicide bomber killed 135 people and wounded hundreds more, driving a truck laden with one ton of explosives into a market in a mainly Shi’ite area of Baghdad.
- February 10, 2007: A suicide car bomber killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded five people, including three civilians, as it targeted an army checkpoint in the northern Iraqi town of Tal Afar. A suicide car bomber killed five people and wounded 10 near a queue outside a bakery in the mainly Shi’ite district of Karrada.
- February 11, 2007: One policeman was wounded when a suicide bomber exploded near a Shi’ite mosque in the Ilaam district in southern Baghdad. A suicide truck bomber attacked a police station in the town of Dour near Tikrit, killing between five and fifteen people.
- February 13, 2007: A suicide bomber blew up a truck near a Baghdad college in the western district of Iskan, killing 18 people and wounding 40.
- February 14, 2007: A suicide car bomber killed at least five people and wounded 20 others when he blew up his vehicle at the entrance of a police station in Ramadi, police sources said. The officer in charge of the station, Colonel Salam al-Dulaimi, died in the blast.
- February 17, 2007: A suicide bomber wounded two policemen when he blew up his vehicle at a checkpoint just north of Karbala.
- February 19, 2007: Iraqi insurgents, using a suicide bomber to explode a fuel tanker, launched one of their biggest assaults in months on a joint US and Iraqi outpost, killing two US soldiers and wounding 29 others.
- February 21, 2007: A suicide car bomb killed 11 people, including four policemen, and wounded 38 at a police checkpoint near a busy market in the holy city of Najaf.
- February 25, 2007: A suicide bomber killed at least 40 people and wounded 55 by detonating an explosives vest in the reception area of Mustansiriya University’s Economy and Administration College in eastern Baghdad.
- February 26, 2007: suicide car bomber killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded two others when he attacked a joint US-Iraqi military checkpoint near the small town of Abbasi.
- February 27, 2007: A suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt killed four people and wounded six others in the reception of a company specializing in manufacturing cement barriers for the Iraqi security forces in the town of al-Baaj.
- February 28, 2007: A suicide car bomber attacked a police station in Nahdha district in central Baghdad, killing two policemen and wounding another two.
- March 3, 2007: A suicide car bomb killed 12 people, including three policemen and a child, when it blew up at a police checkpoint in Ramadi.
• March 5, 2007: A suicide car bomb exploded in Mutanabi Street, a Baghdad district lined with book shops, killing up to 26 people and wounding 54.

• March 7, 2007: A suicide car bomber killed one policeman and wounded 17, including 10 policemen, in Saidiya in southern Baghdad. A suicide bomber killed at least 26 people in an attack on a cafe in Balad Ruz. At least 29 other people were also injured in the incident.

• March 10, 2007: A suicide car bomber killed one soldier and wounded two others when he blew up his vehicle at an Iraqi Army checkpoint in western Baghdad's Jamia district. A suicide car bomber killed six Iraqi soldiers and wounded some 20 civilians when his car was stopped by a military checkpoint at an entrance to the Shi'ite neighborhood of Sadr City.

• March 11, 2007: A suicide bomber in a minibus killed 10 people and wounded eight between Talbiya Bridge and Mustansiriya Square, in an area of northeastern Baghdad near the Shi'ite militia stronghold of Sadr City. A suicide car bomber targeting a truck carrying Shi'ite pilgrims killed 19 people and wounded 25 in Baghdad's central Karrada district.

• March 15, 2007: A suicide car bomb targeting an Iraqi army check point killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded two civilians in the western Yarmouk district of Baghdad. A suicide car bomb targeting a joint Iraqi army and police check point exploded in central Baghdad, killing eight policemen and soldiers and wounding 25.

• March 16, 2007: Two suicide bombings involving toxic chlorine gas made 350 people ill in Falluja, the U.S. military said, and another smaller bomb attack near Ramadi also released chlorine gas.

• March 23, 2007: A suicide car bomb exploded near a police checkpoint in Najaf, south of Baghdad, wounding three policemen. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salam al-Zobai, a leading Sunni Arab politician, was wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a hall where he was attending prayers inside his own compound. Nine people were killed and fifteen wounded.

• March 24, 2007: A suicide bomber driving a truck packed with explosives attacked a police station in Dora district of Baghdad, killing at least 20 people including 14 policemen and three detainees, a police source said. Another 26 people were wounded, mostly police. The US military said 33 people were killed. A suicide bomber in a market in the town of Tal Afar in northwestern Iraq killed 10 people and wounded 3. A suicide truck bomber exploded near a Shi'ite mosque in the town of Haswa. Hilla hospital said at least nine people were killed and 43 wounded. Police said eight were killed. The Babil provincial health directorate said 16 were killed and 45 wounded.

• March 26, 2007: A suicide car bomb killed two civilians and wounded five more in Rusafa, near the Shorja market in central Baghdad.

• March 27, 2007: Two suicide bombers exploded their cars near the home of a tribal leader in Abu Ghraib west of Baghdad, killing the man's son and three other people, a provincial official said. A suicide car bomber blew up his vehicle outside a popular restaurant on a main road north of Ramadi, killing at least 17 people and wounding 32. A suicide car bomb killed one civilian and wounded seven others north of Ramadi. At least 152 people were killed and 200 wounded in the northwestern town of Tal Afar. One of the blasts was detonated by a suicide bomber who lured victims to his truck to buy wheat, the town's mayor and police chief said. The second was in a used car lot.

• March 28, 2007: Two suicide bombers in trucks, one of which was carrying chlorine, attacked a local government building in Falluja, and 15 Iraqi and U.S. security forces were injured in the bomb blasts, the U.S. military said. A number were treated for symptoms linked to chlorine gas inhalation. A police source said eight Iraqi soldiers were killed in the attack.

• March 29, 2007: In the Shalal market in Baghdad two suicide bombers exploded their cars, killing 80 and wounding 100.
Figure 4.5: US IED Deaths July 2003- March 2007

Figure 4.6: National Hotline Actionable Tips: August 2006 – January 2007

Coalition/US Casualties

The broad patterns in US and Coalition casualties have increasingly declined relative to those in Iraqi civilians and Iraqi security forces. They do, however, show the cumulative cost to the US and its allies in human terms and provide another metric of the seriousness of the fighting.

- **Figure 4.7** shows the trend in casualties by month. There is no consistent upward trend, and the new US intervention in Baghdad did not, as some feared, lead to a sudden spike in US casualties. What does emerge is a series of cycles in the fighting and one that warns against drawing any conclusions based on either a short rise or fall in casualties.

- **Figure 4.8** shows the importance of the fighting in Baghdad province, but also in Anbar, Diyala, Dhi Qar, Basra, Babil, Salahaddin, and Ninawa Provinces. The fighting has been bloodiest in the West, but this is natural given the fact that this is where most US counterinsurgency operations have taken place.

- **Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10** show that there have been far more wounded than killed, and that wounded is a better measure of combat intensity than killed.

- **Figures 4.7 and 4.10** show that the overall patterns in the intensity of Coalition combat and casualties did not increase or decrease in proportion to the overall patterns of violence in Iraq. This was because more and more attacks focused on Iraqi targets, and were the result of sectarian and ethnic conflict.

These totals, however, are only part of the story affecting Coalition forces. According to Department of Labor statistics, 750 contractors were killed and 8,000 injured in Iraq by 2007. That figured includes US citizens as well as Iraqis and others employed under US government contracts.61

Between January 20, 2007 and February 23, at least eight US helicopters were shot down in Iraq. Sunni insurgents had made claims in January that they had acquired new ways to shot down US aircraft, and in December, a spokesman for Ba’athist groups said that insurgents received new anti-aircraft missiles.62 Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia claimed responsibility for three of the attacks.63

During the first month of the new Baghdad security plan, 66 American troops were killed, 36% of which occurred in Baghdad.64
Figure 4.7: Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to March 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of March 30, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/
Figure 4.8: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of March 30, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/Province.aspx.
Figure 4.9: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-March 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
<th>Killed in Action</th>
<th>Non-Hostile</th>
<th>Total Wounded</th>
<th>Wounded in Action: RTD</th>
<th>Wounded in Action Non-RTD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DoD US Civilians</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Saddam Fall 1 May 03-</td>
<td>3,076</td>
<td>2,486</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>23,645</td>
<td>13,299</td>
<td>10,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion 19 Mar-30 Apr 03</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>542</td>
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<td>2,601</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>24,187</td>
<td>13,415</td>
<td>10,772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Note: Totals do not include casualties in enforcing no fly zones before March 19, 2003. Wounded-RTD = equals lighter wounded where personnel were returned to duty within 72 hours. Wounded-Non-RTD= more serious wounds where solider could not be returned to duty within 72 hours.
Figure 4.10: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-March 2007

Iraqi Casualties

The trend in Iraqi casualties has been far more consistently upwards, and rise of sectarian and ethnic fighting in the “war after the war” has had steadily grimmer costs in Iraqi lives. As tragic as the numbers in Figures 4.11 to 4.13 are, however, they do not provide a full picture of the rise in Iraq casualties and suffering. “Soft” ethnic cleansing by sectarian groups in order to control political and economic space has involve intimidation campaigns, threats, kidnappings, propaganda, corruption and blackmail to force other ethnic groups out of an area. The number of internally displaced persons is one key measure of the impact of such lesser levels of violence, but it is not possible to tie it to precise estimates of displacement by sect or ethnicity, or to the amount of popular support such efforts received.

US/MNF-Iraq

The Department of Defense March 2007 report to Congress illustrates the sharp increase in the number Iraqi civilian deaths in the second half of 2006 and early 2007, as shown in Figures 4.11 and 4.12.

Daily average attacks against Iraqi security forces in January 2007 averaged 30 per day, which was consistent with previous months. Daily attacks on civilians in January rose to 50 per day, greater than the previous high of 40 in October 2006, according to DIA director General Michael Maples.65

According to a count kept by the New York Times, there were 450 bodies found in Baghdad during the first 4 weeks of the Baghdad security plan (February 13 – March 13, 2007). US military spokesman Gen. Caldwell stated that assassinations fell roughly 50% during the same period.66

A count kept by the Associated Press indicated that 528 Iraqis were killed by IEDs in the month before the start of the new plan. That number fell 30% to 370 between February 13 and March 13, 2007. The AP article also noted, however, that “Figures alone won’t tell the story. In Vietnam, generals kept pointing to enemy body counts to promote a picture of success even when many US soldiers and civilian officials realized the effort was doomed.”67

Iraqi Government Sources

According to data provided by the Ministries of Defense and Health, 2,067 Iraqis were killed in insurgent and sectarian violence in January 2007.68

Statistics from Iraqi government sources showed that sectarian murders dropped to their lowest point in a year during the period February 13 – March 1, 2007 the number of average bodies dumped per day fell from 22.8 to 14.3. There were a total of 265 bodies counted in Baghdad from February 13-March 13, compared with 1,440 the four weeks before. During the same period, 59 Iraqi security forces were killed, according to Iraqi military spokesman Brig. Qassim al-Mousawi.

The number of deaths from IED/VBIED/suicide bombings, however, rose from an average of 40.4 a day to 51.2 during the same time period. This data showed the effects of Moqtada al-Sadr standing down his Mahdi Army, which was widely known to participate in sectarian murders. It
also shows the continued efforts on the part of the Sunni insurgency to incite sectarian violence and undermine occupation efforts to create security. 69

The overall death toll for Iraqi civilians and security forces for March 2007 rose 15% from February to 1,861, an official from the Iraqi Interior Ministry said. Most of the deaths came at the end of the month, as suicide attacks killed several hundred civilians in Tall Afar and Baghdad.70

**NGO Estimates**

By the late-March, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 60,411 and 66,280 Iraqis civilians had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003. Trends recorded by the IBC since 2003 are reproduced in Figure 4.14 below.

Iraq Coalition Casualties also reported 1,711 civilian deaths in January, 1,381 in February, and 1,461 in March 2007. ICC also reported 91 ISF deaths in January, 150 in February, and 212 in March.
Figure 4.11: Average Daily Casualties: April 1, 2004 – February 9, 2007

Average Daily Casualties*
April 1, 2004 – February 9, 2007

* Casualty data reflect updated data for each period and are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident; the inconclusiveness of these numbers constrains them to be used only for comparative purposes.

Source: MNC-I

Casualty data reflect updated data for each period and are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by coalition elements responding to an incident; the inconclusiveness of these numbers constrains them to be used only for comparative purposes.

Note: Data points are estimates from material adapted from the DoD report. The DoD has named the time periods used in the graph as follows:

Figure 4.12: Total Iraqi Security Force and Civilian Casualties by Month:
January 2005-March 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, March 21, 2007, available at:
Figure 4.13: Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue and Iraqi Ministry of Health: January – December 2006


*note: After August 2006 the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report did not separate out deaths reported by the Ministry of Health and deaths reported by the Baghdad Morgue. In November and December 2006 the Report stated that figures were compiled from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico-Legal Institute of Baghdad. In the month of December, figures from some Governorates were not yet included in the total provided.
**Figure 4.14: Iraq Body Count Estimate of Iraqi Civilian Casualties**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>5/1/03 - 3/19/04</th>
<th>3/20/04 - 3/19/05</th>
<th>3/20/05 - 3/19/06</th>
<th>3/20/06 - 3/26/07</th>
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<td>Civilians Killed/day</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Civilians Killed</td>
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<td>11,312</td>
<td>14,910</td>
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<td>Killed by Mortars</td>
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<td>303</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>1,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed by IEDs/VBIEDs and Suicide bombs</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>1,782</td>
<td>3,402</td>
<td>5,797</td>
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<tr>
<td>Killed in bombings killing more than 50</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>1,476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. The “Surge” Strategy Begins to Be Put in Place: February-March 2007

The President’s new security plan, or “surge” strategy officially began to be implemented on February 13, 2007. The new plan focused on Baghdad and called for the deployment of roughly 17,500 additional US forces in the capital, which would arrive on a rolling schedule through June 2007. Prime Minister Maliki promised a similar number of Iraqi Army, national police and local police. However, several sources noted that at least one of the three promised Iraqi brigades did not arrive on schedule, and most battalions that did deploy on time were not at full strength.

The first six weeks of the security plan in Baghdad was characterized by the establishment of 19 Joint Security Stations in ten districts throughout the capital; a total of 30-40 JSS were planned. Iraqi and US forces worked to establish localized contacts, collect excess weapons, and use human intelligence to detain large numbers of suspected militants. Moqtada al Sadr stood down his Mahdi Army, and thus many of those detained in and around Baghdad were members of the Sunni insurgency. By the end of the first month of the “surge” two of the five promised US brigades were operated in Baghdad, with a third deploying to Kuwait. 

Operations also continued outside the capital, partly as a result of the insurgent’s initial reaction to the new US-Iraqi government effort. Diyala province saw an early increase in insurgent activity as insurgents fled the capital to surrounding urban areas. This meant that more US forces involved in the “surge” would be sent to Diyala as well as Baghdad. In contrast, in southern Iraq, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that 1,700 British troops would be withdrawn in upcoming months. The security climate in the south, however, was far from stable; British forces would most likely leave the south in a state of Shi’ite control with a semi functional police force.

The Problem of Defining the Strategy and Planning for Both its Success and Failure

US officials, members of Congress, and analysts divided deeply over whether the new strategy could work, whether any military success could by followed up by Iraqi conciliation, and as to how to plan for new steps both if the plan succeeded and if it did not. President Bush announced in early March that the Baghdad security plan appeared initially successful, but members of Congress who opposed the war took the opposite view and questioned the administration as to its backup strategy if the Baghdad plan failed to bring security. Critics in Iraq and the US also, argued that the month between the announcement of the plan – on January 10 – and the official start saw a security vacuum that the US could not fill.

Administration officials resisted being drawn into a broader debate of strategy. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said when asked by Senator John Kerry what happened if Iraq did not stabilize, “I don’t think you go to a Plan B. You work with Plan A.” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, said when asked about the US plan B, “I’m a Marine, and Marines don’t talk about failure. They talk about victory.” However, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates did tell Congress in February that if the surge failed, the backup plan including moving troops “out of harm’s way.”
Members of Congress who wanted US withdrawal from Iraq pressed for a deadline on when US troops would come home, but top US commanders, including Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, recommended that the “surge” of US forces to Iraq be maintained through February 2008. Odierno made this recommendation to Gen. Petraeus, the top US commander in Iraq, but no final decision had been made. US military officials repeatedly urged patience in assessing the success of the President’s new plan, although Petraeus stated that results would be seen by the summer.

It soon became clear that the size of US forces was dependent on the course of events, and operational needs that inevitably changed and evolved as the operation proceeded. In early March, the Pentagon approved the addition of 2,200 military police to help handle the increased number of detainees. On March 16 the US Army announced that an aviation brigade of 2,600 would deploy to Iraq 45 days early, in May. The President also authorized a total of 2,400 support troops for the “surge”, bringing the total number of troops to 28,700.

**Violence in Baghdad**

In spite of the broadening definition of the war as a series of interrelated civil conflicts, the Bush administration and many in the US military labeled Baghdad as the center of gravity in 2007. Figure 5.1 shows there was some justification for this if violence was measured largely in terms of insurgent attacks, although even by this count there was a major problem in three other provinces or Governorates.

US military officials said that the Baghdad offensive would be “a couple hundred percent” larger than previous offensives in the capital – such as Operation Together Forward in the summer of 2006. The emphasis on Baghdad was underscored in the Pentagon’s quarterly report to Congress:

> Given the concentration of political power and population in Baghdad and the city’s ethnic and sectarian diversity, Baghdad security remains the key to stability in Iraq. An Iraqi-conceived and -led Baghdad Security Plan is the centerpiece for addressing the escalating violence.
Teething Problems as the New Operation Begins

The joint Iraq/US command center for the security crackdown in the green zone was staffed by February 6, 2007, but not yet “up and running.” In addition, Iraqi and US military officials said that the structure of the Iraqi chain of command in the security initiative had not yet been resolved. Iraqis publicly blamed the US for cracking down on the Mahdi Army before the first additional US troops arrived, leaving a security vacuum that allowed insurgents to explode a truck in a Shi’ite market, killing 135 and wounding 300 more.79

Iraqi officials announced that the Lt. Gen. Abboud Gambar would lead the offensive. Gambar, a Shi’ite from southern Iraq, was a General in the old Iraqi Army and was the second choice of Prime Minister Maliki to lead the Baghdad operation. The US military did not support Maliki’s first choice for the job, Lt. Gen. Mohan al-Freiji.80

Just before additional US forces began to deploy, fighting erupted on Haifa Street, outside the green zone in Baghdad. Since fighting broke out between US/Iraqi forces and Sunni insurgents in the first week of January, the area changed hands multiple times and was densely secured by US forces. Joint operations were conducted daily to ensure that insurgents did not return to mostly abandoned buildings. Outside influences were also a problem. In preparation for the start of the plan, on January 30, 2007 Iraq halted all flights to and from Syria and closed a border crossing with Iran.81
The offensive to clear Haifa Street – for the third time in as many years – was clearly led by US forces. US forces on Haifa Street had mixed experiences with the ISF, and found that the Iraqi army units intended for joint patrols never showed up, especially for early morning operations. The New York Times reported that when Iraqi troops did show up for the operation on Haifa Street, they did not seem to take the job seriously. ISF units only searched half the apartments that they were supposed to, and did not take any regard for personal items of the residents. The US troops on Haifa Street said that the main goal was to let Iraqi forces take the lead – which they were already nominally doing – but in doing so the troops could lose control of the area they worked so hard to gain. US military spokesman Maj. Steven Lamb said that by mid-February, the Haifa Street area was secure and in the hands of Iraqi forces.

An Iraqi general defended the ISF by saying that not all Iraqi troops had arrived in the capital. He declined to say how many of the 8,000 troops from the Kurdish north and Shi’ite south were in Baghdad, but local commanders estimated that only 2,000 Iraq troops had arrived. Iraqi officials said that they had 22,000 Iraqi Army troops in the capital and 20,000 national and local police forces. US officials also estimated that roughly one-third of these Iraqi troops were missing at any one time, and the effectiveness of the remaining troops was limited at best. In mid-February, however, the Commanding General in Baghdad Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil Jr. reported that there were 13,000 Iraqi Army soldiers, 20,000 National Policemen, 41,000 local police, and more than 35,000 US troops in Baghdad.

US forces patrolling in Baghdad in early February questioned whether an additional 17,500 could bring security to the capital. Some soldiers said that the offensive came too late and that the US troops still lacked some of the training they needed to wage a full scale counterinsurgency campaign. Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment said that the attitude of the Iraqi population had turned against US troops to such a degree that it made gathering information almost impossible and their efforts to gain the trust of the populace futile.

Sectarian attacks continued in late January 2007. An estimate included in reporting from Time Magazine stated that roughly half of the daily sectarian attacks in Baghdad came from Sadr City. The total number of attacks per day in January averaged 180, equal to the previous high of October 2006.

The overall number of attacks against US and Iraqi forces did, however, decrease in the first week of the new Baghdad security plan, which was officially launched on February 14, 2007. US military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said that there was a relative decline in sectarian kidnappings and murders. The Associated Press reported that the average number of bodies brought to the morgue per day dropped from 50-60 to 10. The US military said in a report that IED attacks dropped 20% and sectarian murders dropped to the lowest point in a year after the first several weeks of the new security plan. Other types of insurgent attacks, such as suicide bombings, however, rose between February 14 and the first week of March.

A bombing on February 26 inside the Iraqi Ministry of Public Works wounded Shi’ite Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. And an attack at the largely Shi’ite Mustansiriya University in Baghdad by a female suicide bomber killed 40 students and wounded 55. Shi’ites contended that the increase in car bombings resulted from the security vacuum after al Sadr stood down the Mahdi Army and US/Iraqi forces could not fill the void.
In his first press briefing as the commander of US forces in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus again urged patience in judging the success of the President’s security plan, and said that the political and economic solution took longer to implement. He stated, “There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency.” He also indicated that progress would not be achieved unless the individuals created the insecurity were brought into political discussions.91

An aide to Petraeus, David Kilcullen, said that there were some positive results visible in Baghdad less than a month into the new security plan. He stated that sectarian fighting was down between 50% and 80% in some districts – although he did not indicate which ones. He also said that between 600 and 1,000 internally displaced families had returned to their homes in Baghdad.92

A month after the start of the “surge” US military spokesman Gen. William Caldwell also said that sectarian assassinations were down roughly 50%. The number of car bombs in the capital, however, rose to their highest point in the war during the same period.93 The last of three committed Iraqi Army brigades had arrived in the capital. The first two, however, were at 60-65% strength, but the last was at 90-100% strength.94

Joint Security Stations (JSSs)

Part of the strategy to secure Baghdad included plans to create between 30 and 40 Joint Security Stations (JSSs). The JSSs would be manned by both Iraqi and US troops and would be located in neighborhoods throughout the capital. In early February the US military stated that the rolling security plan was underway, and would gradually pick up speed. Ten of the planned JSSs were operational by February 8,95 and nineteen were manned by March 20, 2007. There were also plans to create 10 combat outposts – posts manned by only US forces.96

Capt. Erik Peterson established one JSS in Ghazaliya, one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baghdad because it was a mixed area and the focal point of sectarian cleansings campaigns. It was once predominately Sunni, but in the latter half of 2006 the Shi’ite population steadily grew and by 2007 it was almost equally divided. Further, the population of 7,000 was cut off from many local services and received on average one hour of electricity per day.

Peterson said that he established the combat outpost at one of the fault lines in the neighborhood so that he could interact with residents from all sects equally. US commanders in Baghdad were optimistic that the stations would give them more legitimacy with Iraqis because they were no longer returned to distant bases at night. They also acknowledged that the Iraqi security forces had not been prepared to deal with the sectarian violence, although the US military had continued to hand over control throughout 2006.97

Another combat outpost was established in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Amel. US forces moved into an abandoned gym in the once mixed neighborhood that was increasingly turning Shi’ite. The few remaining Sunnis said that they were scared to leave their houses, but welcomed the US troops.

The combat outpost would be the new home of about 130 US soldiers from the 4th Brigade. Unlike many of the troops in Iraq, it was the first tour for about 2/3 of the soldiers, most of whom came straight from basic training. The brigade had originally been expected to provide logistical support for convoys, but their mission changed with the President’s announcement of
the Baghdad security plan. Their new mission was to win the hearts and minds of residents in Amel over the next year.98

**A Continuing Iraqi Build-Up as Operations Begin**

Prime Minister Maliki formally launched the Iraqi government’s start of the security crackdown in Baghdad – Operation Fard al-Qanun (Operation Law and Order) the same as President Bush launched the US effort. US and Iraqi forces set up dozens of new security checkpoints, and the border crossing with Syria and Iran remained closed. Gen. Abboud Gambar also said that Iraqis living in occupied homes of displaced families had 15 days to return the property to the original owner. He stated that he had control of Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry forces under the command structure of Fard al-Qanun.99

It remained unclear how many Iraqi forces had arrived in Baghdad at the time of Maliki’s announcement. Commander of MNF Security Transition Command-Iraq Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey indicated that four Iraqi Army brigades were in Baghdad. One of the units from Sulaimaniyah and composed of Kurdish troops was only at 56% strength, but the other three brigades had 70-75% of their soldiers. Dempsey said that this was a success because up to 25% of the brigades were on authorized leave, and 10% had stayed at their home base. Of the unit from Sulaimaniyah, the 17% of soldiers who chose not to deploy would be dismissed from the Iraqi Army.100

MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said that the first of five additional US brigades also arrived in Baghdad.101 Caldwell also reiterated the need to be patient with the strategy:102

First, it will take time for all the additional troops being deployed to arrive and begin operations. Additional Iraqi and American troops comprising the “surge” will not be completely in place until late May.

Second, the non-kinetic efforts will take time to produce effects on the streets in Baghdad. The government of Iraq’s economic development program, for example, places greater emphasis on long-term job creation, rather than make-work programs.

Finally, most of Iraq’s problems are systemic and will not be turned around immediately because of the new security plan. The key to solving Iraq’s problems, whether military, economic or political, is leadership – Iraqi leadership to be precise….

Similarly, Iraqi security forces have improved since last year. Iraqi forces continue to gain in confidence and capability, and understand that they need to work to gain the trust of all Iraqis’ ethnic and sectarian communities. Yet Iraqi forces still suffer from deficiencies in leadership, logistics, intelligence, and, in some cases, loyalty. It will take more than two months to solve these problems.

The first large scale security operation by US forces in Operation Law and Order was a move by 2,500 US soldiers – with 400-500 Iraqi forces – into the Shi’ite neighborhoods of Shaab, Bayda, and Ur. The troops met little resistance as they entered the area. Residents said that Mahdi Army fighters had gone underground or fled the neighborhood in the previous week.103

These initial stages of the security offensive were controversial among Iraqis. Shi’ites said that it was specifically targeting Shi’ite armed groups and sought to give Sunni insurgents more power, and Sunnis argued that their neighborhoods were being unfairly targeted. Despite assurances by Prime Minister Maliki that politicians would not interfere with security operations, SCIRI member of Parliament Jalal al-Din al-Saghir suspended Friday prayer services to protest a US/Iraqi raid on the Barantha Mosque in Baghdad, at which he was the Imam.
He said that the raid was conducted solely by US forces and that the Iraqi government had not been informed. A US military statement said that Iraqi forces raided the mosque because they suspected it was “used as a place to conduct sectarian violence against Iraqi civilians as well as a safe haven and weapons storage area for illegal militia groups.” The joint forces found three heavy machine guns and 80 assault rifles.

A raid on Sunni politician Dhafir al-Ani’s home in March also found a large cache of weapons, including Kalashnikovs and a sniper rifle, and four cars with traces of explosives. Al-Ani – a more conservative member of the Iraqi Consensus Front - said that the raid was politically motivated and that his guards had been tortured by Iraqi security forces.

On February 17, 2007 the spokesman for the Iraqi general in charge of the new Baghdad security plan said violence in the capital had decreased by 80 percent since the offensive began. Brigadier Qassim Moussawi said four militants were killed and 144 captured in the past three days. He said 130 displaced families were returned home. The following day, he said that 327 displaced families were returned to their homes. Prime Minister Maliki also said that the first few days of the plan were a “dazzling success”. He also told President Bush that Iraqi officials would be “firm in dealing with any side that breaks the law.”

Maj. Gen. Caldwell said of the first week of Fard al-Qanun, “There has been a significant reduction in sectarian incidents and in extrajudicial killings in Baghdad because the Iraqi people have chosen restraint rather than retribution.” He did, however, continue to caution against being too optimistic:

While this is in fact very encouraging, we cannot stress strongly enough that it would be premature to declare Fard al-Qanun a success. Success will require a sustained effort and a comprehensive approach that complements progress and security with political, economic, legal, and social initiatives. The effects of the operation will not be seen in days or weeks, but over the course of months. We do not expect to eliminate all violence in Iraq. The Multinational Force Iraq’s objective is to help the Iraqi security force reduce the violence enough to give the Iraqi people and their government an opportunity to reach political solutions to Iraq’s problems. This effort will be extremely challenging, but it is one that is doable.

The Baghdad security plan included not only the crowded urban areas in the center of the city, but also surrounding outskirts, particularly on the Sunni dominated northern edge. For example, in mid February soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division entered the village of Ibrahim Bin Ali with the goal of capturing insurgents – believed to be aligned with Al Qaeda – and record data on all fighting-age males. The soldiers did not capture any insurgents, but they talked with local residents and began a slow process of gathering intelligence and gaining their trust. The operation, however, did not include any Iraqi soldiers; they did not return calls from the US commander asking for their assistance.

In Baghdad, Iraqi national police forces joined in more operations with US troops in the calmer Shi’ite neighborhoods of Shaab and Ur. The police forces took the lead and entered Iraqi homes, searching for weapons and hoping to install trust in Iraqi security forces among the population. After the search operation, however, an interpreter told the US military that at least some of the Iraqi officers had warned residents to hide their weapons before the US troops entered homes. The incident underscored the sectarianism of the police and the inability of Iraqi forces to take over security operations.

US officials also told Congress in the first week of March that Iraqi deployments to Baghdad were running behind schedule; only two of the three promised Iraqi brigades had arrived.
Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 28, 2007 that the battalions that comprised the brigades arrived at 43-82% of their full strength. It was not clear when all units committed by Prime Minister Maliki, some still coming from the Kurdish north, would arrive.\textsuperscript{111}

**Insurgents and Detainees**

US and Iraqi troops detained hundreds of suspected insurgents in the first month of the new Baghdad security plan. As Sadr continued to stand down the Mahdi Army, the majority of new detainees were Sunni; a White House memo stated that 16,000 suspected insurgents were being held and General Petraeus said in an interview that Coalition Forces had detained 700 members of the Mahdi Army.\textsuperscript{112}

It was unclear, however, how many detainees were later released and how the already overwhelmed Iraqi court system was addressing the numbers, although the Pentagon did approve the addition of 2,200 military police to help handle the detainees.\textsuperscript{113}

The US also planned to expand its two primary detention centers in Iraq, Camp Bucca in the south and Camp Cropper outside Baghdad. A military spokeswoman told the Washington Post that Camp Bucca held 13,800 detainees and Camp Cropper held 3,300 in mid-March. The number held at Cropper, however, was expected to rise to 5,000 in the next several months.\textsuperscript{114}

One of high profile Shi’ite detainee was the son of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of SCIRI. Amar al-Hakim was arrested by US troops after crossing the Iran/Iraq border because of an alleged expired passport – which Amar denied. Amar accused the US forces of treating him roughly. Ambassador Khalilzad later apologized for the detention.\textsuperscript{115} SCIRI was largely cooperating with the US occupation and had at least partly stood down the Badr organization.

**Moving into Hostile Areas**

In the first week of March, US and Iraqi forces conducted the first security sweep of Sadr City as the implementation of the new Baghdad security plan broadened in scope. The US military said that construction of a Joint Security Station in Sadr city would begin shortly. The first raid, however, was limited in its scope and included more Iraqi security forces than US troops. The forces searched homes in only a small section of the suburb and residents said they were polite and not hostile. The military did not take any suspects and did not confiscate any weapons. The troops met no resistance from Mahdi militiamen, although a Sadr aide did state that al Sadr had not approved the raid or the creation of a JSS.\textsuperscript{116}

Other reports, however, offered a different assessment of the first US raids in Sadr City. The raids were meant to be conducted by both US forces and Iraqi police forces, ensuring that Shi’ite residents did not feel threatened. The Iraqi units, however, showed up hours late for the raid, as frequently occurred in Baghdad, and operations were further delayed by meticulous negotiations. For example, it took several hours to determine which US and Iraqi forces would travel in humvees and which would walk. It also took some time to determine which troops would enter houses first and the overall role that the US forces would play.\textsuperscript{117} The common theme in all reporting on Sadr City operations, however, was that US forces would proceed without showy displays of force and would not seek to provoke the Shi’ite civilians.

US clearing operations also began in the dangerous majority Sunni neighborhoods of Amariyah and Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad. During the first day of raids, US and Iraqi forces detained
31 people, and found two weapons caches, nitric acid, and chlorine – which had recently been used by insurgents in several suicide bombings that poisoned hundreds.\footnote{118}

Four years after the start of the war in Dora – a rural Sunni neighborhood in southern Baghdad – *Newsweek* ran a story on the progress there – or the lack thereof. On March 19, 2003 a pair of 2,000-pound bombs landed on Dora with the intention of trapping or killing Saddam Hussein. Ever since, the area had been base for Sunni insurgents in the capital and the daily destination of US artillery.

By 2007, the farmland was largely untended and the once mixed Dora community had broken on sectarian lines. Since 2003, US troops had pronounced Dora under control three times, and were proved wrong three times. During the day, US patrols and empty streets gave the semblance of security, but during the night, residents said, Al Qaeda was in control. Insurgents had killed or forced out the Shi‘ites and Christians, and were waging an intimidation campaign against moderate Sunnis.

The failure to secure Dora four years into the war underscored the previous failures of US strategy in Iraq. Once US forces “cleared” the area, they only “held” it for a short period of time, and moved on before any rebuilding could start. It remained to be seen if the new strategy in Baghdad could “hold” Dora long enough that insurgents would not return, but the increased pessimism of the population was clear.\footnote{119}

**The Nation of Iraq as the “Center of Gravity”**

Baghdad was not the center of gravity in a national struggle for the control of political and economic space that affected every part of the country. The Iraq Study Group report had many weaknesses, but it was all too correct in noting that official US reporting on the patterns of violence in Iraq reflected less than a 10th of the actual struggle, and much of this violence was outside Baghdad.

Winning security control of the city and losing Iraq's 11 other major cities and countryside to Iraq's sectarian and ethnic factions would not be victory, but defeat. The minimal definition of victory was a relatively stable and secure Iraq, not temporary US military control of Baghdad.

As levels of violence fell in the first week of the security crackdown in Baghdad, violence in surrounding areas increased. US troops in Diyala province saw an influx of Sunni insurgents in late February, which strained their manpower and slowed the progress of economic and political initiatives.

In a press briefing on February 21, MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell indicated that the US military was beginning to recognize that Baghdad was not the only “center of gravity” in the war, and that no final decision had been made by the commander of US ground forces – General Odierno – on where incoming brigades would be sent.\footnote{120}

As far as the fringes go, we are very sensitive to that. And as these additional forces flow in, I think General Odierno will be the first to tell you that he has not made his final recommendation to General Petraeus where he would like to employ those final two brigades. Clearly in the operational planning, they’ve looked at areas within Baghdad at how they would use them and where they would use them. But as we watch what they call the belt around Baghdad, it’s clear indications right now that there is increased activity there. And again, without getting into operational decisions – because none have been made yet – but I do know that General Odierno is looking at that very closely. He’s talked about it. And when he...
makes a recommendation to General Petraeus as to where those additional brigades go will be come time in coming as they watch and the situation continues to develop.

In his first press briefing as commander of US forces in Iraq on March 8, Gen. Petraeus indicated that it was “very likely” that incoming US forces would be sent to Diyala Province and other areas outside Baghdad.  

**Diyala**

The counterinsurgency effort in Diyala Province made slow progress. Col. David W. Sutherland said that tactically, the US and Iraqis had enough troops to clear out the provincial capital of Baquba, where violence was the worst. But his focus was not only on eliminating insurgents, but also on the political and economic aspects.

Sutherland stated, “Tying to find one individual leader who will say, ‘We will not allow terrorists on our land. We will not allow IEDs to be placed on our land. We will give you support’ is difficult because you can’t find just one leader in Diyala.” There were roughly 19 tribes and 100 subtribes in the province. He added, “If you’re asking what I need, I need the provincial council to come to work and show backbone, and I need local media… I don’t need more forces.” The provincial council in Diyala had not met for six months and most of the local media had fled due to insurgent threats.

The tactical operations were largely successful. For example, in 72 hours in Baquba the US military found and disabled 32 IEDs and recovered 16 rocket-propelled grenades and other weaponry. Training Iraqi forces in the province was also progressing. US trainers said that animosity did exist between the Iraqi Army and Police due to sectarian differences, but they were gradually learning to work together.

Further, on February 14, 2007 various sources reported that Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri was wounded in clashes with Iraqi Army forces in Balad. Reports also said that his aide, Abu Abdullah al-Majemaa, was killed. The announcement came from Interior Minister Spokesman Brig. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf, but could not be confirmed by the US military.

Progress against insurgents slowed in late February 2007, however, due to a large influx of Sunni insurgents from Baghdad, the US military said. Insurgents fled north to avoid the security crackdown in Baghdad, which put increased pressure on the smaller contingent of US troops in Diyala. Capt. Paul Charlock stationed in Diyala said, “I was here in 2004 and I don’t remember them ever attacking tanks in open daylight, but now that’s exactly what they are doing. There’s a big Sunni influx here, and in the last month or so it’s been pretty violent.”

The Commander of the 5th Iraqi Division, Maj. Gen. Shakir Halal Husain also said, “Al Qaeda represents the most threat against units in Diyala.” Col. Sutherland agreed that the most hostile attacks were conducted by Sunni insurgents, but that Shi’ite militias were also a top concern.

Furthermore, Iraqi security forces provided little backup for US troops in Baquba. For example, one US unit shared a police building with members of the Emergency Response Force. US forces lived on the second story and took turns patrolling the rooftop, picking off snipers and insurgents planting IEDs. Iraqi police, however, lived on the bottom level and rarely went to the roof. A US soldier said that if the US left the station, it would be quickly overrun. Iraqi members of the EFP
unit, however, said they did not venture outside because they lacked protection and weapons. They also reported that they had not been paid in up to eight months.\textsuperscript{126}

US forces in Diyala were increasingly realistic about the level of violence. The US commander for MNF-North, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, said of the violence in Diyala Province:\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{quote}
We have seen an increase of violence in Diyala Province, but that is cased by, really, two things. Number one, we do think some of the enemy forces not only have moved out of Baghdad, but also may have moved from Al Anbar province. It is important to the Sunni insurgency to try and control Diyala. That has been part of the increase. But more importantly, we have increased out offensive operations, and we have killed a significant number of this enemy that is trying to get control in Diyala…

I would tell you that we’ve generally seen about a 30\% increase in offensive actions and attacks. Many of those are initiated by us; some are initiated by them. I can tell you that over the last couple of months we have killed in excess of 175 of the enemy in Diyala, and we anticipate with ongoing operations that we will kill or capture many more.
\end{quote}

Mixon stated that most of the violence was a result of Sunni insurgent groups, although there was a sectarian fault line as well. For example, US troops found a weapons cache with enough materials to make 130 EFPs, which was attributed to Shi’ite militias. Despite some successes, Mixon concluded, “Could I use more forces in Diyala? No question about it. And I’m in discussions of that with General Odierno as he attempts to balance the requirements in Baghdad.”

On March 13, 2007 the requested additional US troops arrived in Baquba. Some 700 troops were transferred from Taji to join the 3,500 US forces already stationed in Diyala.\textsuperscript{128}

Although US and Iraqi troops were winning tactical victories against insurgents in Baquba, the influx of insurgents and the slow progress of economic and political development underscored the fact that Baghdad was not the center of gravity in 2007.

\section*{Anbar}

Anbar remained a major problem in both military and political terms. In his January 10, 2007 speech, President Bush announced that 4,000 additional US troops would be sent to Anbar Province.\textsuperscript{129}

US forces in Anbar maintained that their allegiance with Sunni tribal sheiks helped reduce the level of violence. However, the \textit{Washington Post} reported that other tribal sheiks opposed those who agreed to cooperate with US forces. One sheik said that that the tribal alliance did not represent the will of the people, and that the sheiks involved were attributed more authority than they deserved. He said, “Many of those sheiks are actually following two tracks. One the one hand, they said, ‘We support the council.’ But on they’re not playing a direct role in it, because at the same time they also have connections with other organizations that are outside the law.”

On March 13, 2007 Prime Minister Maliki travelled to Ramadi on his first visit to Al Anbar since he took office in May 2006. Maliki met with Anbar governor Maamun Sami Rashid and top US commanders.\textsuperscript{130} US General Petraeus visited Ramadi the same day, in an effort to show the progress of the past several months. Even so, one Iraqi Army member working with US forces in Ramadi said that the number of IEDs in the city made it seem like a “flower garden” of bombs. The insurgents had been driven out of their main strongholds in the city, but they still fired shots and mortar rounds at US and Iraqi forces on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{131} For example, on March 18, 2007
police found the decapitated bodies of nine Ramadi policemen with their hands bound and bearing signs of torture.

Progress in Haditha in north-western Al Anbar, however, was even slower than in Ramadi. One assessment said of the town, “Haditha is like a police state, surrounded by a dirt berm topped with concertina wire with two tightly controlled entrances and no private cars permitted to drive in the town proper.” The berms were parts of a US operation called “al Majid”, which US forces said emphasized the “hold” portion of “clear, hold, and build” counterinsurgency operations.

US forces in Haditha acknowledged that new COIN tactics reflected a maturation of US strategy in Iraq. In years past, marines had kicked down doors at night and arrested large numbers of the adult male population. In 2007, however, the operation in Haditha included using human intelligence against known insurgents and providing security for the population without using scare tactics. Haditha, however, had a long way to go before the political and economic aspects of counterinsurgency operations could truly take hold.132

There continued to be numerous reports out of Al Anbar province of cooperation between tribal leaders and US/Iraqi forces. While these optimistic reports may have been valid, it was also true that the US still faced an active insurgency and a Sunni population increasingly marginalized by the government in Baghdad.

For example, reporting from Falluja focused on the number of police recruits and the number of Sunni sheiks cooperating with the occupation. However, these were not real metrics measuring the level of political and economic control by the various insurgent groups. Moreover, it was not clear that cooperation with US forces would translate into conciliation with the Shi’ite led Iraqi Government.

Nonetheless, there was clear progress in the ability of Iraqi forces in Al Anbar. On March 1, 2007 Iraqi security forces “backed by Sunni tribesmen” killed 50 suspected insurgents and arrested 80 in a day long battle just outside of Falluja. The Interior Ministry did not reveal how many Iraqi forces were killed or wounded in the fighting, but there were no US forces involved in the actual combat.133

The US Commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, said of the progress in Anbar as follows:134

Anbar is an intriguing location right now. Where I was -- again, "taken aback" was my word for what I saw in parts of Baghdad. I was heartened by what I saw in Ramadi, by what I've heard described about in Hit, where again Anbaris, the members of those tribes, have said, enough, and have banded together, raised their hand, joined the police forces and in fact are standing and fighting against al Qaeda Iraq. And you can start to see, by the way, for what it's worth, an identity emerging among them that is, again, very heartening to someone who has been here since the beginning off and on and watched things go up and down in Anbar province -- frankly, mostly down during a variety of periods. So that's, again, a very, very interesting development in that regard.

It remained to be seen, however, if a Sunni leader would emerge who spoke for the majority of Sunnis and who could find any areas of compromise with the Shi’ite leadership in Baghdad.

Southern Iraq and the British Experience

Shi’ite dominated southern Iraq did not experience the same level of sectarian fighting as Baghdad and other mixed areas, but intra Shi’ite tensions remained high and soft sectarian cleansings against the few remaining Sunnis continued.
A small operation was conducted in southern Iraq to coincide with the start of the Baghdad security plan. British forces in Basra – with the help of Iraqi national and local police and border patrol troops – secured a perimeter of checkpoints around the southern city and closed off two border crossings with Iran at Sheeb and Shalmana. A British military spokeswoman said the goal of the crackdown – called Operation Troy – was “to halt smuggling and contain criminal and rogue militia operations.” The border crossings would be closed for 24 hours, starting on February 15, 2007. Iraqi police searched every vehicle entering and exiting the city for illegal arms, and Royal Marines patrolled the Shatt al Arab waterway. Other border crossings into Iran and Syria would remain closed indefinitely.

At the same time as the majority of the border crossings reopened, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that he would withdraw up to 1,600 of the total 7,000 British troops stationed in southern Iraq in coming months, with 3,000 gone by the end of 2007. Britain stated the security conditions in the south, and in the second largest city of Basra, had stabilized and Iraqi forces could take full control. US Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno supported these comments, “We really see Basra as something that we want to do in the rest of the country. They’re a bit further ahead, obviously, in terms of security and in terms of violence than other parts of Iraq.”

The Pentagon’s March 2007 Quarterly Report to Congress, however, assessed the south somewhat differently. The DoD said the conflict in the south was “characterized by tribal rivalry; factional violence among SCIRI/Badr Organization, the Office of the Martyr Sadr/JAM, and smaller militias for political power; and attacks on Coalition forces.” This assessment underscored the lack of real security in the south, and helped explain Secretary Gates’s emphasis on Shi’ite versus Shi’ite conflicts as one of the four major sources of conflict and division in Iraq.

The British announcement of force cuts reflected a set of realities on the ground that had dominated southeast Iraq for more than two years. Southeastern Iraq had long been under the de facto control of SCIRI and Sadr factions. The British effectively lost any opportunity to shape a secular and nationalist Basra in the summer of 2003, and the US defeat of the Sadr militia in March and April 2004 never extended to the southeast and Basra area.

The British won some tactical clashes in Maysan and Basra in May-November 2004, but Operation Telic’s tactical victories over the Sadrist did not stop Islamists from taking steadily more local political power and controlling security at the neighborhood level when British troops were not present.

As Michael Knight and Ed Williams pointed out in an excellent analysis for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, SCIRI, Sadrist, Daw and other Shi’ite Islamists won 38 out of 41 seats in the provincial elections in Basra in January 2005, and 35 out of 41 seats in Maysan, and Basra came under the control of a corrupt Shi’ite Islamist in February. The British decisively lost the south - which produced over 90% of government revenues and had over 70% of Iraq’s proven oil reserves -- more than two years ago.

Worse, local politics devolved into a fractured mess of factions that were not clearly loyal even to their national parties, soft sectarian and ethnic cleansing, and crime and corruption. The Iraqi forces that Britain helped create in the area were little more than an extension of Shi’ite Islamist control by other means. British forces occasionally swept up the mess of crime and violence created by the ineffectiveness of the ISF, but the Sadr forces reasserted themselves in Basra and
Maysan by the summer of 2005, and Iranian influence (and possible transfers of arms and EFPs) continued.

The Iraqi police in areas like Basra became another part of the problem, rather than the solution, with extensive police operations against Sunnis. British efforts to deal with this led to steadily rising local Shi'ite attacks on British forces, putting an effective end to the British “soft” approach, since British forces could only operate in many areas as armored patrols. To all intensive purposes, the British - which had lost at the political level in early 2005 - were defeated at the military level and confronted with “no go” zones in many areas from the fall of 2005 onwards.

The elections in January 2006 made this worse by triggering more open inter-Shi'ite power struggles and violence in Dhi Qar, Maysan, and Basra with tribal factions, and rival SCIRI and Sadrist police adding to the equation. Even moderate and more secular Shi'tes came under steadily growing threat, while crime and corruption affecting almost every aspect of Iraq's oil industry and exports in the south added mixtures of Mafia-like groups, criminal police officers, and corrupt Shi'ite Islamist elements to the equation. British claims to have transferred responsibility to the ISF in the rest of 2006 were little more than a recognition of “defeat with honor” or at least crude political cover.

The end result was that British security efforts devolved to little more than an attempt to reform the police in Basra and bring some order to the city. The most British efforts accomplished, however, was to restore a higher degree of control over the Basra police by the Shi'ite parties in the Shi'ite dominated central government. They did nothing to either quell attacks on British forces or bring security to areas outside Basra.

The British may not have been defeated in a purely military sense, but lost long ago in the political sense if "victory" means securing the southeast for some form of national unity. Soft ethnic cleansing had been going on in Basra for more than two years, and the south was the scene of the less violent form of civil war for control of political and economic space that was as important as the more openly violent struggles in Anbar and Baghdad.
VI. The Uncertain Role of Iraqi Security Forces

Iraqi Security Forces were seen as a key to both implementing the new “surge” plan in Baghdad plan and creating lasting security for the population. Iraqi forces were supposed to plan and to “lead” the new security plan, but it was clear that US forces would be conducting and planning the majority of operations, in part, because the Iraqi battalions arriving in the capital were not at full strength. In addition, Iraqi police forces continued to be accused of sectarianism; at least two specialized units in Basra province were purged by British forces.

Iraqi forces did not present any major problems in terms of disloyalty, but they also were far from ready to put an end to the insurgency and had sectarian and ethnic tensions of their own. Polls also showed that overall confidence in the Iraqi Army and police had fallen since 2005, although it was still higher than in 2004. A total of 61% had confidence in the Army, compared with 67% in 2005 and 56% in 2004, and 64% had confidence in the police, compared with 68% in 2005 and 2004. In 2007, 25% of Sunnis had confidence in the Army and 24% in the police. Shi’ites expressed the most confidence in the police – 87% - and 80% in the Army. Kurds were 82% confident in the police and 80% confident in the Army, most likely because peshmerga elements made up the majority of both forces in the Kurdish areas. Figures 6.1 and 6.2 depict Iraqi confidence in the Army and police forces respectively.

A January 2007 GAO report on “Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq” noted that the numbers reported trained and equipped by US government agencies overstated the number of Iraqi forces on duty. The report also reaffirmed that DoD and MNF-Iraq could not account for some 90,000 weapons issued to Iraqi security forces. 138

The March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report also stated, “The actual number of present-for-duty soldiers is about one-half to two-thirds of the total due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition. The police have also experienced significant attrition of personnel who have been through Coalition training, but provincial and local governments have hired additional police outside the train-and-equip program.” These locally hired police, however, were much more likely to have sectarian loyalties. The DoD estimated that 192,300 Ministry of Interior forces and 136,400 Ministry of Defense forces were trained and equipped by February 2007.

A subsequent GAO report released in March 2007 went further in explaining the factors that limited the abilities of the ISF. The GAO assessed the problem as follows:139

Iraqi security forces are not a single, unified force; instead, they are comprised of a wide range of units with different missions that have changed over time. Of the security forces’ major components, only the Iraqi army currently has the primary mission of conducting counterinsurgency operations…

The Iraqi national police—a paramilitary force of about 24,000 personnel under the Ministry of Interior—had conducted counterinsurgency operations in the past, but the Iraqi government decided in late 2006 to transform it into a civil security force due to frequent allegations of abuse and other illegal activities...

The number of Iraqi security forces who are present for duty is significantly lower than the number of trained and equipped Iraqi personnel reported by DOD and State. For example, data on the number of trained and equipped Ministry of Interior personnel include police who are absent without leave, while Ministry of Defense data exclude military personnel who are absent without leave…

Sectarian and militia influences on the Iraqi security forces have frustrated U.S. efforts to develop effective Iraqi military and police forces and have contributed to the high levels of violence in Iraq…
Capable and effective Iraqi security forces are a critical element in the U.S. strategy to stabilize Iraq, drawdown U.S. forces, and lay the foundation for political reconciliation and economic development. For the past 3 years, MNF-I has tried to reduce violence in Iraq so that Iraqi forces can assume greater responsibility for their country’s security. The additional $5.8 billion that DOD now seeks for the Iraqi security forces attests to the importance of this mission. But, after 3 years, more than $15 billion in prior U.S. assistance and a substantial increase in the number of Iraqi security forces, violence in Iraq’s society has not lessened. This outcome is partly explained by the differing capabilities among Iraqi forces, high absenteeism, divided loyalties, and the continued reliance on U.S. logistical support.

Gen. George Casey, outgoing commander of US forces in Iraq, said that training Iraqi forces was “occurring slower than we originally predicted.” The US military still planned to hand over complete control to Iraqi security forces by the end of 2007, but the January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate stated that if US were to withdraw in 12 to 18 months, “this would almost certainly lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of the sectarian conflict in Iraq.”

It was clear that the training effort of Iraqi troops would require US troops in at least a supporting role for several years.

Commanding General of the US Civil Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) Kenneth W. Hunzeker stated that through January 2007, 200,000 Iraqi police forces had been trained – 19,000 above the original target goal. However, this figure did not take into account attrition, desertion, and forces on leave. He estimated that the attrition rate was roughly 20%. Gen. Hunzeker did say that the Iraqi police faced several obstacles:

- There are problems of leadership. We face the [problem] of finding and developing mid-level leaders.
- There are problems of logistics. Do the provinces have systems in place to pick up their equipment? Not yet. The Iraqi police also face problems with sustaining their equipment given the current high tempo of operations.

To address these issues, 2007 will be the year that I call leadership and logistics. We will bring training for mid-level managers within the MOI helping to put in place an Iraqi logistics and sustainment system. We also have an initiative to improve police operations in Iraq. We have what I call national police transformation taking place right now in Numaniya, and it’s a four-week individual and collective training plan for all national police brigades. Three brigades already completed this training.

The loyalty and readiness of some police units remained questionable as the security initiative in Baghdad began. Three IA brigades had arrived in the capital with 70-75% of their strength, although another Kurdish brigades from Sulaymaniyah only had 56% of its soldiers; 17% chose not to deploy. It was not clear how many police units were involved in the first phase Operation Law and Order. Caldwell reiterated that advisors were embedded with Iraqi police forces at all levels, and that their professionalism and competence would grow over time.

The Iraqi Interior Ministry did take steps against sectarianism in the police forces. The MOI fired or reassigned over 10,000 employees found guilty of human rights abuses. A MOI spokesman said that abuses included torturing prisoners, accepting bribes, or having known ties to militias. The Ministry did not release the names or sects of those terminated, but said they included a number of high ranking police. Since its establishment, the MOI was repeatedly accused of supporting sectarianism and allowing abuses within the largely Shi’ite police force.

Similarly, British troops in Basra stormed the offices of an Iraqi government intelligence agency on March 5, 2007. The raid was not coordinated with either Iraqi troops or the Iraqi government, and Prime Minister Maliki said he would launch a formal investigation. British officials, however, said they found 30 prisoners, some showing signs of torture. The Iraqi government did not comment on the torture allegations.
An assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency stated that Iraqi security forces were still heavily infiltrated by sectarian militias and unready to take over security operations. Lt. Gen. Maples told the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 27: 145

Iraqi Security Forces, particularly the Ministry of Interior forces, are infiltrated and influenced by members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq’s Badr organization and Muqtada al-Sadr’s Jaysh al-Mahdi. The Jaysh al-Mahdi often operates under the protection or approval of Iraqi Police. Many Sunnis view the ISF as a Shi’a led tool of oppression. Some Jaysh al-Mahdi cells may operate outside Sadr’s direct guidance and conduct independent operations...

The building, training, and deploying of Iraqi Security Forces and police is progressing, although politicization of the security ministries remains a challenge. The ISF are meeting the initial manned, trained, and equipped milestones, have improved unit capabilities, and are increasingly taking the lead in security operations. They remain generally dependent on Coalition support. We judge the Iraqi Security Forces are presently unable to stand alone against Sunni insurgents, al-Qaida in Iraq and Shi’a militias.

In addition to implementing the Baghdad security plan, US forces went ahead with plans to increase military and police transition teams embedded with Iraqi forces. In early February, the US military experimented with pairing a US battalion, about 400 soldiers, with an Iraqi brigade of 3,000 soldiers in an advising mission. The US troops said that it was difficult to stand back and direct the Iraqis from behind, but that it was key to the training effort.

Commander of US forces in northern Iraq, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Nixon, said in a March 9, 2007 press conference that military transition teams had added 400 soldiers since December 2006, an increase of 50%. An additional 33 police transition teams were also added. He stated that Iraqi security forces were 85% manned in northern Iraq, although they lacked equipment. MNF-North included the provinces of Ninwah, Tamiim, Salah ad din, and Diyala, the latter of which was by far the most violent.

The key problem, however, was with training more specific force units, such as the border security forces and the strategic infrastructure battalions. Gen. Mixon said of these forces “had a long way to go.” He added, “They still need to make improvements in their overall manning, their equipping and their general professionalism, and we continue to work that each day.” He added that part of the problem stemmed from a failure to adequately vet recruits; a portion of the forces were found to have sympathies to the insurgency or were part of the black market theft of oil. 146
Figure 6.1: Confidence in the Iraqi Army

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>9%</th>
<th>16%</th>
<th>35%</th>
<th>40%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shiite</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.

Figure 6.2: Confidence in the Iraqi Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>16%</th>
<th>24%</th>
<th>52%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
VII. Reconstruction, Development, and Aid

Economic development was another uncertain element of the new strategy and reason for Iraq’s conflicts and tensions. Numerous small-scale reconstruction projects were completed or near completion in early spring 2007. These projects, however, had not previously been tied to a strategic goal and their effectiveness in winning the support of the Iraqi population amid an insecure environment was limited. As a result, the US and Iraqi governments made aid a key tool in trying to deal with these problems. The US plans for the “surge” called for a rapid doubling of the number of Provincial Reconstruction teams. Efforts were also begun to create new public sector jobs for Iraqis, although the results could not been seen for some time.

The PRTs, Economic Aid, and the Insurgency

The President’s new strategy created six new PRTs embedded with Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in Baghdad, three in Anbar, and one in Babil. All were planned to be established by June 2007. A March 2007 report by the United States Institute of Peace assessed the role and effectiveness of the PRTs as follows:

The new PRTs are to bolster moderates, promote reconciliation, support counterinsurgency operations, foster development, and build the capacity of Iraqi government officials to perform their duties. New PRTs will work at the city, district, and neighborhood level. The goal is to create areas where moderates will have political space to operate and violent extremists can be brought under control. The emphasis is on shaping the political environment rather than building infrastructure...

The teams will be established in stages. First, small teams composed of a total of forty representatives from the State and Defense Departments and USAID, plus cultural advisers provided by the Defense Department, will join the BCTs to conduct assessments and develop plans for future operations. These joint management teams will undergo predeployment training together and deploy in March. In the second phase, 140 specialists will join the advanced teams; a final phase will bring in 142 more staff. Of the civilian positions in the new PRTs, about 110 will be filled initially by military personnel called up from the National Guard and Army Reserve or recruited directly by the Defense Department...

A model PRT would have the following complement of personnel: State Department, six; senior U.S. military officers and staff, three; U.S. Army civil affairs soldiers, twenty; Agriculture Department, one; Justice Department, one; RTI International, three; USAID, two; and a military or contract security force of indeterminate size, depending on local conditions. Most PRTs lack their full complement of personnel, however, and there are time gaps between assignments. Absence of key staff reduces the PRTs’ effectiveness and places additional burdens on those who are present.

In practice the size and composition of PRTs has varied based on maturity, local circumstances, and the capacity of U.S. agencies to provide personnel. Because the State Department has experienced difficulty in recruiting, particularly among senior foreign service officers, it has been forced to rely on junior officers and retirees. Currently 82 percent of PRT-related State Department assignments have been filled.

The overall absence of security in Iraq negatively affects all aspects of PRT operations, but it has a particularly negative impact on efforts to develop effective local government. Provincial governors and other senior officials are subject to intimidation and assassination. Iraqi provincial councils often are afraid to meet, and provincial-level ministry representatives often are reluctant to attend work because of security concerns. In conflicted areas, meetings between PRT personnel and Iraqi officials occur infrequently or not at all. Iraqis are often unwilling to be seen with Americans or other foreigners or to visit U.S. military installations. PRT civilian personnel may be restricted to base during security alerts or may fear endangering their Iraqi counterparts if they are seen together. PRTs will be able to pay the military for equipment and accommodations, which should improve cooperation and provision of services. Cell phones, e-mail and out-of-country meetings are used, but they are no substitute for daily contact and the opportunity to monitor and assist Iraqis in resolving problems.
The future success of this PRT effort, however, relied on the ability of State and Defense Departments to adequately fill the positions with experienced and effective personnel and a more secure environment that allowed greater interaction with Iraqis and greater opportunity for economic growth. It also relied on both continued US aid and the Iraqi government disbursing some $10 billion in development funds that it had failed to spend in 2006.

US aid money was becoming a problem, although new funds were requested in a supplemental for FY2007 and in the FY2008 budget request. By the end of 2006, Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Funds were obligated, and 80% were expended, according to the October - December Quarterly Report to Congress from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.\(^{148}\)

The ability to get the qualified US personnel needed to expand the PRTs was more of a problem. SIGIR also reported on the status of PRTs in Iraq and highlighted the challenges. At the end of 2006, personnel from the Basra PRT relocated to Kuwait because of poor security conditions. Dangerous conditions hampered recruitment for existing civilian PRT positions, making it unlikely that the US State Department could fill additional positions for expanding PRTs in 2007.

SIGIR quoted a National Coordination Team assessment that said, “Systems for documenting measurements in capacity building have not yet been developed and put in place.”\(^{149}\) This statement underscored the need for clear metrics to assess the progress of PRTs on the ground; the number of projects “completed” was not a measurement of control of economic and political space. MNF-I’s “Provincial Security Transition Assessment,” shown below in Figure 7.1, was an example of an unrealistic assessment using faulty metrics.
**Figure 7.1: The Unready Aid the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Assessment; February 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irbil</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewah</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniyah</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamim</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah Ad Din</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
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<td>Babil</td>
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<td>Qadisiyah</td>
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<td>Maysan</td>
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<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>Provincial Iraqi Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>Not Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Employment Initiatives**

As part of the President’s “New Way Forward,” the US and Iraqi Governments launched several programs aimed at reducing unemployment and limiting the recruitment base for armed groups. Most experts projected unemployment at 40-60%, although a draft report from the US Embassy in Baghdad said unemployment in 2006 was only 17.6%. The Pentagon’s “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” for March 2007 described these employment problems as follows:

Estimates of unemployment vary from 13.4% to 60%. Underemployment may be a much more significant factor. For example, a January 2007 survey by Multi-National Division Baghdad indicated that only 16% of Baghdadis responded that their current income meets their basic needs. The GOI must, with Coalition and international help, create an effective strategy to provide jobs. This program must be seen as fair and nonsectarian by ordinary Iraqis. It must produce tangible results for the majority of Iraqis or it will decrease the legitimacy of the GOI. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, new businesses have increased from 8,000 to more than 34,000.

One of the efforts headed by the US Defense Department focused on creating public sector growth, which was a sharp turn from the original US focus on privatization. On February 27, 2007 the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Business Transformation Paul Brinkley completed a first assessment of the Iraqi industrial base “in an effort to revitalize and restart, where appropriate, idled Iraqi industry.” In total, Brinkley estimated that the idle factories could provide some 300,000 to 350,000 jobs. He also said that the major factor inhibiting the restart of
some key large state industries was the lack of a stable power source, which could take years to reach a capable level, and the lack of “bureaucratic capacity.” Brinkley also said that he worked with a number of private sector industries as well and hoped that they would be up and running soon.\footnote{51}

This shift in thinking did not begin in earnest until mid-2006 and Brinkley described the impact of the previous US policy toward privatization in post war Iraq as follows:

I would characterize, think of it as two different approaches. So the initial approach to privatization was kind of a rapid disempowerment of state owned industry in an expectation that in a secure, stable environment, private industry would quickly emerge… which is a model that was seen effective in Easter Europe in some ways, after the fall of the Iron Curtain. I would think about we’re doing instead as a different approach, which I think is more consistent with what one sees in the Asia-Pacific region, where large, state-owned industries have been privatized in a more traditional way…

And so I actually have a great deal of optimism that the approach we’re taking, which is the traditional approach – get these factories up and running, get them engaged with the global economic community – as those factories get up and running, the private sector begins to get uplifted again. And where we bring in outside industry and they engage these factories and they see skilled workforce and they see an opportunity to invest, then that puts them on a more rapid path to actual privatization than we have seen in the prior effort…

Another US/Iraqi initiative focused on microfinance projects. Eric Nigh, executive director of the Iraqi-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, began a program that offered small loans – a few hundred dollars – to small Iraqi businesses. The business owners had to match 25% of the microgrant with this own money and commit to hiring new employees. The loans were indirect, meaning that the business owners received new equipment and services, rather than cash. The goal of the project was to keep struggling businesses open while providing new jobs. Through 2007, the program was expected to distribute $6 million and create some 2,000 new jobs.\footnote{52}

\textit{Security and the Rule of Law versus Crime and Corruption}

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

Corruption within the Iraqi government continued to hinder effective governance. In a January 2007 report to Congress, the GAO said the following of the problem of corruption in Iraq:\footnote{53}

Corruption in Iraq is reportedly widespread and poses a major challenge to building an effective Iraqi government and could jeopardize future flows of needed international assistance… According to US government and World Bank reports, the reasons for corruption in the Iraqi ministers are several, including the following:

- The absence of an effective Iraqi banking system leaves the government dependence on cash transactions.
- The majority of key Iraqi ministries have inadequately transparent, obsolete, or ambiguous procurement systems.
• Key accountability institutions, such as the inspectors general who were installed in each Iraqi ministry in 2004 lack the resources and independence to operate effectively and consistently.

• The government has no strategy to implement training for its three anti-corruption institutions – the Commission on Public Integrity, the Board of Supreme Audit, and the inspectors general in each ministry.

Furthermore, Embassy Baghdad’s Anticorruption Working Group attributed poor performance by the anti-corruption institutions to the government’s lack of visible and authoritative commitment and engagement.

The Defense Department’s “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” March 2007 report warned that crime and corruption interacted with sectarian and ethnic violence in a climate where the rule of law generally did not function.154

Criminal activities remain elevated and are often difficult to distinguish from sectarian and other violence. White collar crime is an entrenched practice stemming from decades of nepotism and organized criminal activities by government institutions of the former regime; it will remain a serious obstacle for the GOI for years to come. The Board of Supreme Audit, the Commission on Public Integrity, and ministry inspectors general continue to work with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to promote transparency and to curb this entrenched practice.

Budget execution and corruption problems continue to hamper the GOI’s ability to perform and turn good intentions into results… To be fully effective, however, Iraq must also reform Saddam-era laws that allow cabinet ministers to shield government officials from prosecution, and all Iraqi leaders must commit to ensuring the neutral and independent application of the law. The United States is also working with the World Bank and other international institutions to support the three primary anti-corruption institutions in Iraq: the Commission on Public Integrity, the Supreme Board of Audit, and the inspectors general assigned to the government ministries. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad recently restructured its rule of law and law enforcement offices to improve their effectiveness in achieving civilian rule of law objectives in Iraq...

Militia infiltration of local police remains a problem and Prime Minister Maliki has demonstrated a commitment to retraining and reforming police units that are shown to be serving sectarian or parochial interests. Though improving, the lack of a fully functional justice system has led to unreliable detention practices, and police have often disregarded release orders signed by Iraqi judges. Security forces also remain prone to intimidation by or collusion with militias and criminal gangs, thereby decreasing the confidence among ordinary Iraqis in their legitimate security force…

As of January 2007, Iraq had approximately 870 investigative and trial judges (up 70 from the last report) and 100 criminal courts. The GOI recognizes the need to expand judicial capacity. To meet the growing demands of the judiciary, the number of judicial investigators is scheduled to reach 700 in 2007 and 1,000 in 2008. The MOJ now operates a Judicial Training Institute. The first class of 178 judges and prosecutors is scheduled to graduate in summer 2007. A second class of 60 trainees is scheduled to graduate in fall 2008. These are positive steps, but to meet the growing demand across the judicial sector, the MOJ needs to increase the system’s capacity…

Judges frequently face threats and attacks, and thus absenteeism and resignations undermine the workforce. Those who remain often fear handing down guilty verdicts against defendants with ties to insurgent groups or militias. In the provincial courts, judges often decline to investigate or try cases related to the insurgency and terrorism…

Concerns remain that the Iraqi Corrections Service is increasingly infiltrated by criminal organizations and militias. Detention facilities in Iraq do not meet incarceration needs. Pre-trial detention facilities in Iraq, administered by the MOI, the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the MOJ, are reported to be overcrowded, substandard facilities with poor detainee accountability practices. Post trial prisons, administered by the MOJ, generally meet international standards, but are at maximum capacity. To address this problem, Prime Minister Maliki and the Minister of Justice are demanding greater oversight of prison facilities, and U.S. advisors are encouraging the MOJ to increase the salaries of corrections officers to bring them more in line with those of police officers and thus to reduce the temptations of bribery. The Embassy and Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) are also working with the GOI to increase detention capacity in the near term.
through additional compounds with adequate oversight in Baghdad and in the long term through hardened facilities to be administered by the MOJ.

US officials also said that only the Central Criminal Court of Iraq in Baghdad effectively handled insurgent cases. Local tribunals, such as one in Mosul, had a backlog of cases in the thousands. To deal with the large numbers, trials only lasted ten minutes in some cases. If there was not sufficient evidence or the detainee did not admit to the crime, they were released, but some had been held for up to two years in poor conditions.\textsuperscript{155}

In addition, the failure to provide adequate facilities for detainees and fair trials undermined the new security plan. The White House stated that by mid-March 2007 Iraqi and US forces had arrested some 16,000 suspected insurgents. The majority of Iraq detainees were brought to two detention centers run by the Defense Ministry. One center in Mahmudiya was designed to hold 75 people, but at the end of March 2007, held 705. Another facility at Muthanna Air Base held 272 in an area built for 50.\textsuperscript{156}

The US was expanding its detention facilities and the President authorized the addition of 2,200 US Military Police, but it was clear that Iraq was not prepared to deal with the larger numbers. \textbf{Figure 7.2} below shows that the majority of Interior Ministry investigations from 2006 remained open and unresolved.
Figure 7.2: 2006 Ministry of Interior Affairs Investigations by Outcome

Oil, Insurgency, and Civil Conflict

Oil was both a target of violence and a cause of it. All of Iraq’s main factions recognized that oil revenues were the main source of revenue they could count on in the future, and the importance of controlling Iraqi’s oil reserves and development. The insurgents saw petroleum facilities as a key target and way of denying the Iraqi government and Coalition resources and public support.

As Figure 7.3 shows, oil production met the Iraqi Government goal in the first quarter of 2007 (2.1 mbpd), and accounted for 67% of Iraq’s GDP and 95% of internal government revenues. The goal, however, had been lowered from 2.5mbpd in 2006. Progress was made to implement a national oil law that shared revenue to provinces based on population. As part of the President’s “New Way Forward,” the US military stepped up efforts to combat corruption and smuggling in the oil industry.

The October – December Quarterly Report to Congress from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said that in 2006 Iraqi crude oil production increased slightly from 2005, averaging 2.12 mbpd. The last quarter, however, saw average production drop to 2.07 mbpd.

Average daily exports of crude oil increased 150,000 bpd from 2005, but also failed to meet the goal of 1.65mbpd. SIGIR reported that oil constituted 93% of total Iraqi export earnings. However, a total of $16 billion was lost since 2003 due to “attacks, poorly maintained infrastructure, and criminal activity.”

The SIGIR report also noted that imports of refined fuels increased, but would not meet demands for the winter of 2007. Iraq relied heavily on Turkey for refined fuel products. The Kurdistan Regional Government signed an agreement with Iran to import 2 million liters of kerosene per day to make up for shortages. The oil industry suffered from a lack of security of oil facilities and installations, corruption and smuggling, and poor execution of budget.158

In January 2007, the GAO presented Congress with a review of challenges facing rebuilding and securing Iraq. The GAO assessed developments in the oil sector as follows:159

Iraq’s oil production and exports have consistently fallen below US program goals. US and Iraqi efforts to restore Iraq’s oil sector have been impeded by the lack of security, corruption, sustainability, and funding challenges. The unstable security environment continues to place workers and infrastructure at risk while protection efforts remain insufficient. Widespread corruption and smuggling affect the distribution of refined oil products, such as gasoline. The US reconstruction program has encountered difficulty with Iraq’s ability to operate and maintain aging infrastructure. Further, uncertainties exist regarding the sources of future funding. These challenges could make it difficult to achieve current production and export goals, which are central to Iraq’s government revenues and economic development...

Security conditions have affected Iraq’s oil production and have, in part, led to project delays and increased costs. Insurgents have destroyed key oil infrastructure, threatened workers, compromised the transport of materials, and hindered project completion and repairs by preventing access to work sites. US officials reported that major oil pipelines in the north continue to be sabotaged, shutting down oil exports and resulting in lost revenues. Pipe line repair crews are overwhelmed by the amount of work and unable to make rapid repairs.

The US government has developed a number of initiatives to protect the oil infrastructure and transfer this responsibility to the Iraqi government. Such efforts include improving the capabilities of infrastructure protection forces such as the Oil Protection Force, a protection force for static infrastructure sites. The US military, with the assistance of other coalition forces, is also working to improve the capabilities of the Strategic Infrastructure Battalions. However, according to US officials, some units are of questionable capability and loyalty...

US and international officials note that corruption in Iraq’s oil sector is pervasive. In 2006, the World Bank and Ministry of Oil’s Inspector General estimated that millions of dollars of government revenue is lost each year to oil smuggling or diversion of refined products. According to State Department officials and reports, about 10% to 30% of refined fuels is diverted to the black market or is smuggled out of Iraq and sold for a profit. According to US Embassy documents, the insurgency has been partly funded by corrupt activities within Iraq and from skimming profits from black marketers.

In addition, Iraq lacks fully functioning meters to measure oil production and exports... According to the Ministry of Oil and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board, an absence of functioning meters precludes control over the distribution and sale of crude and refined products. The US government is currently taking steps to replace old and broken meters at the Al-Basra export terminal, Iraq’s major oil export terminal. This project is scheduled for completion in April 2007.

The March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report said the following about the Iraqi oil sector:160

Damage to pipelines, fires, poor maintenance, and attacks have combined to slow production of refined products and crude oil for export, primarily in central and northern Iraq. Production and exports in the south remain the primary driving force of Iraq’s economy, although aging infrastructure and maintenance problems impede near-term increases in production and exports.
In mid-February, Iraq completed a study of oil reserves throughout the country. The Oil Ministry had allocated $25 million to each of 40 international oil companies, which collected data on resources and provided training and technical help to Iraqi engineers. The result of the study found that oil reserves and natural gas deposits in western Anbar Province were far larger than expected. It would take years to create the infrastructure – and security environment – necessary to begin extracting the deposits, but it did mean that in the future, the majority Sunni region would not have to rely solely on the Kurdish and Shi’ite resources in the north and south.\(^\text{161}\)

In late February the Iraqi cabinet approved the draft oil law. The draft law allowed the central government to distribute oil revenues to provinces and regions based on population. Regional oil companies or regional governments – a reference to the Kurdistan Regional Government – retained the right to enter into oil contracts with foreign companies for the development of fields. Analysts, however, said that the law was still vague on the rights that those foreign companies would have in Iraq, which could deter investment. The law also recreated the National Oil Company, which would provide state-run oversight for distribution. Approval by the Iraqi cabinet showed a promising level of compromise and conciliation. The Kurdistan Regional Government also put out a statement saying that they supported the draft law in its current form. The law still needed Parliamentary approval.\(^\text{162}\)

At the same time, the US military stationed in Kirkuk cracked down on oil smugglers. The US commander in charge of the operation, Lt. Col. Jack Pritchard, said that smugglers raised roughly $50 million a year in oil theft. He also said, “It became a free for all [after the US led invasion in 2003]. I think [oil smuggling] is increasing because it has gone unabated for a number of years. We’ve seen tanker trucks here and there and we realized the enemy is making money here and we need to stop it.” Military officials believed that smugglers ranged from poor local farmers to international criminal gangs.

The crackdown would focus on the 55 miles of pipelines between Kirkuk and the Beiji refinery. Pritchard’s troops were also charged with training members of the Iraqi Strategic Infrastructure Brigade, which had made little progress up to that point. Several members of the SIB were themselves arrested for oil smuggling. The problem, US officials said, was that SIB forces were loyal to the local tribal leaders, who participated in the smuggling, and thus often turned a blind eye. US forces said they were making progress in training the SIB forces, but the crackdown on smuggling would clearly be a US led initiative.\(^\text{163}\)

For the first time, US troops of the 82nd Airborne maintained a full-time presence at the Baiji refinery in Salahaddin Province – the largest refinery in Iraq. US military officials estimated that as much as 70% of the fuel produced at Baiji ended up in the black-market. The troops were “cracking down on illegal gasoline stations, arresting refinery works suspected of corruption and using sophisticated data-sifting methods to identify which senior Iraqi officials might have ties to black-market oil rings,” according to the \textit{Wall Street Journal}.

The Iraqi government also began its own program, Operation Honest Hands, which put the Baiji refinery under Iraqi military control, rather than in the hands of the strategic infrastructure brigades, widely suspected of corruption and smuggling. The Iraqi Army began escorting fuel trucks to their destinations around the country, so that smugglers could not intercept the trucks as they traveled.
US military commanders said that their full-time presence was necessary, in part, to make sure that Iraqi Army troops did not fall into the same pattern of smuggling and illegal activities. Even so, some fuel drivers reported that Iraqi Army soldiers had approached them asking for bribes in return for providing the drivers’ safety.

Both US and Iraqi officials agreed that the biggest issue created the large black market was corruption; “police officers demanded bribes of as much as $1,000 to let tankers pass through checkpoints or for ‘protection’ along route,” and “some government officials worked directly with smugglers or secretly owned gas stations and fuel trucks, giving them a share of money earned through illicit sales.”

In addition to providing full time military surveillance of the Baiji refinery, the US planned to spend $12 million to install video cameras and new digital scales to make sure that fuel trucks did not carry extra fuel with them. As with other aspects of the new security plan, it would take several months to assess whether the crackdown on the oil black-market produced real results.

Figure 7.3: Oil Production, Million of Barrels per day: May 2006 - March 2007


The Problem of Electricity

Most key government services affecting Iraq’s infrastructures had suffered from the insurgency, and become another underlying cause of civil violence. The electricity sector, for example, continued to suffer from lack of security and slow reconstruction. The President’s new plan recognized the importance of providing basic services to all Iraqis, but it had become clear that building the infrastructure and securing it would take several more years. The electrical grid was underdeveloped during Saddam Hussein’s regime, and therefore required long and costly
modernization. The patience of many Iraqis, however, particularly in Baghdad where most of the Saddam era power had been directed, was quickly fading.

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) reported that the electricity sector received the second largest allocation of IRRF funds in 2006. At the end of 2006, 65% of IRRF funded electricity projects were complete. The US contributed a total of 2,817 MW to Iraq’s electrical generation capacity. The SIGIR Quarterly Report to Congress at the end of January 2007 noted that Baghdad continued to receive less electricity than the rest of the country, as shown in Figure 7.4.165

A GAO report to Congress in January cited the following critical challenges facing the electricity sector:166

The deteriorating security environment continues to pose a serious challenge to Iraq’s electricity system, leading, in part, to project delays and increased costs for security services. Electrical workers and infrastructure are inadequately protected and are subject to targeted attacks. The security situation also makes it difficult to get workers, parts, and equipment to sites. Moreover, looting and vandalism have continued since 2003, and major electrical transmission and fuel lines have been repeatedly sabotaged, cutting power to other parts of the country. According to Ministry of Electricity and U.S. officials, workers are frequently intimidated by anti-Iraqi forces, and have difficulty repairing downed lines.

In an effort to stop the sabotage, the ministry contracted with tribal chiefs to protect the transmission lines running through their areas, paying them about $60 to $100 per kilometer, according to State’s Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO). However, in October 2006, IRMO officials reported that this scheme was flawed and did not result in improved infrastructure protection...

The US reconstruction program has encountered difficulties with Iraq’s ability to sustain new and rehabilitated infrastructure and address fuel requirements. Iraq’s electricity sector suffers from deteriorated, outdated, and inefficient infrastructure resulting from two decades of underinvestment in operations and maintenance, replacement, and expansion. This weakened infrastructure has led to unplanned outages.

The rebuilding of the electricity sector has been slowed by the lack of training to enhance the skills of plant workers, inadequate spare parts, and an ineffective asset management and parts inventory system. Moreover, plants are sometimes operated beyond their recommended limits and use poor-quality fuels that rapidly deteriorate parts, involve longer maintenance downtimes, and increase pollution. According to US government officials, Iraq needs to develop cleaner and more reliable sources of natural gas for its generators and to formulate an integrated fuel strategy to address these needs. Currently, Iraq’s fuel supply does not meet demand and its quality is inconsistent.

For example, of the 35 natural gas turbines the US government installed in power generation plants, 16 are using diesel, crude, or heavy fuel oil due to the lack of natural gas and lighter fuels. As a result, maintenance cycles are reportedly three times as frequent and three times as costly. Poor-quality fuels also decrease the power output of the turbines by up to 50 percent and can result in equipment failure and damage, according to US and Iraqi power plant officials. The US government also estimates that Iraq is flaring enough natural gas to generate at least 4,000 mw of electrical power. Because of natural gas shortages, diesel has to be imported at a cost of about $1.2 billion a year, thus straining economic resources.

To make up for electrical shortages, many Iraqi citizens:167

…Established private entrepreneurial generator arrangements to produce electricity on a neighborhood or building basis, therefore underestimating total electrical production. The gap between government-produced supply and consumer demand continues to increase due to the failure to add or rehabilitate capacity, as well as inadequate security, operations, and maintenance practices for the generation and transmission infrastructure. A surging demand is exacerbated by the fact that Iraqis pay very little, if anything, for electricity. Reform of electricity charges for consumers is key to the long-term viability of Iraq’s electricity sector.
In a Press Briefing on March 1, 2007, Army Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, Commander of the Army Corp of Engineers in the Gulf, told reporters that a full electrical grid in Iraq would most likely not be available until 2013. He added that Baghdad residents continued to receive only six to seven hours of electricity per day. The principal form of generation for many Iraqis was generators, often shared throughout a neighborhood. Part of the problem, in addition to insufficient power lines and continued insurgent attacks against infrastructure, was a huge rise in demand (20-32%) after the 2003 invasion and the lifting of international sanctions. Walsh also reminded skeptics that during Saddam Hussein’s rule, Baghdad typically received three times the power of the rest of Iraq, his point being that current distribution was more equitable.¹⁶⁸

**Figure 7.4: Iraq Average Hours Electricity Received, January 10 – March 14, 2007**

![Figure 7.4](image-url)

VIII. Changes in the Sunni Insurgency

Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia remained the dominant insurgent threat in Iraq. Increasingly, however, the “Islamic State of Iraq” claimed responsibility for attacks. The Islamic State was founded in the fall of 2006 and served as an umbrella group for loosely affiliated insurgent groups. Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi was the symbolic emir of the Islamic State, which consisted of at least ten insurgent groups, including Al Qa’ida in Iraq and Ansar al Sunna. The Islamic State claimed territory in the Sunni areas of Baghdad and Kirkuk, the provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Nineveh and parts of Babil and Wasit.

As Moqtada al Sadr stood down the Mahdi Army, the President’s new security plan primarily targeted Sunni insurgents in Baghdad. There were a number of large scale suicide bombings during the first month of the new offensive, and insurgents continued to use IEDs against military and civilian targets. There was also evidence that the insurgency in Baghdad was moving to the urban belt surrounding the capital. Diyala province saw a marked increase in insurgent activity, putting US and Iraqi forces under considerable strain. Sectarian violence fell in February and early March, but it was clear the insurgency sought to provoke sectarian violence and Shi’ite reprisal attacks.

The Defense Intelligence Agency assessed the threat of the Sunni insurgency in late February as follows:

Attacks by terrorist groups account for only a fraction of insurgent violence, yet the high-profile nature of their operations and tactics have a disproportionate impact. Al- Qaida in Iraq (AQI) is the largest and most active of the Iraq-based terrorist groups. AQI’s attacks against Iraqi government targets and Coalition Forces continue with a particular intent to accelerate sectarian violence and destabilize Baghdad. AQI is one of the most visible perpetrators of anti-Shi’a attacks in Iraq and has capitalized on the current cycle of sectarian violence by increasing perceptions its operations are in defense of Sunni interests. AQI will continue to attempt to dominate the news cycle with sensational attacks. Ansar al-Sunna, the second most prominent terrorist group in Iraq, also poses a threat to stability in Iraq; however its longstanding ties to AQI are increasingly strained. Hard numbers for foreign fighters in the Iraq insurgency are unavailable. DIA judges less than 10% of insurgents are foreign fighters. The majority of these individuals are used as suicide bombers.

The March 2007 Department of Defense stability and security report came to a similar conclusion:

[Al Qa’ida in Iraq] AQI and associated foreign fighters attack Coalition and GOI targets and both Shiites and Sunnis to further AQI’s goal of establishing an Islamic state in Iraq and to build a sanctuary to support operations against targets outside Iraq.

Goals of Sunni Insurgents:

- Expel U.S. and Coalition forces from Iraq
- Topple the “unity” government
- Re-establish Sunni governance in Anbar and Diyala

Goals of AQI:

- Force Coalition forces withdrawal
- Gain territory to export conflict
- Provoke clash between Islam and others
• Establish caliphate with Shari’a governance

The new security plan did lead to several successes against the insurgency. On February 14, 2007 various source reported that Abu Ayyub al-Masri – leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq - was wounded in clashes with Iraqi Army forces in Balad. Reports also said that his aide, Abu Abdullah al-Majemaai, was killed. The announcement came from Interior Minister Spokesman Brig. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf, but could not be confirmed by the US military.\(^{170}\)

In addition, on March 13, 2007 Reuters reported that Iraqi Police arrested Ahmed Faraj and Ali Jassim, leaders in the 20th Revolutionary Brigades insurgent group, in Abu Ghraib district in the western outskirts of Baghdad. The Brigades did not join the Mujahdeen Shura Council or the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006, but had been known to work with Al Qaeda on some attacks. The Brigades, however, stated that personal tensions with Al Qaeda’s tactics and leadership led the group to remain outside the Islamic State. Former Ba’athist extremist groups, for the most part, did not join forces with Al Qaeda.\(^{171}\)

**Evolving Tactics**

The tactical aspect of the insurgency remained low-tech. However, the variety of tactics employed and consistently changing methods of implementation helped the insurgency remain one step ahead of US military technological superiority. IEDs were the primary threat to US troops on the ground, contributing to some 65% of US deaths, according the Secretary of Defense Gates. Insurgents also focused on downing US helicopters in late January and early February. Suicide bomb attacks against Iraqi civilians took hundreds of lives in ethnically mixed areas, despite the increased numbers of Iraqi and US troops.

In addition to IEDs, VBIEDs, and suicide bombings, the first several weeks of the Baghdad security plan saw several new, although still low-tech, tactics. In mid-January, insurgents dressed in full US military uniform attacked the provincial governor’s office in Karbala. Insurgents regularly acquired ISF uniforms and vehicles, but had never so effectively disguised themselves as US troops.\(^{172}\) In early February, US troops found a stash of hundreds of American uniforms, flak jackets, helmets, and armored plates in a warehouse in Baghdad. The military was investigating how the insurgents acquired the gear.\(^{173}\)

Insurgents also attacked a US military combat outpost in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad. Suicide bombers drove at least one car – and up to three – into the compound on February 19, 2007. Witnesses said the cars exploded as they hit the outer perimeter wall, killing two and wounding 29. Additional insurgents entered the compound after the explosions and opened fire.

US troops had only entered Tarmiya in December 2006, when local police forces collapsed. Residents said that Sunni insurgents waged an intimidation campaign against security forces for two years, until they finally fled. They also pushed the minority Shi’a residents out of the town of 25,000. Both the US military and Iraqi residents said that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia was largest insurgent force in the area. Although casualties were minimal, it was first attack against a fortified US compound in some time.\(^{174}\)

Another series of attacks in the first week of March targeted Shi’a pilgrims traveling to Karbala for a religious festival. IEDs and suicide bombings over several days killed roughly 220 pilgrims and wounded many more. Insurgents had attacked Shi’a pilgrims multiple times since 2003 in efforts to push Shi’ites toward civil war. In this case, al Sadr had stood down his Mahdi Army to
avoid open confrontation with the US at the start of the new Baghdad security plan, and insurgents sought to again push Shi’ite militias toward sectarian revenge attacks. A spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq, which claimed responsibility for the attacks, said they were “more successful than we had expected.” He also said that two Saudi suicide bombers were responsible for killing 77 of the pilgrims in Hilla.\footnote{175}

Insurgents also continued attacks against Iraqi security forces. ISF checkpoints and police stations were targeted on a daily basis, and a number of police stations were destroyed by bombs in February and March. One of the largest attacks occurred on March 18, 2007. Insurgents representing the Islamic State of Iraq disguised themselves as car mechanics and planted several bombs in the garage of a hotel used as an Iraqi Army post in Falluja. The attack killed and wounded about 20 people and destroyed the building.\footnote{176} In another incident, insurgents attacked a police station in Duluiyah, just north of Baghdad, and threatened the five policemen with execution until they pledged to quit their jobs and swear allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq. The insurgents stole weaponry and communications equipment then burned the station to the ground.\footnote{177}

**Sectarian Displacement**

Insurgent tactics all contributed to a campaign of soft sectarian cleansing against other sects and opposition Sunni groups. Documents captured from an aide to Abu Ayub al-Masri in December 2006 described these tactics. Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia sought to push Shi’ites out of western Baghdad, followed by the provinces of Salahuddin, Diyala, and eastern Anbar. US intelligence officials said that success of Shi’ite militias in 2006 in preventing this goal led to frustration and disorganization among Al Qa’ida operatives. As a result, insurgents began operating more out of the area in which they were a majority, mainly the belt around Baghdad including Baquba and Falluja, which US officials said contributed to increased insurgent activity at the time of the US “surge.”

A new tactic used in Diyala Province, mass burning of houses, created dozens more internally displaced persons. Diyala saw a sharp rise in insurgent attacks since the start of the Baghdad security plan, but it had long been a base of several insurgent groups, including Al Qa’ida in Iraq, Ansar al Sunna, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades, and Former Regime Elements.

On March 11, insurgents burned dozens of homes in the town of Muqadiya, Diyala Province. A security officials said 30 homes were burned, but witnesses said as many as 100 were torched. One report said that both Sunni and Shi’ite homes were burned, while another said that the neighborhood was largely Shi’ite. Members of the police and armed forces appeared to be singled out. Victims, however, all blamed the Islamic State of Iraq. A spokesman for the self-proclaimed Islamic State said that the attacks had targeted members of the Shi’ite Mahdi Army. Many of the remaining houses were seen flying the Islamic State flag.\footnote{178}

**Helicopter Attacks**

Insurgents continued to attack US troops as long as they remained in Iraq. Between January 20, 2007 and February 23, at least eight US helicopters were shot down in Iraq. Sunni insurgents had made claims in January that they had acquired new ways to shot down US aircraft, and in December, a spokesman for Ba’athist groups said that insurgents received new anti-aircraft missiles.\footnote{179} Documents captured from insurgents indicated that Al Qa’ida leaders urged fighters
to concentrate on the helicopters.\textsuperscript{180} The series of attacks brought to 60 the number of US helicopters lost since the start of the war – 30 of those downed by enemy fire.\textsuperscript{181}

The insurgents had good reason to find a new group of targets, and helicopters were an attractive option. All of the insurgent groups were fully aware that the US was increasingly vulnerable to attacks on its own forces, those of Iraq, and large, high-profile attacks on Iraqi civilians. The more media attention the insurgents could get through such attacks, the more likely it was that US domestic politics would increase pressure for withdrawal from Iraq or place limits on the use of US forces.

If the insurgents “swarmed” around helicopters as a target, they also could use virtually any automatic weapon, manportable surface-to-air missiles, and even RPGs. An ambush could simply consist of training insurgent troops to “swarm” their fire if a helicopter simply happened to fly by, or it could consist of a wide variety of planned efforts to prepare for an attack. In any case, the insurgent effort was limited and no new weapons were needed.

Helicopters were also highly desirable tactical targets. They were the key to rapid and relatively secure movement of forces and personnel. IEDs made the roads unsafe for small, isolated movements and road movement took time. Moreover, it took large security forces to provide relatively security for even a well-organized convoy.

In early 2007, if the insurgents could limit helicopter use, or force a major addition in the US security effort, they gained in military as well as political terms. They had already forced the US into a vast military and contractor force protection and rear area security effort.

Attacking helicopters had other advantages. The helicopters had to fly long routes, which meant they could be attacked over wide areas and insurgents could disperse to limit their vulnerability to counterattack. The flight profiles, and helicopter speed and height, were predictable, but this was a war of attrition. Insurgents could simply wait anywhere in the normal flight area until a helicopter became easy to attack.

In many areas, the attacker did not have to be road bound, expanding the area that must be put under surveillance and/or protected. If the helicopter flew low, it could be hit be guns. If a chopper flew high, it became more vulnerable to light, manportable surface-to-air missiles like the SA-7 or SA-14 and their far more sophisticated successors.

Attacking a helicopter as it came into or went out of a base or facility was also a way of bypassing its force protection while being able to place the attacker in areas where helicopters had more frequent ingress and egress, the attacker could hide in built up areas, and counterattacks presented problems in terms of civilian casualties and collateral damage. While insurgents did not yet seem to have focused on this fact, such attacks were also a means of attacking contractor movements, since many contractors used their own or chartered helicopters and were less able to provide protection than US forces.

Like IED attacks, suicide bombs, car bombs, and the increased use of snipers; helicopter attacks were yet another way of “stretching” the US and Iraqi forces politically and militarily at the same time at very little cost and with little dedicated training. Simply attacking enough helicopters could cost the US a great deal in terms of defensive effort even if successes become rare, and like IEDs, simple improvements in technology – like the import of SA- 16s and other more sophisticated SHORADs – could challenge new US defensive tactics and countermeasures.
To counter the helicopter attacks, the US military imposed no-fly zones. Many of the no-fly zones were north of Baghdad, where most of the helicopters were shot down. US pilots also started flying higher and at night. The new tactics seemed to be working; there were no new attacks on helicopters after February 23, 2007. But pilots also acknowledged that it was only a short-term solution and insurgents would soon figure out the new circuitous travel routes. US pilots were expected to log 400,000 flight hours in 2007, up from 240,000 in 2005.¹⁸²

### Chemical Bombs

In addition to helicopter attacks in February and March 2007, insurgents combined explosives with chlorine gas in attacks against Iraqi civilians. In three attacks in February 2007, insurgent suicide bombers detonated explosive laden trucks that also carried canisters of chlorine gas. Some 30 civilians were killed in these attacks, and hundreds were sent to the hospital with chlorine gas poisoning. All of the attacks occurred in the outer ring of Baghdad, where US security was less tight. The bombs did not reflect a new level of warfare of weaponry, but rather showed that insurgents still focused on using readily available resources against Iraqi civilians in “shock and awe” attacks.¹⁸³

Another series of chemical attacks occurred on March 16, 2007. Three suicide bombers detonated trucks carrying explosives and chlorine gas in separate attacks throughout the day. The first suicide bomber detonated his truck at a checkpoint in Ramadi, killing one US soldier and an Iraqi civilian. The second attack occurred two hours later when the bomber detonated a dump truck just south of Falluja, killing two Iraqi policemen and poisoning some 100 residents. The final attack also occurred near Falluja; 200 gallons of chlorine gas exploded, poisoning another 250 people.¹⁸⁴

### The Propaganda War

Insurgents continued to make effective use of propaganda to turn public opinion against the US and to incite sectarian violence. One popular TV station, Al-Zawraa TV, repeatedly showed violent insurgent attacks against US forces. Other frequent targets of animosity were the Iraqi government and al-Qaida in Iraq.

Al-Zawraa anchors wore Old Iraqi Army uniforms and were associated with ex-Ba’athists. The station was owned by Mishan al-Jibourni, a parliamentary who fled to Syria after charges of corruption.

Viewers of al-Zawraa said that it had developed a “cult following” of sorts among Iraqi Sunnis. The station and its owner seemed to support small, localized insurgent groups that attacked the occupation, rather than foreign associated organizations, such as Al Qa’ida. Jibourni blamed Al Qa’ida for instigating sectarian violence and threatening Iraqi unity.

US and Iraqi government officials opposed the station because they said it showed viewers how to make homegrown bombs and where to target US forces. The Iraqi government, however, made no effort to shutdown the station and US military counterinsurgent propaganda was out of date and insufficient.¹⁸⁵

### The Role of Foreign Volunteers

Foreign fighters continued to augment the largely homegrown Iraqi Sunni insurgency. The evidence pointed to regional countries – Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt – as the source of
most volunteers. But the development of the conflict in Iraq into a larger sectarian civil war offered a different kind of motivation for foreign fighters. Insurgent networks were able to use the Shi’ite militias’ soft sectarian cleansing against Sunnis as rallying points for their cause.

For example, US military and intelligence officials traced suicide bombers in Iraq to a small town in Morocco, where residents said that roughly two dozen men responded to Al Qa’ida recruitment propaganda. Moroccan authorities said that some 50 volunteers went to Iraq since 2003 that they knew of.

Morocco and its neighbors cracked down on insurgent groups operating in their countries, and made dozens of arrests, but they said it was increasingly difficult to contain them. There was also evidence that rivaling Islamic extremist groups in North Africa had put aside their differences and joined together to recruit fighters for Iraq and increased their affiliation with Al Qa’ida.\(^{186}\)
IX. The Role of Shi’ite Militias

The Samarra mosque bombing in February 2006 – which the Bush administration downplayed at the time - was only the most visible symbol of sectarian conflict that began in 2004. Former Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al Jaafari said in January 2007 that Shi’ite militias had infiltrated security forces long before the mosque bombing and that top US officials had ignored his warnings about the militias.187

Moqtada al Sadr’s Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization continued to be the most power Shi’ite militias in Iraq. The March 2007 Department of Defense “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report said the following about the objectives of the Shi’ite militias:

Shi’a sectarian militias have differing objectives, which occasionally lead to violence. JAM, which is associated with Muqtada al-Sadr, conducts attacks and provides services in support of Sadr’s efforts to dominate the Shi’a areas of Baghdad and the south. The Badr Organization often works against JAM and in support of SCIRI and its political agenda of autonomy in the south.

Internal Shi’ite Tensions

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

On January 28, 2007 several hundred Shi’ite militants battled US and Iraqi forces just north of Najaf. The fighters were planning an attack on top Shi’ite clerics, including Ayatollah Sistani, on the Shi’ite Ashura festival. They were first described as Sunni insurgents – based on information that they were attacking Shi’ites – but were later ascribed to a Shi’ite millenarian group called Jund al-Sama. In the day long fight, US and Iraqi forces killed over 200 militants and confiscated 500 rifles, mortars, machine guns, and Katyusha rockets.188 Provincial control of Najaf had been turned over to Iraq in December 2006, but Iraqi troops quickly called in US reinforcements.189

In the following days, it became clear that many of the Shi’ite fighters were foreign and that they had entrenched themselves for a long battle. Each fighter had surplus supplies of food, clear identification, and they had dug a 6 foot dirt berm and a trench surrounding their camp. The camp itself included 30 concrete buildings. The group also had its own books and newspapers, all led by Dhyaa Abdul-Zahra, who also claimed to be the Mahdi.

An Iraqi soldier said that without US reinforcements, the ISF would have taken at least two weeks to penetrate the camp. Both US and Iraqi officials pointed to the success of the battle, which possibly saved the lives of top Shi’ite clerics. Yet it was also clear that even in one of the safest provinces, US forces were still needed and ISF capabilities were insufficient.190

Gen. Qais Hamza al-Mamouri, chief of police for Babil Province, said that the leader of the group – Ahmad bin al-Hassan al-Basri – was actually a Sunni takfiri imposter posing as a Shi’ite. Hamza said that his family was Sunni, but he had trained to be a Shi’ite. The general did not provide further evidence.191 Several weeks later, Iraqi police forces arrested another 38 members of the groups in the city of Hilla.192

The appearance of the small militia in Najaf raised fears that numerous similar organizations operated in Iraq and could carry out attacks against any ethnic group.193 The planned attack was an isolated incident and it was doubtful that the group would appear again in the near future, but
it did underscore the heterogeneous nature of armed Shi’ite groups and the need for better metrics gauging control of economic and political space.

Another clash between rival Shi’ite groups in the south occurred on March 22, 2007. Fighting erupted when members of the Mahdi army attacked the headquarters of the Fadhila party in Basra with guns and mortars. They also attacked the governor’s office, who was a member of Fadhila. Fadhila headed much of the local government in Basra and controlled oil facilities, but had recently withdrawn from the Shi’ite coalition in the national government.

A British Embassy spokeswoman said that the violence was “not encouraging.” Fadhila and Sadrists played down the fighting as a personal dispute. Nine people were wounded and a curfew was put in place. At the very least, the incident drew into question statements by the British military that the south was stable and secure.

**Sadr and the Mahdi Army**

Moqtada al Sadr was the principal potential Shi’ite challenge to the new security plan. He had clashed with US and British forces twice before, and was the most vocal opponent of a continued US presence in Iraq. At the same time, like all of the Shi’ite and Kurdish factions, he stood to gain if the US led an effort that effectively secured Baghdad for a Shi’ite led government, strengthened Shi’ite dominated Iraqi forces, and then moved on to attack the insurgents in other areas.

Sadr also stood to benefit personally if the operation in Baghdad destroyed rogue or undisciplined elements in his militia while leaving the rest of his forces intact. This may explain why Sadr did not resist the US and ISF operation, although he loudly condemned it, and stood down his militia.

It is impossible to be certain of Sadr’s motives, but this clearly played to his advantage. Sadr also may have felt he had had more to win in a relatively peaceful power struggle for a political and economic role in a Shi’ite coalition than having his militia fight a combination of the US and ISF in Baghdad. He faced a future in which outside powers were very likely to largely leave at some point in 2008, Sistani seemed to be losing practical influence over events, and Sadr may have felt figures like SCIRI’s Hakim and Prime Minister Maliki would fade. Tactically backing other Shi’ite leaders in using the US also meant that various rivals or rogue operations in the Mahdi militia that were not directly loyal to him would either lose power or be defeated in clashes with US and ISF forces. He benefited from their defeat and could exploit that defeat to attack the US politically at the same time.

At the same time, it was far from clear that the Mahdi Army would not continue to play a role in future violence. There was still a strong possibility that Sadr would revive the militia after the departure of US combat forces. Although Sadr’s tactics changed with the arrival of additional US troops, his strategic goals were the same. The DoD quarterly report defined the goals of the Mahdi Army as follows:

- Force Coalition forces withdrawal
- Consolidate control over Baghdad and the [Government of Iraq] GOI
- Exert control over security institutions
- Implement *Shari’a* governance
Some of Sadr’s subordinates were more open in indicating that al Sadr did not plan to engage the US ‘surge’ head on in late January 2007. On January 24, 2007 Rahim al-Daraji, spokesman for the Mahdi Army and Mayor of Sadr City, spoke with Coalition military officials about a plan to avoid armed confrontation under the new Baghdad security push. He said that Mahdi militiamen would not carry guns in public if the US and Iraqi governments agreed to better secure Sadr City. He said that he represented 14 military and political groups in Sadr City. His proposal appeared to be in tune with al-Sadr’s drawdown of his Mahdi Army loyalists. Daraji said that the dialogue would be ongoing, although some of his demands, such as cessation of US military raids in Sadr City, seemed unlikely points of agreement.195

Another Sadr loyalist in Sadr City, local council head Abdul Hussein Kaabai, said that Sadr and the Mahdi Army would “fully cooperate with the government to make the plan successful.” Political analysts in Baghdad were divided about whether Sadr was making a fundamental political change by standing down his militia or whether he was simply waiting for the departure of US troops to continue a process of soft sectarian cleansing against other groups.196 Yet a Sadr official said that al-Sadr supported the al-Daraji but made it clear that the mayor did not represent all of Sadr City.197 Unfortunately, Daraji was shot and wounded by gunmen on March 16, 2007.

A Mahdi militiaman in Sadr City said that all loyal fighters of the militia were told by their respective commanders that al-Sadr called on them to avoid confrontation with US forces and not to carry weapons in public. An aide to Prime Minister Maliki said that the government took notice that Sadr was standing down his militia, but said that al-Maliki had taken measures to make the “classic insurgency tactic” a failure. The aide did not go into detail about how the Iraqi government was countering Sadr’s unanticipated actions.198

Outgoing US General Casey said in a written statement, “We have seen numerous indications Shi’a militia leaders will leave, or already have left, Sadr City to avoid capture by Iraqi and coalition security forces.” Casey acknowledged that the standing down of the Mahdi Army would present a challenge to the Iraqi government and the 2007 Baghdad security plan.199 It appeared increasingly likely that the offensive by US and Iraqi troops in the capital would encounter resistance from Sunni insurgents and rogue members of Shi’ite militias, leaving Sadr’s loyalists in the Mahdi Army intact.

Sadr’s motives were almost certainly sectarian as well as personal. Despite Sadr’s denial that he approved sectarian cleansing, a former Mahdi Army member living in Jordan told Jane’s Intelligence Review, “It was very simple, we were ethnically cleansing. Anyone Sunni was guilty. If you were called Omar, Uthman, Zayed, Sufian or something like that, then you would be killed. These are Sunni names and they were killed according to identity.” He said that the Mahdi Army was responsible for killing at least 30 Sunnis a day in Baghdad.

By mid-February, the usually clearly armed and dressed Mahdi Army was not visible in Sadr City. In checkpoints surrounding the neighborhood, men without visible weapons stood in track suits next to police commandos. In previous months, Mahdi members wore black and patrolled the streets with large weapons in plain view.200

There was some confusion as to Sadr’s location at the start of the Baghdad plan on February 13, 2007. MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell stated that Sadr was in Iran, but Sadr’s aides denied this. If indeed Sadr was in Iran, it was unclear whether he had fled for personal reasons,
fear of his safety. The US military believed that he was still in Iran a month after the start of new plan.

Despite continued insurgent attacks against Shi’ites, including bombings of pilgrims traveling to Karbala for a Shi’ite religious festival, the Mahdi Army did not retaliate. US operations began in Sadr City in the first week of March, and joint US and Iraqi troops were allowed to search homes uninhibited. Markets in Sadr City were busy, and the usually very visible black clad Mahdi militiamen had slipped back into the population.

A Sadr aide, however, read a statement in late February emphasizing the need for more Iraqi control over the Baghdad security plan. It read, “There is no good that comes from a security plan controlled by our enemies, the occupiers. If you stay away from them, God will protect you from horror and harm. Make sure your plans are purely Iraqi and not sectarian.”

It also appeared that Mahdi militiamen, which numbered some 60,000, were heeding Sadr’s call. One Mahdi fighter interviewed by the Washington Post said that he wanted to seek revenge for attacks against Shi’ite pilgrims traveling to Karbala in early March. He said that in 2006, the Mahdi Army had secured all the roads to Karbala and no attacks against Shi’ites occurred, but multiple suicide and roadside bombings in 2007 killed up to 150 pilgrims and wounded many more. He added, however, “We are still committed and comply with the words of our leader, Moqtada Sadr, which call for calm and self-restraint.”

In an interview with USA Today, General Petraeus stated that Coalition forces had captured some 700 members of the Mahdi Army during the first month of the Baghdad security plan. The majority of those detainees were most likely rogue members of the militia who challenged Sadr’s authority. Petraeus also said that the Iraqi government was actively negotiating with Sadr’s officials in an effort to officially disband the Mahdi Army.

The US military also announced the release of Sheik Ahmed Shibani – Sadr’s spokesman who had been arrested by the US in clashes with the Mahdi Army in September 2004. An Iraqi court had acquitted Shibani on charges of weapons possession in 2006, but the US military did not release him. A US military spokesman said that Prime Minister Maliki had requested his release several times, and the US had determined that he could help “moderate extremism and foster reconciliation in Iraq.”

**Divisions in the Sadr Movement**

There were heated rivalries within the Sadrist movement between the political and military wings, both of which believed they were the ultimate source of Sadr’s power. When rivalries between the two sides developed, the military brigades sometimes took violent action against their own Mahdi politicians, leading to the creation of rogue death squads who answered to no one. In 2007, the division between the Sadrist politicians and military members boiled down to a disagreement over the legitimacy of ethnic cleansing.

Sadr himself refused to publicly acknowledge that his movement had splintered into rivaling groups, but his decision in early 2007 to stand down his loyalists – allowing US/Iraki forces to target those who did not lay down their weapons – indicated that he sought to eliminate rogue members.

Two Mahdi commanders who talked to the Associated Press also stated that the Mahdi Army was splintering. They said that at least 3,000 Mahdi fighters were no longer loyal to Sadr and
were now financed and trained by the Iranian Quds Force. The commanders said that many
militiamen had fled the US “surge” in Baghdad to Iran and were operating under the alias of an
Iraqi refugee organization. Within Iraq, however, an increasing number of Mahdi Army cells
were splintering off, but still used membership in the militia as a cover. A US military
intelligence official agreed that Mahdi cells appeared to be breaking with Sadr, but he could not
confirm the relationship with Iran.208

Another US official said that at least two Shi’ite rivals were competing for control of parts of the
Mahdi Army while Sadr was in Iran. US military officials said they hoped to benefit from fewer
Mahdi Army attacks and internal arguments within Sadr’s movement, but also recognized in the
in the long term, the splintering of Sadrists into smaller groups would make them harder to
defeat.209

At the end of March 2007, Sadr’s location was still largely unknown. He clearly, however, had
more to gain in a relatively peaceful power struggle for a political and economic role in a Shi’ite
coalition than having his militia fight a combination of the US and ISF in Baghdad.
X. The Kurdish Dimension: Compromise or Time Bomb?

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

The Kurds engaged in diplomatic talks with the US on the possible political options for stability in Iraq. In late January 2007 the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) representative to the US, Qubad Talabany, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Talabany that the key issues facing Iraq were as follows:

- Resolving and passing Iraq’s National Oil, Revenues Sharing and budget laws; revising and implementing a sound de-Ba’athification policy; devising an amnesty program that separates terrorists from those who have legitimate grievances; taking necessary steps to disarm and bring to justice death squads and rogue militias; and addressing, once and for all, the tense issue of Kirkuk and its future.

Talabany also reaffirmed the Kurdish position that federalism would ultimately bring “long term, sustainable political settlement in Iraq.” He said that as long as central power rested in Baghdad, violence would continue.

On the issue of oil, Talabany said that he supported the draft oil law, made public in early January and approved by the Iraqi cabinet in late February, as long as regions retained the ultimate right to make and sever contracts. He agreed with the law that oil revenues should be distributed to regions based on population and that a national oil policy had the potential to bring stability and peace to Iraq.

Finally, Talabany said that he hoped the US would not interfere with the constitutional mandate that Kirkuk hold a census and referendum for inclusion in Kurdistan in 2007. Talabany’s emphasis on the federalism issue, however, showed Kurdish priorities.

The KRG also reported plans to triple the number of foreign oil companies in the region by the end of 2007. The Kurdish energy minister, Ashti Hawrami, said that the KRG was in discussion with a Norwegian company and two American oil companies. He said the goal was to have fifteen foreign contractors operating in Kurdistan. The oil law was suspected to be approved by Parliament by May 2007, but the KRG said it would continue with plans to expand the number of foreign companies regardless of the status of the law. He also said that the KRG supporting sharing oil revenues with the central government to distribute throughout the country.

The Issue of Kirkuk

The struggle for Kirkuk remained important and unresolved in the first several months of 2007. In mid January the US rejected Turkey’s call for delaying the referendum planned for November 2007. Turkey – along with Iraq’s Turkomen and Arabs - argued that the roughly 100,000 Kurdish refugees in Kirkuk unfairly altered the demographics. Turkish Prime Minister Ergodan said, “Turkey cannot just sit idly and watch the demographic structure of Kirkuk change,” and called for delaying the referendum at least five years. The US, however, maintained that the date of the referendum was in Iraq’s Constitution and therefore only the Iraqi government could change the date. The referendum issue clearly heightened tensions between Ankara and Washington.
In the last reliable census, taken in 1957, Turkmen made up 40% of the population, Kurds composed 35%, Arabs 24%, and Christians 1%. During Saddam Hussein’s regime, the number of Turkmen and Kurds dropped dramatically in his Arabization campaign, but exact numbers were unknown. US and Iraqi officials estimated that some 350,000 Kurds returned to the Kirkuk area since 2003.

Violence in Kirkuk would increase leading up the census scheduled for July 2007. Gen. Anwar Mohammad Amin, the top Iraqi commander in Kirkuk, said, “We expect increased violence the closer we get to the referendum.” Iraqi officials said they were increasingly concerned about the activities of the two main Sunni insurgents groups operating in Kirkuk – Ansar al Sunna and the Islamic Army in Iraq.

Kurdish officials began offering Arabs incentives to forfeit voting rights for the referendum. Arabs would receive $19,000 if they moved from their homes and gave up their voting rights. Further, in late March 2007 the central Iraqi cabinet approved a decision to pay Arab families $15,000 each to leave Kirkuk. The offer would be extended to Arab families that had been forced to move to Kirkuk during Saddam Hussein’s Arabization campaign; they would be given a piece of land in their original towns. Despite deteriorating economic conditions, however, it was unlikely that many Arab families would voluntarily relocate, effectively giving Kirkuk to Kurdistan.

**The Turkish Question**

Tensions between the Kurds and Turkey continued to escalate in the winter and early spring of 2007. On January 27, 2007 units from the Turkish forces attempted to cross into Kurdistan. Peshmerga forces detected the Kurdish troops and refused to allow them into Kurdistan. Turkish fighter jets circled the area as Peshmerga forces secured border crossings.

Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul reiterated Turkey’s objections to Kirkuk being included into Kurdistan. Gul said that it was important for the Kurds to remember that Turkey provided northern Iraq with electricity and 90% of its refined oil. He also against urged US action against PKK rebels and said that he would not accept a double standard; Turkey provided troops to Afghanistan.

There were also internal tensions in Turkey between the government and the military over what type of action to take against Kurdish rebels in Iraq. General Yasar Buyukanit, chief of the Turkish General Staff, said that two groups in northern Iraq were supporting the PKK and that action should be taken against them. However, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said, “Soldiers speak with weapons ... but in order not to come to that point politicians and diplomats must do their work too. It would be a big mistake to turn this issue into a polemic.” Buyukanit put the total number of rebels in Iraq at present at 3,500.

There were reports, however, that Kurdish officials were seeking direct reconciliation talks with Turkey. In late February the leader of the KDP, one of the two Kurdish parties making up the KRG, Massoud Barzani, called for direct talks with Turkey over the issue of the PKK. Barzani said, “Dialogue is the best way to resolve problems and understandings. We must talk face to face to understand each other’s position. This will be followed by [discussions on] what should be done and necessary actions… We are extending to Turkey a hand of friendship. We will be pleased if Turkey responds in kinds.” He denied that the KRG supported the PKK, but urged
Turkey to follow political ends to curbing PKK rebel activity. Barzani, however, rejected Turkish calls for postponement of the referendum scheduled for Kirkuk in July 2007.218

In his January 10, 2007 speech, President Bush vowed to work with Turkey against the PKK. A week after the President’s speech, US and Iraqi troops raided the Mahmoud refugee camp in northern Iraq, which Turkey believed was a PKK safehaven.

Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns said that the raid marked the beginning of US crackdown on rebel activity and better relations with Turkey. Turkey’s Foreign Ministry welcomed the attack and said, “We desire a continuation of such steps... in the context of our hope for an end to the presence and activities of the PKK terrorist organization in Iraq.” 219 There did not appear to be any follow-up attacks, however, and cracking down on the PKK was clearly not a US priority in the early spring of 2007.

In March, Turkey reiterated the need for the US to take action against the PKK and pledged Turkey’s own military intentions against a suspected PKK spring offensive. Foreign Minister Gul and Turkish military officials said in late March that 3,800 PKK rebels were planning attack in south-east Turkey. Gul stated, “We will do what we have to do, we will do what is necessary. Nothing is ruled out. I have said to the Americans many times: suppose there is a terrorist organization in Mexico attacking America. What would you do? ... We are hopeful. We have high expectations. But we cannot just wait forever.”

In preparation for PKK attacks, Turkish special forces began conducting operations in Khaftanin and Qanimasi in northern Iraq. A PKK leader threatened that war was foreseeable unless Turkey removed the forces. Public pressure in Turkey was also forcing Prime Minister Erdogan to take action before upcoming elections.

In response to Turkish concerns, assistant secretary of state Daniel Fried said, “We are committed to eliminating the threat of PKK terrorism in northern Iraq.” But US special envoy to the PKK General Joseph Ralston admitted, “We have reached a critical point in which the pressure of continued PKK attacks has placed immense public pressure upon the government of Turkey to take some military action. As the snows melt in the mountain passes, we will see if the PKK renews its attacks and how the Turkish government responds... I hope the Turks will continue to stand by us.” 220 It was clear that Turkish patience had run out and US-Turkey relations were significantly strained.
XI. The Role of Outside States

Other states continued to express their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Jordan and Syria were concerned about the flow of refugees across their borders, and both states tightened border security in 2007. The US increasingly accused Iran of instigating sectarian violence by funding and supplying Shi’ite militias.

Impacts: Good and Bad

The National Intelligence Estimate for Iraq, released in early February 2007, said of the role of outside states as follows:\textsuperscript{221}

- Iraq’s neighbors influence, and are influenced by, events within Iraq, but the involvement of these outside actors is not likely to be a major driver of violence or the prospects for stability because of the self-sustaining character of Iraq’s internal sectarian dynamics. Nonetheless, Iranian lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shia militants clearly intensifies the conflict in Iraq. Syria continues to provide safehaven for expatriate Iraqi Baathists and to take less than adequate measures to stop the flow of foreign jihadists into Iraq.

- For key Sunni regimes, intense communal warfare, Shia gains in Iraq, and Iran’s assertive role have heightened fears of regional instability and unrest and contributed to a growing polarization between Iran and Syria on the one hand and other Middle East governments on the other. But traditional regional rivalries, deepening ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq over the past year, persistent anti-Americanism in the region, anti-Shia prejudice among Arab states, and fears of being perceived by their publics as abandoning their Sunni co-religionists in Iraq have constrained Arab states’ willingness to engage politically and economically with the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad and led them to consider unilateral support to Sunni groups.

- Turkey does not want Iraq to disintegrate and is determined to eliminate the safehaven in northern Iraq of the Kurdistan People’s Congress (KGK, formerly PKK)-a Turkish Kurdish terrorist group.

Iraq appealed to the international community for support and international cooperation. On March 10, 2007 thirteen countries and three international groups met in Baghdad to discuss Iraq’s security crisis. Key attending countries included Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Turkey, the US, and Britain. Prime Minister Maliki stated, “This is an international epidemic. It needs to be met by an international stand and – more importantly – a stand by which our brothers and neighbors support Iraq in this battle.” He again requested that outside states respect Iraq’s borders and sovereignty and that they do nothing to instigate violence. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari announced that the attending parties had agreed to create three committees for security cooperation, Iraqi refugees, and energy supplies.\textsuperscript{222}

Public opinion was also divided on the role that outside states played in Iraq. The ABC News Poll “Where Things Stand” in the winter of 2007 asked Iraqis if they thought other key countries were playing a positive, neutral, or negative role in Iraq. Figure 11.1 below shows that public opinion of other Muslim countries broke on sectarian lines.
Figure 11.1: The Role of Outside States

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Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.
Continued Tensions with Syria

Syria had been accused of allowing safe haven to Sunni insurgents and allowing foreign fighters to cross the border throughout the war. The Pentagon’s “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” March 2007 report to Congress noted the normalization of relations between Syrian and Iraq, but remained critical about Syria’s role in propagating violence:223

Although Iraq resumed diplomatic relations with Syria in November 2006, Damascus appears unwilling to cooperate fully with the GOI on bilateral security initiatives. Syria continues to provide safe haven, border transit, and limited logistical support to some Iraqi insurgents, especially former Saddam-era Iraqi Ba’ath Party elements. Syria also permits former regime elements to engage in organizational activities, such that Syria has emerged as an important organizational and coordination hub for elements of the former Iraqi regime. Although Syrian security and intelligence services continue to detain and deport Iraq-bound fighters, Syria remains the primary foreign fighter gateway into Iraq. Despite its heightened scrutiny of extremists and suspected insurgents, Damascus appears to want to appease Islamist extremist groups. Damascus also recognizes that Islamist extremists and elements of the former Iraqi regime share Syria’s desire to undermine Coalition efforts in Iraq.

On February 4, 2007 the Iraqi government publicly accused Syria of harboring terrorists that were responsible for the large scale suicide bombing in Baghdad the previous day. Government spokesman Ali Dabbagh said, “I confirm that 50% of murders and bombings are by Arab extremists coming from Syria.” The government did not provide evidence for their accusation. During the parliamentary session, Shi’ite politicians called for expelling Syrians and closing the borders, to which Sunni speaker Mashadani replied, “Be careful about what you say, because we have a half million Iraqis there.”224

Iran: Growing Tensions with the US and UK, Growing Ties to the Iraqi Government

The US continued to accuse Iran of propagating violence in Iraq by supplying materials necessary to make explosively formed penetrators (EFPs). Iran denied all charges, and some experts agreed that the evidence was not sufficient to link Iran to the weapons. Iranian involvement in Iraq, however, was clearly on the rise at the political, economic and military levels.

Iranian Arms Transfers to Iraqi Militias and Extremists

US accusations against Iranian weapon smuggling increased after the President announced the new Baghdad security plan. The March 2007 DoD Stability and Security report said as follows of Iranian involvement:225

Iranian lethal support for select groups of Shi’a militants intensifies the conflict in Iraq. Consistent with the National Intelligence Estimate, Iranian support to Shi’a militias, such as JAM and the Badr Organization, includes providing lethal weapons, training, financing, and technical support.8 This includes supplying some Shi’a extremist groups with explosively formed projectiles (EFPs), the most effective of the roadside bombs. Shi’a extremist groups have been implicated in direct attacks against Coalition forces, including with EFP technology. EFPs require advanced manufacturing processes and training for employment that clearly place them outside the category of “improvised explosive devices.”

“We have weapons that we know through serial numbers … that trace back to Iran,” Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno – commander of day to day operations in Iraq – also said in an interview with USA TODAY. He said the weapons include the following:226
The RPG-29, a rocket-propelled grenade that can fire armor-piercing rounds. It is larger and more sophisticated than the RPG-7 more commonly found in Iraq.

Katyusha rockets, so large they are generally fired from trucks.

Powerful roadside bombs, known as explosively formed projectiles, which can pierce armor. The technological know-how and "some of the elements to make them are coming out of Iran," Odierno said.

Odierno added that arrests made in December and January had provided clues, and that some of the Iranians were still held at the end of January.

Following several harsh speeches by President Bush about Iranian involvement in Iraq, top administration officials tempered their accusations and stated that they sought a diplomatic solution with Tehran. In addition, the administration continued to delay a promised presentation of evidence against Iran. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley said that the briefing was delayed because, "the truth is, quite frankly, we thought the briefing overstated, and we sent it back to get it narrowed and focused on the fact." 227

On February 12, 2007 US military officials presented their evidence against Iranian involvement in Iraq. They displayed mortar shells, rocket-propelled grenades, and an explosively formed penetrator bomb that they said were manufactured in Iran and given to rogue members of the Mahdi Army in Iraq. The weaponry was smuggled into Iraq by the Iranian Quds Force – which had helped train Hizbollah in Lebanon. However, the officials said that there was no "widespread involvement" of the highest levels of the Iranian government.

Iranian officials, however, were hesitant to accept the evidence against Iran. Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi said, "If they have anything really conclusive, then they should come out and say it openly, then we will pick it up from there and use diplomatic channels." 228

Experts disagreed whether the Quds Force reported directly to Ayatollah Khomeini or whether it had evolved into a rogue paramilitary. It was active in Iraq in the 1980s helping Kurdish rebels fight Saddam Hussein and in the 1990s helping Shi’ites in the south opposed to the Sunni Ba’athist regime. It was estimated to have some 2,000 highly trained fighters. 229

US forces continued to find weapons caches that they said supported Iranian involvement. A weapons cache in the largely Shi’ite town of Hilla included infrared sensors, electronic triggering devices, and information on explosives. All the materials were similar to those found in southern Lebanon and used by Hizbollah. Many experts, however, remained unconvinced that the components could not be produced in Iraq. The electronic devices were rudimentary and included garage door openers, and the copper disk used in EFPs could be created by any machine. John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, stated that the most convincing pieces of evidence were those about the “trademark of the fuse and the wrappings of the explosives.” 230

In addition, a British Army Board of Inquiry determined that a SA14 Strela missile that brought down a Royal Air Force Lynx helicopter in May 2006 came from Iran. The official report was not released, but the unclassified components left little doubt that the SAM was smuggled across borders. 231

**Iranian Ties to Iraq**

Despite rising tensions between the US and Iran, the Iraqi government continued to strengthen its relationships with its neighbor. In late January 2007 Iran’s ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi
Qumi, said that the two countries were expanding their economic and military ties. He said that Iran would offer training for Iraqi security forces and would provide significant reconstruction aid. He did not go into detail on military assistance, but said his plan involved enhanced border security and the creation of a “join security committee.” He also said that Iran would open a national bank in Iraq, which an Iraqi banking official confirmed, and that several more banks would follow in the future. Qumi did acknowledge that two Iranians detained and later released by the US in an operation in Baghdad were security officials, as the US had said, but that they were in legal talks with the Iraqi government.

Iran’s increased political and economic role was notable. At the end of January, Tehran had 56 diplomats in its embassy staff in Baghdad and consulates in Basra and Kerbala. Iran provided 20% of Iraqi demand for cooking gas as well as 2 million liters of kerosene and plans to quadruple the number of electricity projects. Iran offered a $1 billion line of credit for reconstruction.

Overall trade between Iran and Iraq seemed to have grown some 30% since 2003, but this was only an estimate because the Iranian government did not provide accurate figures. Iran did say that its trade with the Kurdish region alone amounted to $1 billion in 2006. Southern and central Iraq, however, clearly benefited the most from increased Iranian involvement. The governor of Najaf, home of several Shi’ite shrines that attracted tens of thousands of pilgrims each month, stated that Iran gave the city $20 million a year to “build tourist facilities for pilgrims.” Neighboring Karbala also received about $3 million a year.

In addition, several Iraqi cities near the border increasingly relied heavily on Iran for electricity. Basra planned to import 250 megawatts of power from Iran by the summer of 2007. Diyala province in central Iraq already imported 120 megawatts.

Basic goods from Iran, such as air conditioners and cars, also flooded Iraqi markets. Store owners said that it was much cheaper to import the goods from Iran than from other places, such as China. Iraqis also increasingly traveled to Iran for medical treatment, due to massive brain drain and health care crisis in Iraq.

Iran’s growing influence in Iraq represented both a potential sectarian threat to Iraq’s Sunnis, and the potential end of Iraq’s status as an Arab nation; the threat of Persia dated back long before the Sunni-Shi’a split. The visibility of Iran’s presence in Iraq – be it aid, language, or weaponry – prompted some Sunnis to state that Iran was the biggest winner in the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. An article in the Chicago Tribune summarized this viewpoint as follows:

Iran barely had to lift a finger to win this round in its centuries old rivalry with Iraq. By removing the two staunchly Sunni regimes ruling Iran’s neighbors – the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Baathists in Iraq – the US eliminated the two biggest security threats to Iran’s borders within a period of less than two years.

The advent of democracy in Iraq further leveraged Iran’s influence, by installing in Baghdad a Shi’ite dominated government, many of whose leaders had been sheltered in Iran during the years they stood in opposition to Saddam Hussein’s regime, disposing them toward friendship with Iran…

The MEK Problem

While the US accused the Iranian Quds force of operating on Iraqi soil, the Iraqi government took steps to prosecute members of an Iranian opposition group that had been operating out of a US secured compound north of Baghdad. In mid-March 2007, the Iraqi government announced
that it would prosecute some 100 members of the 3,800 strong Mujaheddin-e Khalq (MEK) opposition group.

Although the US listed the MEK as a terrorist group, the US military had protected the MEK compound in Iraq since 2003. The MEK had turned over its weapons to the US after the invasion and it was given the status of “protected persons” under the Geneva Convention.

The MEK was founded in 1965 by students at Tehran University as an opposition movement against the US backed Iranian Shah, but also opposed the Islamic government of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, established in 1979. In 1986, toward the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the MEK moved its headquarters to Iraq under the protection of Saddam Hussein.

Prime Minister Maliki gave the group six months to leave Iraq shortly after he entered office in May 2006, but the MEK said his request violated their status under the Geneva Convention. Maliki and the Iraqi Justice Department, however, maintained that the MEK had committed human rights abuses, which involved aiding Hussein’s campaign against the Shi’ite uprising in the early 1990s. The US did not indicate that it would get involved in the dispute.236
XII. The Future of the Baghdad Security Plan and the US Role in Iraq

By spring 2007, any form of US action that ended in some form of “victory” meant finding a strategy that allowed the US to withdraw most US forces from an Iraq that was stable enough to have reduced internal violence to low levels that could be controlled by local forces, that was secure against its neighbors, that was politically and economically unified enough to function and develop as a state, and which was pluralistic enough to preserve the basic rights of all of its sectarian and ethnic factions.

However, things in Iraq may have deteriorated to the point where none of the “least bad” options available allowed the US to achieve these goals. From a perceptual viewpoint, “victory” may already be impossible because most of the people in Iraq, the region, and Arab and Muslim worlds will probably view the US effort as a failure and as a partial defeat even if the US can leave Iraq as a relatively stable and secure state at some point in the future. The perceived cost of the US-led invasion and occupation has simply been too high in terms of local opinion (and most polls of opinion in Europe and the rest of the world.)

It will be the late fall 2007 before it is clear whether the US has secured even the part of Baghdad Province it is attempting to control. It is all too clear that US success will not depend on an Iraqi-led effort, an effective mix of Iraqi security forces, success in Iraqi conciliation, or the US ability to create an effective economic effort to “build” in time for this offensive. It will depend on US ability to implement a new counterinsurgency doctrine, and on the nature of the Iraqi reaction.

If the US can win any kind of “victory”, it will probably be to expand Shi’ite influence, particularly if US politics continue to press for early withdrawal without a strategy for dealing with either Iraq after major US force cuts or the overall security and stability of the region.

All of Iraq’s factions, including the Shi’ite dominated central government, know that time is as much an enemy of the US and Britain in Iraq as any insurgent group or militia. The US can talk about “long wars,” but it does not have a political structure willing to fight them.

Iraq’s factions know that the US is involved in a war of attrition where these past mistakes have created a political climate where it appears to be steadily more vulnerable to pressures that either will make it leave, or sharply limit how long it can play a major role. One year increasingly seems “long” by American domestic political standards, but the actors in Iraq and the region can play for years. One of the lessons that both the Bush Administration and its various US opponents and critics may still have to learn is that at a given level of defeat, other actors control events. US discussions of alternative plans and strategies may well be largely irrelevant.

As the commander of US ground forces in Iraq, General Odierno, recommended that the surge be maintained through February 2008, democrats in the House and the Senate worked on resolutions to put limitations on the President’s new strategy. The Senate measure failed to find enough votes, but the House did adopt a non-binding resolution opposing the “surge.”

Polls of the American public, however, showed that 57% of Americans supported “finishing the job in Iraq.” A slim majority also believed that victory in Iraq over the insurgents was still possible. However, only 34% thought Iraq would become a stable democracy, and the most popular option for US policy was a withdrawal timetable. It appeared increasingly unlikely
that the American public and Congress would support a long-term “surge”, as would be necessary to make real progress in the latter two components of “clear, hold, and build.”
Endnotes


Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.

52 MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said that the first of five additional US brigades also arrived in Baghdad.
70 Salam Faraj, “Iraq Dead up 15 Percent Despite Crackdown,” AFP, Yahoo News, April 1, 2007.


99 MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said that the first of five additional US brigades also arrived in Baghdad.


123 “GIs Sweep Baghdad; Al Qaeda Leader Hurt,” USA Today, February 16, 2007.


170 “GIs Sweep Baghdad; Al Qaeda Leader Hurt,” USA Today, February 16, 2007.


201 MNF-I spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said that the first of five additional US brigades also arrived in Baghdad.


215 Information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data has been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, February 1, 2007. Used with permission.


