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Success or Failure?

Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy:

Developments through June 2007

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Executive Summary

Two reports released to U.S. government officials by the National Intelligence Council in January 2003 predicted that establishing a stable and secure democracy in Iraq would be a long and difficult task. The reports highlighted that the competition between religious sects and ethnic groups would open the door for foreign entities such as Al Qaeda to target U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, and encourage neighboring countries to vie for power and influence in the country. By the summer of 2007, the accuracy of these predictions became increasingly apparent.

President Bush's proposed "surge" did succeed in deploying additional troops from February to mid-June 2007. The Baghdad security plan, known as Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, did not achieve quick results for two primary reasons: First, the few areas that were successfully cleared of insurgents were then held by Iraqi police and army personnel, which were largely under-prepared and under-manned to carry out such operations. The security situation evolved in Iraq in a way that was defined less by the deployment of Coalition and Iraqi forces, and more by the spontaneous growth of tribal and local resistance movements to Al Qaeda and the counter-movements of al-Qaeda, Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias.

Second, as fighting took hold, insurgents and militiamen fled to other areas, primarily Diyala and the outskirts of Baghdad. Three of the five brigades initially deployed to Baghdad were rerouted in June to other areas in order to reign in and root out the insurgents that had fled from Anbar and the capital. As a result, Operation Phantom Thunder was initiated, which entailed offensives that took place throughout the country.

As of June 27, Operation Phantom Thunder consisted of Operation Arrowhead Ripper, focused on clearing Baqubah and other parts of southwestern Diyala; Operation Marne Torch, aiming to clear al-Qaeda bases southeast of Baghdad; a few sub-operations in Fallujah and the area south of Lake Tharthar in Anbar; a continued effort by Iraqi security forces to combat Shi'ite militias in southern Iraq, particularly in Diwaniyah and Nasiriyah; a continued effort by Iraqi security forces to maintain order in Mosul and throughout Ninewah; U.S. and Iraqi Special Forces, targeting high-value al-Qaeda operatives; and continued efforts by U.S. and Iraqi forces to clear and hold areas of Baghdad in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon.

Once the Baghdad security plan took hold, Coalition and Iraqi forces witnessed an increased number of attacks on military personnel, noting a slight decrease in civilian casualties due to sectarian violence. The increase in U.S. fatalities in May and June was due to three factors: 1) new tactics that demand a higher profile for U.S. troops in an attempt to secure Baghdad's neighborhoods and prevent civilian deaths; 2) a greater number of explosives attacks with greater degrees of lethality; and 3) a rise in direct attacks on U.S. troops, involving tactics with increasing sophistication.

U.S. government sources and news services cited a dip in the number of sectarian killings in February, March, and April; but a rise took place during May and June. Figures cited in one report estimated a total of 542 bodies found in the month of March, 440 in April, and 743 in May. According to the Associated Press, the count was higher: 855 bodies were found in the first 24 days of May. Additionally, the New York Times reported that 167 bodies were found in Baghdad in the first six days of June. These figures remained below the average before the surge, but are much higher than the levels recorded in March and April.

One major positive development took place that was unrelated to the “surge,” and occurred as a result of an initiative of Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders. In Anbar, the tribal alliances were formed against al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and other hostile Islamist extremist elements that had challenged tribal control and killed a number of tribal leaders. These alliances were encouraged and supported by the U.S. and Iraqi troops, and tribal forces were so successful in attacking al-Qaeda forces that its attacks on civilians and Coalition and Iraqi troops dropped sharply.

These alliances appeared to be so successful that they were imitated by local Iraqi leaders in some areas, and led Coalition commanders to try to replicate the strategy of recruiting and assisting the arming and training of local tribal groups. Tribal alliances were formed in some parts of Diyala, Babil, Maysan and Baghdad.

It is unclear, however, how lasting this success will be, how much it can spread outside Anbar, and whether opposition to Islamist extremist elements like Al Qaeda can be translated into any form of national unity or support for the central government. Some Iraqi government leaders--as well as some U.S. commanders--are concerned that groups will not be loyal to the central government and could become hostile to the Coalition if they succeed to the point where they no longer need to fear Al Qaeda.

It is also important to note that the number of insurgent attacks continued to increase on a national level, as did Iraqi civilian casualties. Insurgents adapted to the Coalition offensives by dispersing when they came under pressure, launching large-scale bombings and suicide attacks designed to provoke Shi'ite reprisals and block conciliation, and by improving the quality and lethality of their IED attacks on Coalition forces.

It often takes six months to a year to determine how effective a given tactical approach really is, and how well insurgents and other hostile movements can adapt. The US-led Coalition and Iraqi government forces have always been able to win at the tactical level, but so far have not been able to hold or establish lasting security and the ability to build. Military success is dependent on political conciliation, effective governance, and the rule of law – none of which have as yet achieved major success in most of Iraq, and particularly outside Kurdish dominated areas.

Reports by General Petraeus and President Bush on the status of political reform and security in Iraq were due to Congress on July 1st (15th?) and September 1st. It is unclear that these can say anything definitive, even at the tactical level. The US troop surge was only fully deployed in June, and Iraqi and American officials and senior officers have repeatedly expressed their concern that these reporting dates are too premature to produce an accurate understanding of the surge's effectiveness.

Iraq's civil conflicts are also at least as important as the threat posed by Al Qaeda and similar insurgent groups. The overall level of civil conflict, displacement, and sectarian and ethnic tension remained high.

The central government made little progress in reducing sectarian and ethnic tension. Energy production, reconstruction efforts, and legislation regarding political reform were slowed by major political divisions within the government, sectarian tensions, and security concerns caused by the ongoing violence. While U.S. officials continued to warn that US military and diplomatic support would be contingent on Iraqi government efforts to reach political conciliation on important issues, little progress was made in any area. Each faction involved in the political

process continued to make unrealistic demands on the others, and refused to accept fault for the crisis.

Arab-Kurdish tension did not diminish in the Mosul and Kirkuk areas or along other parts of the “ethnic fault line.” Tensions continued to rise over whether a referendum should be held on the future of Kirkuk, and future control of oil resources and the resulting export income. Intra-Shi’ite feuding and violence continued in the south, as did arms flows and support from Iran. SIRI and Al Dawa did attempt to ease their political tensions at the national level.

Shi’ite factionalism became a growing problem in the south, particularly in Basra and the other eastern provinces. Moreover, the Moqtada al-Sadr, who had been in hiding for several months, reemerged in mid-May. He immediately called for the US to leave Iraq, blamed US occupation for much of the violence in the country, and called for a coalition independent of ties to the US and its Coalition allies.

At the same time, he stated that the Mahdi army should stand down and refrain from attacks on Coalition forces and from reprisal attacks against Sunni insurgents. Sadr also attempted to publicly align himself with moderates as well as conciliatory Sunni elements. This did not prevent incidents of violence by Mahdi army members against Sunnis and other Shi’ites, despite Sadr’s public stance discouraging these acts.

Sadr’s ability to take several different positions in opposition, and claim to pursue both Shi’ite and nationalist goals gives him a political advantage. At the same time, having most of his militia stand down, while having US and Iraqi government forces concentrate on the Sunni extremist threat, may allow him to wait out the US presence in the field while expanding his influence and the strength of his forces. Sadr has also benefited from the fact that Abdul Aziz Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), has lung cancer and from splits in the central government, although the SIIC and Al Dawa have attempted to strengthen their relationship, and Hakim’s son may emerge as a new leader of the SIIC.

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I. Introduction: The Current Status of the “War after the War”

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 civil conflict that dominate the overall struggle for power in Iraq, and have become a nationwide series of struggles 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. A fifth, Sunni versus Sunni conflict has become progressively more important. Moreover, the drift towards escalating sectarian and ethnic conflicts 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 others Iraqis from Ministries and professions that do not take a sectarian and ethnic side.

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 portion of this strategy called for sending 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 Iraq forces. It also, however, called for major new efforts at political conciliation, for improved US aid efforts, and far more effective Iraqi governance and economic development programs.

As of the end of June 2007, meaningful progress had only begun at the military level, and even that portion of the President's strategy had largely been overtaken by the impact of Iraqi Sunni tribal fighting with Al Qa'ida in Anbar that showed security operations might succeed through growing reliance on local forces even if the development of central government military and police forces lagged badly behind the minimum level of effectiveness necessary to establish security.

The success of US and Iraqi security efforts in Baghdad remains uncertain, and the initial Baghdad-centric surge strategy has failed in the rest of the country. 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.

Equally important, the security effort in Baghdad largely succeeded in pushing the hard-line Sunni Islamist insurgents into changing their tactics. They maintained the ability to conduct high

profile bombs in Baghdad and elsewhere designed to show they could continue to inflict casualties on US forces and to try to provoke Sunni versus Shi'ite and Kurdish conflicts. At the same time, many Insurgent forces avoided the "surge" forces in the capital, and left for the surrounding urban belt and other governorates. Security deteriorated further in Diyala, Salah Ad Din, and eastern Anbar provinces. Further, the British failure to secure the Shi'ite dominated governorates in the Southeast left much of southern Iraq controlled by rival, feuding Shi'ite factions.

Iraqi army forces could only perform part of the mission required even in the Baghdad urban area, and the Iraqi police fell badly behind the level of effectiveness required. Movements like Al Qa'ida continued to conduct high profile bombings and attacks designed to show that security was not improving in Baghdad, as well as outside Baghdad.

The new Baghdad security strategy would almost certainly have failed to bring more than limited security to part of Baghdad at the cost of a serious deterioration in security in other parts of the country dimension if Sunni tribal groups had not begun active armed resistance to Al Qa'ida's efforts to dominate Sunni areas, and had not reached out to the US for support.

If success comes, it will not be because the new strategy President Bush announced in January succeed, or through the development of Iraqi security forces at the planned rate. It will come because of the new, spontaneous rise of local forces willing to attack and resist Al Qa'ida, and because new levels of political conciliation and economic stability occur at a pace dictated more by Iraqi political dynamics than the result of US pressure.

It will not be possible to determine whether the elements of success or failure for such an option by the fall of 2007. It may well take until the spring of 2008. Even then, the prospects for lasting success in achieving security and stability in Iraq will almost certainly take several more years of determine US effort and support to the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces. Success is possible, but remains a high-risk operation.

Key Trends and Developments through June 2007

Two reports released to U.S. government officials by the National Intelligence Council in January 2003 predicted that establishing a stable and secure democracy in Iraq would be a long and difficult task. The reports highlighted that the competition between religious sects and ethnic groups would open the door for foreign entities such as Al Qaeda to target U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, and encourage neighboring countries to vie for power and influence in the country. By the summer of 2007, the accuracy of these predictions became increasingly apparent.

President Bush's proposed "surge" did succeed in deploying additional troops from February to mid-June 2007. The Baghdad security plan, known as Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, did not achieve quick results for two primary reasons: First, the few areas that were successfully cleared of insurgents were then held by Iraqi police and army personnel, which were largely under-prepared and under-manned to carry out such operations. The security situation evolved in Iraq in a way that was defined less by the deployment of Coalition and Iraqi forces, and more by the spontaneous growth of tribal and local resistance movements to Al Qaeda and the counter-movements of al-Qaeda, Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias.

Second, as fighting took hold, insurgents and militiamen fled to other areas, primarily Diyala and the outskirts of Baghdad. Three of the five brigades initially deployed to Baghdad were rerouted in June to other areas in order to reign in and root out the insurgents that had fled from Anbar and the capital. As a result, Operation Phantom Thunder was initiated, which entailed offensives that took place throughout the country.

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Once the Baghdad security plan took hold, Coalition and Iraqi forces witnessed an increased number of attacks on military personnel, noting a slight decrease in civilian casualties due to sectarian violence. The increase in U.S. fatalities in May and June was due to three factors: 1) new tactics that demand a higher profile for U.S. troops in an attempt to secure Baghdad's neighborhoods and prevent civilian deaths; 2) a greater number of explosives attacks with greater degrees of lethality; and 3) a rise in direct attacks on U.S. troops, involving tactics with increasing sophistication.

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These alliances appeared to be so successful that they were imitated by local Iraqi leaders in some areas, and led Coalition commanders to try to replicate the strategy of recruiting and assisting the arming and training of local tribal groups. Tribal alliances were formed in some parts of Diyala, Babil, Maysan and Baghdad.

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process continued to make unrealistic demands on the others, and refused to accept fault for the crisis.

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II. Continued Failures in Conciliation and Achieving Political Benchmarks

On January 10, 2007, President Bush announced a strategy to secure tumultuous areas of Iraq--Baghdad in particular--in an effort to create space for Iraqi leadership to develop and implement political and economic reforms. The effort was called "the New Way Forward," and it demanded a reciprocal effort by the Iraqi government to try and work towards national goals of reconciliation, economic reform, and the successful transition to Iraqi security sovereignty. The most important issues needed to be addressed were the need for a hydrocarbon law, a provincial election law, constitutional review, and de-Ba'athification reform.

So far, this strategy has only had limited success in the military dimension in Baghdad proper, although the spontaneous rise of tribal and local anti-Al Qaeda forces in Anbar and other areas has brought some important successes at the tactical level in other areas. There was no meaningful new progress in political conciliation or economic development through the end of June 2007.

Congressional Benchmarks for Iraqi Political Conciliation

On May 25, 2007, President George W. Bush signed a bill allotting \$108 billion to war funds in Iraq and Afghanistan that would pay for military operations in Iraq through September 2007. According the requirements set by Congress, the disbursement of these funds, and the further support for troop deployment to Iraq would be contingent on conditions set for the U.S. military command in Iraq and the President himself.¹ These conditions demand that the President report to congress on the extent to which the Iraqi government is meeting the following benchmarks:

- "Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty;
- "Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq;
- "Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan;
- "Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations;
- "Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias;
- "Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even handed enforcement of the law;

- “Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said ‘the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation’;
- “Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security;
- “Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad;
- “Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently;
- “Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected;
- “Allocating and spending \$10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis; and
- “Ensuring that Iraq’s political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi Security Forces.”²

The first report was set as due on July 15, 2007, and prescribes the necessary revisions to be made in American policy in order to help the Iraqi government successfully reach the benchmarks in which there has been unsatisfactory progress. The second report of this kind would be due September 15, 2007.³

Independent assessments regarding the preparedness of Iraqi Security Forces and the implantation of the 18 benchmarks were required from Gen. Petraeus and the Department of Defense to be submitted by September 1, 2007. The bill also required that the US Ambassador to Iraq and the Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq testify before the relevant congressional committees before September 15, 2007.⁴

President Bush said, the bill “reflects a consensus that the Iraqi government needs to show real progress in return for America’s support.”⁵ However, US Military officials in Iraq were skeptical about the ability of US and Iraqi armed forces and political institutions to meet the goals set by the Iraq spending bill. Some counter insurgency experts said that the benchmarks given by Congress were never realistic. In particular, they doubt the Iraqi government will be able, in a short amount of time, to enact a new oil law, establish provincial elections, and reintegrate former Ba’athists and Sunni Arabs into government jobs.

One senior military officer said, “You are talking about Sunnis who had power and Shiites who have power forgetting about what happened over the last 30 years. How easy is that going to be?” Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations criticized the demands that the U.S. has put on the Iraqi government and populace, saying, “The kinds of broad threats now popular in the US – ‘you Iraqis get yourselves in order and negotiate a deal or we leave’ – are way too blunt an instrument... It has to be much more discriminating.”⁶

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates questioned the emphasis that US officials had put on the Iraqi central government. “One of the concerns that I’ve had,” Gates said, “was whether we had focused too much on central government construction in both Iraq and Afghanistan and not enough on the cultural and historical, provincial, tribal and other entities that have played an important role in the history of both countries.”

The Lack of Central Government Progress

In any case, the Iraqi government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki failed to meet the Bush administration’s benchmarks for reversing de-Ba’athification and administering provincial elections through the end of June 2007. Despite the congressional pressure on the Bush administration to produce results, Iraqi lawmakers were reluctant to succumb to the Bush

administration's timetable for crucial issues. "We have two clocks – the Baghdad clock and the Washington clock," said Mahmoud Othman, representative for the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. "This has always been the case. Washington has been pushing the Iraqis to do things to fit their agenda."⁷ In a phone call to President al-Maliki, President Bush warned that Washington expects to see "tangible results quickly" on the oil bill and other legislation, in exchange for the continued American support.⁸

Iraqi legislators failed to reach a deadline to propose constitutional revisions promised to the Sunni minority, a grievance that drove the insurgency against Maliki's government and U.S.-led forces. Members of the multiparty committee assigned to reform the constitution were unable to reach agreements on key issues, such as the allocation of revenue among various regions and the future of Kirkuk. They instead referred the issues to their leaders for further discussion.⁹

Brian Katulis, a staff member at the Clinton National Security Council, said that "there are still gaping holes... and fundamental questions about power sharing" that remain unanswered. The question of administrative regions remains sensitive, because the number and boundaries of these regions will dictate the distribution of political and economic power among ethnic and sectarian groups, as well as the fate of Kirkuk.

Political Developments in the Central Government

The Iraqi government did face significant challenges in moving forward. In a news briefing in late April 2007, MNF-I Commander Gen. David Petraeus said of these issues:¹⁰

There are also a number of challenges in the area of governance that the embassy and Multinational Force Iraq are helping the Iraqis to address. It is in fact important to recall that the government of Prime Minister Maliki is Iraq's fourth government in as many years. Moreover, it is not a government of national unity. Rather, it is one comprised of political leaders from different parties that often default to narrow agendas and a zero-sum approach to legislation.

That is one reason that progress on key laws has been slow, though there has been some progress. The budget law, the base hydrocarbon law approved by the Council of Ministers, the emergency powers law and so forth have all been noteworthy. And it is in fact just noteworthy to acknowledge, as Ambassador Negroponte did yesterday, just what Iraq has achieved since he served there as the ambassador in 2004, with respect to its elections, its constitution, its government and so forth. I believe Prime Minister Maliki and many other Iraqi leaders are committed to achieving more in this area in the months ahead.

Though its institutions are slowly developing, Iraq still suffers from a lack of the governmental capacity needed to put Iraq's oil revenues to work sufficiently for all its people. In view of this, we are working hard, together with the U.S. embassy again, to help strengthen institutions, doubling the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, establishing a law and order task force, developing an energy fusion cell, and increasing emphasis on ministerial mentorship.

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates met with Iraqi leaders in mid-April and urged them to approve the draft oil law and to make more efforts to include Sunnis in the political process. The political process, however, seemed to be collapsing rather than moving forward. Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih said, "The political track has yet to gain traction. We need a grand bargain among Iraqis to establish a sustainable and balanced power sharing arrangement. We thought that the Constitution would do it, but it did not." The constitution contained ambiguities on over fifty issues, the majority of which had yet to be clarified. In response to American pressure for progress he added, "There is not way that Iraq's predicament will be fixed by

August, but I think it's fair for the people in Iraq and for our allies in the United States to expect some demonstrable progress by then."

One key problem was that each faction in the political process saw itself as the key victim of the insurgency and civil war. Each group made unrealistic demands on the others, and each refused to accept a fair share of blame for the crisis. For example, a Shi'ite member of Parliament recently said, "The Shias are still oppressed, they need support," and Tariq al-Hashimi, a Sunni Vice President said, "It's only Sunnis that have been marginalized."¹¹

Widespread Iraqi political support for the "surge" strategy was also elusive. On May 10, 2007, 138 of the 275 parliamentarians signed a draft bill that would cap the number of foreign troops at the current level. It would also require a timetable for the withdrawal of Coalition forces. The draft bill was proposed by the 30 members of the Council of Representatives loyal to Sadr. Various Sunni and Kurdish groups also signed it. The draft did not receive support from Prime Minister Maliki's party, Dawa, or SCIRI. The bill was proposed at the same time as a similar measure on the US troop presence was being debated in Washington.¹²

Opposition Grows to the Maliki Government

The Shi'ite led government of Prime Minister Maliki continued to face opposition and doubts from some US experts, the majority of the Sunni population in Iraq, and some Kurds. Retired Army General Barry McCaffrey, now a professor at West Point, described the Maliki government as "despised" by Sunnis and seen as "untrustworthy and incompetent" by Kurds. He said that there was not area in which members of the Iraqi government – regardless of their sect – could walk without heavily armed protection.¹³ In late June, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, appeared to be near exhaustion, and described political "conspirators" against his government, comparing them to "a black ant on a black rock on a dark night." He stated, "They will definitely pay a price if they insist on weakening Iraq or interfering in its internal affairs." His words appeared to be aimed at Ayad Allawi or Tariq al-Hashemi.¹⁴

The decision of two key groups to leave the government also threatened Maliki's power. Cabinet ministers loyal to the radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr resigned on April 16, 2007 to protest Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to set a timetable for an American withdrawal. All six of the ministers loyal to Sadr left the government, saying that their positions would be given back to the government to choose their successors. The 30 Sadrist in Parliament, however, would not be leaving the government and would continue to work for the withdrawal of US forces. Sadr's loyalists had boycotted Parliament in December 2006 and early January 2007 to protest the continued presence of US forces.¹⁵ It remained to be seen if the political decision by Sadr would be followed by increased military opposition to the US "surge."

Shortly thereafter, a Sunni bloc also threatened to withdraw. The Iraqi Consensus Front, a Sunni bloc made up of three parties, said that it may remove its five cabinet ministers, but would keep its 44 representatives in Parliament. The group filed a statement to Maliki saying it had "lost hope in rectifying the situation despite all of its sincere and serious efforts to do so." The bloc cited the lack of basic services in Sunni areas in Baghdad, the failure to ratify the oil law, and the failure to remove Shi'ite militias from Iraqi security forces. A spokesman said that they had not made a final decision to withdraw because of controversy within the bloc.¹⁶

A week later, Sunni vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said that he too would withdraw from the government if there was not movement on the Constitutional issue of federalism. He argued that

the document needed to be amended to ensure that Iraq could not be split into three states based on ethnicity or sect. Hashimi had previously resisted calls from Sunnis to withdraw from the government. His statement, however, appeared to be aimed at instigating political progress, rather than a real threat to withdraw from the government.¹⁷

Shi'ite Political Tensions

Differences between Shi'ite parties continued to threaten the breakup of the Shi'ite political bloc, the National Front. In March 2007 the Fadhila party withdrew from the National Front, citing differences with leadership and a desire to defuse sectarianism in the government. This political tension fueled clashes in the Shi'ite south between Fadhila loyalists and members of Moqtada al – Sadr's Mahdi Army.

Tensions escalated further on April 17, 2007 when several hundred Sadrists joined protests in Basra against the Fadhila governor, Muhammad al-Waeli. The protesters said that the governor had failed to provide Basra residents with basic services, such as electricity, potable water, and jobs. There were also allegations of corruption and favoritism. One protester said that Waeli only gave jobs at the large Southern Oil Company to Fadhila loyalists.

The governor's office, however, said that the protests were a result of Fadhila's withdrawal from the Shi'ite coalition. There was no evidence that Waeli would resign in response to the protests.¹⁸ The protests were non-violent, but added another complex layer to political tensions in the Shi'ite south, where British forces planned to draw down large portions of their force strength over 2007.

Changes in the Shi'ite Opposition

On May 13, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq announced that the word "revolution" would be dropped from its name, and its initials would change to the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC). It also announced that Iran's top cleric would no longer reign as the party's dominant spiritual leader. This change represented a recent move among the party's leaders to shore up support among Iraqi nationalists and US officials.

Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, a Supreme Council leader in the Parliament and a hard-line cleric said, "There is no need to talk about revolution anymore... The word means change, and we have achieved the changes through the Constitution." It is still unclear whether this nominal change may represent a more significant shift in the party's political platform. For example, the Council continues to advocate a form of government that would allow clerics to override elected leaders, and has not renounced its ties to Iran.¹⁹

In late June, two of Iraq's leading Shi'ite factions signed a cooperation agreement in which they agreed to sponsor cabinet officials despite specific party allegiances. The agreement between Prime Minister Maliki's Dawa party and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, headed by cleric Abdul Aziz Hakim, tentatively unified the four Shi'ite parties in parliament that previously contested each other, into the United Iraqi Alliance. In an effort to create a wider consensus among moderates in the Iraqi parliament, the newly formed United Iraqi Alliance negotiated with Kurdish politicians. However, negotiations with the moderate Sunni Arab party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, failed.²⁰

The SIIC may have opted for the unity move because Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council began treatment for lung cancer in the beginning of June, and his son, who would succeed him, was seen as an uncertain future leader.²¹

Sadr's Shifting Role in Politics

Moqtada al-Sadr took an ambiguous political stand upon his return to Iraq. He publicly reached out to Sunni politicians and insurgents while purging some of the more rogue and extremist members of his Mahdi Army militia who targeted Sunnis. At the same time, elements of his forces continued to attack Sunnis and take reprisals for bombings against Shi'ite mosques and targets. At least in some cases, these attacks occurred under conditions where Sadr at least tolerated them, if he did not privately encourage them in spite of his public calls for Sunni-Shi'ite unity.

Since the US-led invasion in 2003, Sadr has attempted to push the US and the Coalition out of Iraq, and to create a political climate where his movement could lead a unified, Shi'ite-led state with a strong central government. As a result, Sadr continued to challenge other Shi'ite parties like Al Dawa and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC). He also increasingly criticized the government of Prime Minister al-Maliki, which many in Iraq saw as US-dominated, corrupt, and ineffective.²²

Some Iraqi "moderates" have seen him as a the independent political voice in Iraq, and one seeking to preserve Iraq's unity, and have sought to shift Sadr's image to one less anti-American and more Iraqi nationalist. Ahmed Shaibani, a cleric who leads Sadr's newly formed reconciliation committee, and Salah al-Obaidi, a senior aide to Sadr, were both released in recent months from detention centers by the US military, under the pretense that they have the power to neutralize the radicals in Sadr's movement. Their release shows both that the Sadr movement does include pragmatic figures and that the US differentiates between the "irreconcilable" elements of the Mahdi Army and the "reconcilable" members who they are able to work with.²³

Members of the Sadr movement did engage in informal talks with Sunni politicians and insurgent groups in late April and early May. Hussein al-Falluji, a legislator in the Iraqi Accordance Front, the largest Sunni political bloc, said, "We think there is some possibility to have a closer relationship."²⁴ Salah al-Obaidi, a senior aide to Sadr, has said that the move to disassociate the movement from the Maliki government was "one way to show we are trying to work for the welfare of Iraq and not only for the welfare of Shiites." Sadrists are currently forming a political bloc to challenge the Maliki government, but Mr. Obaidi said they are "not mature yet."²⁵

According to some of his associates, Al-Sadr believed that the Maliki government would not last much longer, given its failure to secure Iraq and stabilize its economy. Such a collapse would result in a political realignment, which would put the Sadr movement in the running as one of the leading political elements in Iraq.²⁶ "We gave the government a historic opportunity, but al-Maliki did not use it, and that's why we are preparing for a state led by the Sadr movement," said one of al-Sadr's political aides. "An Islamic state led by the Sadrists is our future."²⁷

Sadr's Shi'ite rivals in the Maliki government doubt the Sadr movement's ability to form a coalition with Sunnis. Ridha Jawad Taqi, a senior legislator with the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq (SICI), formerly known as SCIRI, said that "Now, it is very difficult... Between them, there's a gap

made of blood. After Samarra, there is no possibility of reconciliation.”²⁸ Referring to the efforts of Sadr’s followers to form an opposition position after quitting the al-Maliki Cabinet, Security Council spokesman, Gordon Johndroe said, “The president of Iraq, the vice presidents, and the prime minister all support keeping US troops in Iraq... The Sadrists often make these claims, yet rarely produce a bill, let alone a majority.”²⁹

Sadr has continued to push for US withdrawal, as have many other members of the Iraqi Parliament. On May 11, 2007, 144 of the 275 members of Parliament signed a petition for a timetable governing a withdrawal of US troops. The withdrawal would be contingent on the growth and ability of the Iraqi security forces, in order to ensure against the creation of a security vacuum upon their departure. The document is being developed into a draft bill by the Parliament’s legal and foreign relations committees.

Some Sadrists have, however, cautioned against an immediate withdrawal of US forces. Saleh al-Igili, a member of the parliamentary bloc allied with Moqtada al-Sadr, who sponsored the petition, said, “The troop withdrawal would move in parallel with the build up of Iraqi troops, but their stay should not be for a long time.” Bahaa al-Araji, a member of the Sadr bloc and head of the legal committee said the legislative committees drafting the bill asked the interior and defense ministers for an estimated timeline for the effective development of the Iraqi security forces.³⁰

Obaidi said that Sadr has been compliant with the new Baghdad security plan to reduce the US-propagated image of the cleric as being a tool of Iran. US policy toward Sadr has often been contradictory. US officials frequently blame violence on the group Al Qa’ida in Iraq rather than Shiite elements, yet the US military is still trying to contain Sadr through increasing troops in Sadr City.³¹ Obaidi said that violence is now being perpetrated primarily by Sunni insurgents. Sadr’s aides say that Sadr is open to talking with US politicians who are calling for a US withdrawal. “We are not anti-American. We think the Americans have an important role in rebuilding Iraq, but as companies, not as an army,” Obaidi said. “We can open a new channel with the Democrats, even some of the Republicans.”³²

No Meaningful Progress in De-Ba’athification

Reforming Iraq’s de-Ba’athification laws continued to divide Iraq’s politicians, and remained a key issue in reaching any future level of conciliation between the Sunni and Shi’a Arabs. The original de-Ba’athification law – put in place by L. Paul Bremer III and the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003 – prevented the top 4% of former Ba’athists from holding a position in the former government.

The administration of this decision, however, however, purged large number of teachers, scientists, and doctors, from their jobs, as well as many government officials and military officers who had only joined the Ba’ath at a time where they had little other choice. The end result was that security and stability steadily deteriorated, and much of the country’s secular core and educated class was left powerless, fled the country, joined the insurgency, or opposed the central government. Bremer scaled back the de-Ba’athification to attract back some of the country’s scientists and teachers before he handed over control to the interim Iraqi government in June 2004, but this had little practical effect, and Shi’ites and Kurds ion the government and armed forces continued to push Sunnis out of key positions or deny them opportunities for office and promotion. Virtually all Sunnis feel that most elements of the de-Ba’athification process now need to be reversed.³³

So far, such efforts have not gone beyond the drafting of new laws. On March 27, 2007 Prime Minister Maliki and President Talibani said 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.³⁴

However, the draft law immediately met opposition from Shi'ite and Kurdish lawmakers. Ali Lami, a member of the De-Ba'athification Committee, said, "Our opinion is that this is an attempt to return Ba'athists into the highest echelons of power within the coming six months... without taking into account the many innocent victims who suffered from the Ba'athists." He also believed that the bill, negotiated by Maliki and Talibani, was the product of US coercion. Lami, however, could have had more issue with the fact that the bill proposed to replace the Shi'ite dominated de-Ba'athification committee with a panel of seven judges, to make it more independent.³⁵ The proposal was also rejected by Ahmad Chalabi, who is the head of the de-Ba'athification commission and relies on the commission for his role in the Iraqi government.³⁶

Furthermore, on April 2, 2007, the head of the de-Ba'athification committee, Ahmed Chalabi, said Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani opposed the draft law, making it unlikely that the Shi'ite dominated cabinet would accept the proposal. Iraqi government spokesman, Ali Dabbagh, however, argued that Sistani had made no such statement and that the cleric "goes with the decisions of people's representative in parliament." He added that Chalabi's statement was doubtful because Sistani had been distancing himself from politics over the past year, and was unlikely to get involved in such a heated dispute.³⁷

Sunnis and Sadrists, who agree on some aspects of reconciliation, disagree over allowing former Ba'ath Party members to return the government. "If national reconciliation is at the expense of the return of the assassin Ba'athists, then we will reject such reconciliation," said Falah Hassan Shanshal, a Sadr legislator and chairman of the parliament's de-Ba'athification committee.³⁸ Proposed de-Ba'athification reform focused on rehiring low- to midlevel Ba'athists, in attempt to bring in Sunnis that have been alienated and to drain support for Sunni insurgent groups.³⁹

Despite these developments, the US continued to push the Iraqi parliament to accept the revised de-Ba'athification law. Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged the parliament to accept the law before taking summer recess. Sources close to Prime Minister Maliki and key Shi'ite lawmakers, however, said that they had already watered down the bill and that even if it was adopted; it was too late to make a difference in bringing Sunnis back to the government.⁴⁰ A senior US official said, "It's an extremely difficult issue. If you push it too fast in an environment like we have right now just to meet a benchmark, you can risk a very extreme reaction" from Shiites who opposed the reform process.

Hydrocarbon Law

Legislation regarding the distribution of oil wealth has been framed by the Maliki government, but not completed in full, and was not submitted to parliament for approval through June 2007. The passage of the oil law stalled over disagreements over the role of foreign investment, the "law" was only a partially draft leaving many details unresolved, and it is clear that no one can determine the degree of conciliation it will really bring until they can see how it is actually implemented over time, and the degree of corruption and Arab Sunni, Arab Shi'ite, and Kurdish tension that results.

The Iraqi parliament approved one draft of the bill in February, but agreement was not reached on many details and on whether foreign oil companies or the state-run Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC) should hold the rights to Iraq's oil. Iraq's oil minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, proposed an annex in April that would grant 93% of Iraq's known oil fields and related contracts to INOC. Kurdish leaders have disagreed with Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs over the dominant role proposed for INOC, stating that a greater centralization of economic power will discourage foreign investment, a key component to Iraq's economic growth.⁴¹

The law was supposed to pass in Iraqi parliament on May 31, 2007, but an agreement could not be reached by that date. Some members of the Iraqi parliament objected to the proposed Iraqi oil law, claiming that it was "sloppy" and rushed, in order to satisfy the May deadline proposed by the US government. The law fails to address key issues such as the prospective task of dividing oil revenues among the Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish regions, and the question of how much foreign investment to allow.

The Kurdish Regional Government opposed the placement of 93% of Iraqi oil fields under the administration of the prospective state-run Iraq National Oil Company according to the measure drawn up in May by the Iraqi central government. The Kurdistan Regional Government website claims that some of these fields are at least partially in Kurdish territory and Kurdish officials who represent about one-fifth of the parliament say they will not support the bill if the measures are not redrawn.⁴²

The issue of foreign investment is also debated. While energy experts say that Iraq cannot increase its oil production without foreign investment, Iraqis believe that allowing foreign investors to profit from Iraqi will compromise the sovereignty of Iraq. The leader of the Federation of Oil Unions, said workers want oil production to remain under Iraqi control and threatened to strike to protest legislation that would result in increased foreign investment.⁴³

Gal Luft, an energy expert at the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, noted that any decision regarding foreign investment would have little real world impact until the country itself is stabilized, because foreign investors "won't come in." There were at least 15 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities in the first three months of 2007, including the slayings of oil industry workers, the bombing of wells, and the targeting of the pipeline from Baiji, in northern Iraq, to Turkey. Though there the rate of attacks on oil facilities has reduced since last year, Luft said that this is because the pipeline has been hit so often that it rarely functions, making it a less appealing target.⁴⁴

Revenue sharing is also a contentious issue because the Sunni Arab and Kurdish distrust of the Shiite-led government, who would, under the proposed law, control the distribution of oil proceeds through a central government bank account.⁴⁵ In late June, the cabinet approved part of the legislative framework of the hydrocarbon law, that outlined the responsibilities of a federal oil and gas council that would review contracts with oil companies. However, a law regarding the division of oil revenues was not approved by the cabinet.

Constitutional Review and Provincial Elections

The Iraqi constitution defined how federalism could be established in broad terms, but left many aspects undecided. The Iraqi government's Constitutional Review Committee began to work on this element of the constitution on November 15, 2006, but failed to meet the deadline for submitting its recommendations to parliament on May 15, 2007.

Local elections are another critical problem, as is the relative power of the central and local governments and if any new federal areas. An Independent High Electoral Commission was established on April 28, 2007. However, no date for provincial and local elections could be agreed upon by the end of June. This issue had growing importance for many reasons: The ineffectiveness of the central government, the lack of legitimacy of many local governments, the de facto devolution of authority in to the local level, and the growing ethnic and sectarian division of the country without practical representation or authority.

III. The “Surge” and Operation Phantom Thunder

The Bush administration and many in the US military labeled Baghdad as the center of gravity when they formulated the new “surge” strategy announced in January 2007. The initial “surge” ordered five additional combat units to support the existing fifteen already deployed. This was designed to give commanders the twenty combat brigades that the Pentagon said were necessary to secure Baghdad and the western Anbar province.⁴⁶ Two-thirds of the troops planned for the “surge” were in Iraq by May. The number of Joint Security Stations had increased to 60 by mid-May and the US had an additional 21 combat outposts, manned only by US troops, throughout Baghdad.⁴⁷

The initial security efforts did not, however, produce a meaningful improvement in the overall level of violence in Iraq. Insurgents carried out more planned and complex ambushes and retaliatory attacks against US troops from February to June, though these kinds of direct attacks were few. They involved direct assaults on US military outposts, and complex attacks that use multiple weapons and tactics on more than one target. Violence in the capital declined slowly after the launch of the US-led security plan, whereas attacks have increased in the 30-mile radius around the city.⁴⁸ Insurgent activity shifted to the southern belt of Baghdad and in Diyala, northeast of the city.⁴⁹ The transfer of insurgents to other areas outside of Baghdad led the US military to engage militants elsewhere, in Operation Arrowhead Ripper (Diyala) and Operation Marne Torch (Maysan).

As a result, it has become clear that the new strategy President Bush announced in January was fundamentally wrong in exaggerating the importance of Baghdad as a center of gravity in a nation filled with civil tensions and conflicts. This does not, however, mean that the new security efforts in Iraq – many of which depart strikingly from the original outline of the surge strategy will fail.

Lt. Gen. Ordierno said on June 22, 2007, “We are beyond a surge of forces, and we are now into a surge of operations.” The open-ended operation named Operation Phantom Thunder, to incorporate the current security operations underway throughout Iraq. According to the Iraq Report by the Institute of the Study of War, the initial deployment of troops to Baghdad during the first phase of Operation Phantom Thunder was deliberate in setting the stage for the second phase of the operation.⁵⁰

As of June 27, Operation Phantom Thunder consisted of Operation Arrowhead Ripper, focused on clearing Baqubah and other parts of southwestern Diyala; Operation Marne Torch, aiming to clear al-Qa’ida bases southeast of Baghdad; a few sub-operations in Fallujah and the area south of Lake Tharthar in Anbar; a continued effort by Iraqi security forces to combat Shi’ite militias in southern Iraq, particularly in Diwaniyah and Nasiriyah; a continued effort by Iraqi security forces to maintain order in Mosul and throughout Ninewah; U.S. and Iraqi Special Forces, targeting high-value al-Qa’ida operatives; and continued efforts by U.S. and Iraqi forces to clear and hold areas of Baghdad in what is known as Operation Fardh al-Qanoon.⁵¹

The operation coordinated offensives aimed at clearing levels of al-Qa’ida, Sunni and Shi’ite extremists near and around Baghdad. Operation Phantom Thunder deployed 20 brigade combat teams, two additional Marine battalions and a Marine expeditionary unit. Of the five surge brigades initially deployed to operate in Baghdad, only two remained in Baghdad proper by late June.⁵²

On June 22, Lt. Gen. Ordierno reported that 159 enemies had been killed, 721 detainees were captured, 128 weapons caches were seized, 7 car bombs disabled and 10 “house-borne IEDs” were found.⁵³

Additional U.S. Troop Deployments and Extended Tours

As might be expected, the US side of the “surge” produced a significant increase in US warfighting capability. At the start of April 2007, one-third to one-half of the additional 30,000 US soldiers deployed as part of the “surge” were in Iraq, although other military sources said that a full half were in place.⁵⁴ Full deployment was reached in mid-June.

On May 22, Pentagon deployment orders showed that the second deployment of troops to Iraq and the extended tours of existing brigades could boost the number of combat troops to as many as 98,000 by the end of 2007, if arriving and departing troops overlap. Including support troops, the total number of US troops in Iraq could increase from its current number of 162,000 to 200,000 by the end of this year. As many as 28 combat brigades may be in Iraq by Christmas.⁵⁵

Army spokesman, Lt. Col. Carl Ey, said that there is no effort underway to secretly deploy more troops beyond the 20 combat brigades ordered for in the initial surge.⁵⁶ Since January 10, 2007, the Pentagon extended combat tours for units in Iraq from 12 to fifteen months and announced the deployment of additional brigades, including two Stryker brigades. One Stryker brigade’s tour was extended from the end of June to October. The other began its 15-month deployment in April.⁵⁷

In contrast, the Iraqi side of the “surge” has lagged badly in effectiveness, if not in numbers. Around 30,000 Iraqi Army and national police forces and an additional 21,000 policemen were deployed along with the US troop increase in April and May. According to Gen. Brooks, many of the new Iraqi units were either redeployed to other parts of Iraq or were insufficient in number, leaving the Iraqi forces more depleted than expected. In addition, US troops had to send units outside of Baghdad to deal with increased violence in Diyala and to search for missing soldiers in Mahmudiya. It seems highly probable that the overall surge might have failed if not for the spontaneous emergence of anti-Al Qa’ida tribal and other local forces during the spring of 2007.

Gen. David H. Petraeus has promised a progress report by September, which may influence the policy of the troop increase. However, the administration doubts the situation in Iraq will have changed dramatically by the time of the report’s release.⁵⁸ The second troop surge coincides with Gen. Petraeus’ promise to provide a verdict on the success or failure of the initial surge, and whether additional troops will be needed, or whether US troops should begin withdrawal.⁵⁹

Uncertain Results Through June

Attack numbers have only limited importance in a nation torn by diverse civil conflicts, particularly when they do not count many of the forms of violence leading to sectarian and ethnic tension and cleansing. They do, however, have some value in gauging the trends in the insurgency. In February 2007 the number of attacks dipped to 164 a day. The troop increase has had a marginal effect so far in decreasing attacks. In March and April the figures were 157 and 149 respectively.

Gen. Petraeus highlighted some of the successes against the Sunni insurgency and sectarian militias since the start of the surge in a press briefing in late April. It is important to note that most were not the product of the original strategy laid out in January 2007.⁶⁰

We have achieved some notable successes in the past two months, killing the security emir of eastern Anbar province, detaining a number of key network leaders, discovering how various elements of al Qaeda Iraq operate, taking apart a car bomb network that had killed 650 citizens of Baghdad, and destroying several significant car bomb factories. Nonetheless, al Qaeda in Iraq remains a formidable foe with considerable resilience and a capability to produce horrific attacks, but a group whose ideology and methods have increasingly alienated many in Iraq.

The extremist militias in Iraq also are a substantial problem and must be significantly disrupted. There can be no sustainable outcome if militia death squads are allowed to lie low during the surge only to resurface later and resume killing and intimidation.

There have been some significant successes in this arena as well, including the detentions -- detention of the heads of the Sadr secret cell network, the Iraqi leader of an explosively formed projectile network from Iran, the former deputy minister of Health and his facility protection security force brigadier, who had effectively hijacked the Ministry of Health, and a national police officer accused of torture, with several of these detained by Iraqi forces.

Gen. Petraeus was cautious not to claim early success. He described the situation as “exceedingly complex and very tough,” and underscored the need for patience with the “surge” strategy. John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org said, “The improvement is too small to be meaningful, but it’s too soon to declare a defeat.”⁶¹

Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Ordierno, MNC-Iraq Commander, also emphasized the need for patience with the strategy. He said that “surge” troop levels would be needed through early 2008 to be effective.

The Impact of the Baghdad Security Operation (Fardh al-Qanoon)

The initial phase of Operation Phantom Thunder, known as the Baghdad security plan, or Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon (Enforcing the Law), took place from January 15 to June 15, 2007. The operation deployed a surge of US and Iraqi forces to clear neighborhoods of insurgents and militias, and hold them, by maintaining a presence in those areas. 27 of the 34 planned Joint Security Stations were established in Baghdad as of June 2007. They were staffed 24 hours a day by Iraqi security and Coalition forces.⁶²

When the US military began planning for the operation in late 2006, it estimated that the operations would be able to “clear” every neighborhood in the capital by the end of July. However, these deadlines have slipped substantially even in Baghdad. Some of the new brigades were diverted to volatile regions surrounding Baghdad, including the Diyala province. More than one of the Army’s Stryker battalions planned for Baghdad was sent to Diyala.

Some clearing operations took longer than expected. In Mansour, for instance, an operation that was originally intended to last two weeks was extended to five weeks. Military officials claimed that the intelligence available justified a more thorough search of the area. It took the military longer to control some districts in western Baghdad, such as al-Rasheed and Amiriyah, because of the presence of insurgents.

Iraqi security forces also were slower than expected in making progress in some cases. Most Iraqi battalions came to Baghdad without full manpower. In addition, their effectiveness was

compromised by a program that rotates units out of Baghdad and back to their home regions every ninety days.

Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, deputy commander of the First Cavalry Division in Baghdad said he believed the setback was due largely to the failure of Iraqi Security Forces to secure areas that had previously been cleared by US forces. The Iraqi police and army units, according to Gen. Brooks, were unprepared to man checkpoints and handle security operations. In these instances, American troops were forced to conduct operations in areas that had previously been cleared, yet had been infiltrated again by insurgents.

It was unclear how many Iraqi troops were deployed to Baghdad. The majority of the Iraqi Army troops were Kurds from northern Iraq, and there were doubts that Kurdish troops would be able to secure Arab Baghdad. There were about 2,100 Kurdish Iraqi Army troops in the capital at the end of April, although it was clear that the brigades were not at full strength. US forces and residents in Baghdad, however, were impressed with the overall conduct and professionalism of the Kurds.

US troops said that the Kurds had never turned down a mission in Baghdad, which was often a problem with Iraqi police forces. Citizens also said that Kurdish-Arab animosities did not seem to inhibit the Kurdish troops' ability to conduct patrols. US troops felt that the Kurdish troops' ambivalence toward Sunni – Shi'a animosity helped their credibility among the sectarian population in Baghdad. Iraqi Army units continued to operate with close oversight by US forces, however, and they did voice their distrust of Arab Army units.⁶³

On April 12, 2007, there were two large-scale attacks in the capital. A suicide bomber donated his truck on the historic al-Sarafiya bridge in Baghdad, causing the steel structure to divide in two places and sending most of the bridge and cars into the Tigris River. At least ten people died and dozens were wounded. The bridge was 75-years old and connected the Sunni neighborhood of Wasiriyah to the Shi'ite neighborhood of Utafiyah, making it a symbolic target.

On April 28, 2007, a suicide car bomber killed 60 people and wounded 170 near one of Iraq's most revered Shi'ite shrines in the holy city of Kerbala.

On April 30, 2007, at least two people were killed and 15 wounded when a bus bomb exploded in a tunnel; it also badly damaged the tunnel, a main road into Baghdad. A tanker laden with chlorine gas exploded near a restaurant west of the Iraqi city of Ramadi, killing up to six people and wounding 10. A suicide bomber wearing a vest packed with explosives killed 32 people when he blew himself up among mourners at a Shi'ite funeral in the town of Khalis, north of Baghdad. The attack took place inside a crowded mourning tent. More than 52 people were wounded.

On May 6, 2007, a car bomb killed 35 people and wounded 80 others near a crowded market in Baghdad's Shi'ite neighborhood of Bayaa. On May 11, 2007, Truck bombs detonated on three bridges around Baghdad, killing 25 people and injuring 69. The attacks damaged two of the bridges that connect a largely Shiite-populated area of east Baghdad to a mostly Sunni area of west Baghdad. The attack came one month after a truck bombing collapsed the Sarafiya Bridge over the Tigris River, killing 11 people.⁶⁴ On May 22, 2007, a car bomb in a Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad killed 25 people and injured 60 at an outdoor market.⁶⁵

The additional troops in Baghdad also found a growing number of weapons caches. In the first seven weeks of the security plan, troops found an average of 36 stockpiles per week, compared

with 24 the previous seven weeks. On April 9, 2007, US and Iraqi troops deploying from the Joint Security Station in Jihad found a car with numerous weapons suspected of being smuggled from Iran. They included: 60-millimeter mortar round, 81-millimeter mortar rounds, RPG-7 rounds, and a 107 rocket.⁶⁶

The Baghdad command put out weekly reports during this period, gauging which neighborhoods fall into each of the predetermined phases of military operations: disrupt, clear, control and retain. At the end of May, 156 neighborhoods in Baghdad were under the “disrupt” category, meaning that it was possible to keep insurgents off balance until full military presence was established.

These areas included Sadr City. 155 neighborhoods at that time fell into the “clear” category, in which the military raided buildings and homes, block by block, to look for weapons and fighters. 128 neighborhoods fell into the “control” phase,” meaning that U.S. and Iraqi forces were able to keep insurgents out and protect the population. Only eighteen neighborhoods fell into the “retain” phase, which relied heavily on Iraqi security forces to ensure that the area remained secure. It should be noted that these figures are judged to be “very conservative,” due to the fact that military officials did not want to overestimate the status of neighborhoods for which they were responsible.

On June 4, 2007, 146 of Baghdad’s 457 neighborhoods (fewer than one-third) were controlled by Iraqi and American troops, while the remaining 311 either remained to be infiltrated by troops or still face “resistance.” While violence was reduced in many areas, the Sunni-Shiite mixed neighborhoods in western Baghdad remained especially dangerous. On June 22, Lt. Gen. Ordierno reported that the Baghdad operation was focusing on “clearing and controlling the security districts of Atamiyah in northeast, Rasheed in the south and portions of Mansour in the West.”⁶⁷

On June 30, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commander of Multi-National Division Baghdad, said that American and Iraqi forces were retaining 7 percent of the 474 neighborhoods in Baghdad. Fil reported that an additional 41-42 percent were being “controlled,” 36 percent of the capital’s neighborhoods were being “cleared”, and the remaining 15 percent were being “disrupted.”⁶⁸

These developments need to be kept in perspective. The second phase of the operation only began on June 15th and the principal clearing and holding operations were not anticipated to take shape until August. Lt. Gen. Ordierno also announced that the troop surge had made “some very clear progress” toward the end of June, citing the detention of nearly 18,000 people, the discovery of about 2,500 arms caches, the killing of over 3,184 enemy fighters and the wounding of 1,106.

Counts of Iraqi casualties are notoriously uncertain, and only measure deaths and not wounded. They also do not measure displacements, refugees, and growing problems in basic services and infrastructure. To the extent they are relevant, Coalition estimates of civilian deaths in Baghdad were lower in February and March than January figures, although they showed an increase in May over the previous two months. Security barriers had been constructed around 11 markets in Baghdad, and more than \$35 million had been spent on reconstruction and humanitarian projects.

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Problems in Sunni Baghdad

Some Sunni areas of Baghdad – which were now concentrated on the western side of the Tigris – did not improve as quickly as Shi'ite neighborhoods. Reconstruction projects improved water quality and electricity in Shi'ite Sadr City – funded in part by the Iraqi government and in part by al-Sadr himself - and the markets were generally busy.

Residents in many Sunni areas rarely left their houses, markets and streets remained empty, and people lacked the most basic services – leaving them to feel generally deserted by the government. Yet government workers said they could not enter the Sunni neighborhoods because they would be killed. Sunnis were constantly under pressure from insurgents and Sunni militias, and they knew that cooperating with the US or Iraqi forces meant certain death.

Ahmed Chalabi, who had recently been charged with working to win popular support for the Baghdad security plan, said he saw four main problems in Sunni areas: food distribution, electricity, fuel, and health services. He said he was working to solve the first problem by having food agents accompanied by Iraqi Army units when traveling to Sunni areas. He admitted, however, that the other problems were deeper and would require much more time to solve. In the meantime, the outlook for Sunnis in Baghdad was bleak. Some estimates suggested that Sunnis now only made up 40% of Baghdad's population in the spring of 2007, when once they had been the majority.⁷⁰

Security remained uncertain in a number of Sunni areas. The Fadhil neighborhood had sent up a neighborhood watch group in 2006, but Sunni insurgents had entered the neighborhood to use it as a base against the surrounding Shi'ite areas, and the watch group eventually merged with the insurgents. Like many once prosperous Sunni areas, Fadhil had become a no-go zone for Shi'ites, reporters, and aide workers and was following a downward spiral with much of Sunni Baghdad.⁷¹

Fighting erupted between Sunni militants and residents and Iraqi-US forces in the Baghdad neighborhood of Fadhil on April 10, 2007. Iraqi Army troops were conducted operations at a mosque, where residents said that they killed two men, sparking attacks from the largely Sunni population of Fadhil, which is located in Shi'ite dominated eastern Baghdad.

Reports of the casualties varied widely. Residents said that up 36 people in Fadhil had been killed and that they had destroyed five Iraqi Humvees. The US military said that a total of seven people were killed – three insurgents and four Iraqi soldiers, and 16 US soldiers were wounded.

Uncertain Efforts at “Gated Communities”

Securing the entire city of 5 to 7.5 million people has so far proved significantly more difficult than some estimated in advocating the surge strategy. Baghdad was too important to the Iraqi economy to search every vehicle or control every access point, and the same applied to internal traffic. The city could only function with relatively constant flows of traffic between Sunni, Shi'ite, and mixed areas.

The US military announced on April 22, 2007, that it was securing at least ten neighborhoods in Baghdad by creating “gated communities.” The first areas to be walled-off were the Sunni neighborhoods of Ameriyia, Khadra and Adhamiyah. The US military also planned to take a census of the areas, recording residents' fingerprints and possibly issuing permits for entry and

exit. The goal was to isolate some of the most violent areas and keep insurgents enclosed, allowing troops to establish security in other parts of the city.

This approach to security was intended to ensure relative physical security to given parts of the city without paralyzing it, or creating security systems that did not function. They also allowed some economy of force. Focusing on security in the most troubled areas still involved more manpower than the US and ISF could deploy, but was far more practical than trying to both secure the entire perimeter and then secure the entire inner structure of the city.

There were, however, serious problems with such an approach. Most importantly, all three of the initial attempts were planned for Sunni areas, which further divided Iraqis along sectarian lines, and could make it appear that the US was choosing a side in the civil war. Secondly, the communities would enclose militias, but an attempt had to be made to co-opt the militias instead of leaving them to develop as a parallel force. The communities had the potential to be simply sanctuaries for armed groups. There also had to be a clear effort to win the trust of the populations in the communities by providing basic services, employment, and infrastructure.

Sunni residents were divided about the new plan. Some said they thought it would curtail some of the violence, but others said they felt like they were in jail. The Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party as well as Shi'ite Moqtada al Sadr said they opposed the "gated communities" idea because it would further divide the two sects. The US military said it would remain "in dialogue" with the Iraqi government over the issue.⁷² An Iraqi Army spokesman said that Maliki had approved of the plan and that the project would go on. He also emphasized that the concrete blocs were "barriers" and not a "wall", in an attempt to stave off comparisons to the wall built by Israel in the West Bank and the Berlin Wall.⁷³

This security effort also met strong opposition from elements in the Iraqi government. Prime Minister Maliki announced that he would stop work on the "wall" that the US military had already started to build around Adhamiya. Maliki said that the communities would only aggravate sectarian tensions and that it reminded people of "other walls".

On May 13, members of the Iraqi Parliament testified their objections to the construction of walls around the Baghdad neighborhood of Azamiyah, criticizing the policy as a form of sectarian discrimination. Kurdish parliamentarian Mahmoud Othman stated, "We must build bridges between the different groups, not build walls to separate them." The resolution against the barriers passed 138-to-88 in the 275-member house. (The bill must be approved by Maliki and his two deputies in order for it to become law or the house will be forced to redress the law).⁷⁴

The Second Askariya Mosque Bombing

On June 13, 2007, the Askariya Shrine, the holiest Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, was bombed for the second time since February 26, 2006. The explosion brought down the two minarets that had been left standing after the 2006 bombing. Sunni Arabs were suspected in the attack.⁷⁵ Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker said, "The attacks on the bridges, on religious shrines, the attack on the parliament, the attacks on the population at large – it's clearly part of a concerted al-Qaeda campaign to try to reignite widespread sectarian strife."⁷⁶

Following the attack, a curfew was implemented and there was a ban on vehicles inside the city.⁷⁷ The curfews worked to minimize high-profile reprisal attacks.⁷⁸ Following the attack, only five bodies were found in Baghdad, about one-fifth of the usual daily toll.⁷⁹

Both Sunni and Shi'ite religious leaders appealed to their constituents to remain calm. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani called on his followers to protest peacefully. Sadr called for a mourning period of three days.⁸⁰

Moqtada al-Sadr called on his followers to restrain themselves from violent reprisal attacks.⁸¹ Moqtada al-Sadr's bloc in Parliament said it would refuse to participate until progress was made on rebuilding the mosque.⁸² Following the attack, Sadr said, "The Iraqi people should know that there is no Sunni, and no Muslim, who would attack a shrine that is the burial place of our two imams."⁸³ The day after the bombing occurred, however, Shi'ite followers of Moqtada al-Sadr convened at the site of the bombing. U.S. troops and Iraqi police dispersed the demonstrators by firing into the air, and flying fighter jets low over nearby rooftops.⁸⁴

In attacks reported throughout Baya, Basra, and Diyala, at least 13 Sunni mosques and one Shi'ite shrine were attacked in the aftermath of the Askariya bombing.⁸⁵ The Ashrah al-Mubashra Sunni mosque was destroyed in central Basra. The mosque was attacked by hooded gunmen who forced the police guarding the mosque to flee. The attack was seen as evidence of a "huge penetration into the security forces in Basra, by militias," as admitted by an emergency force commander in the area.⁸⁶ Sadrist elements were involved in some of these attacks in spite of Sadr's public posture.

A second attack on a Shi'ite mosque followed on June 19, when a powerful explosion destroyed part of the Khalani Mosque in central Baghdad, killing 61 people and wounding 130.⁸⁷ Sunni leaders from the Arab Ghilani Mosque and Shi'ite leaders from the Khalani mosque were encouraging their followers to attend each other's Friday Prayers, to dissuade sectarian attacks.⁸⁸

The Green Zone

The quality of attacks improved even during periods where attack numbers declined. An increasing number of attacks occurred within the heavily fortified area of the Green Zone. Navy Rear Adm. Mark Fox said, "There is unquestionably an increasing pattern of attacks against the International Zone. There's no doubt about that." In a UN report, 18 attacks against the Green Zone were reported in March 2007, 30 in April and 39 by May 22. 26 people have been killed in the Green Zone since Feb. 19, 2007.⁸⁹

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon released a report on May 10, analyzing the conditions of the Green Zone. Ban requested funds to construct a more well-protect UN headquarters in the Green Zone, saying the UN could not risk "having to wind down operations due to unacceptable security risks."⁹⁰

U.S. Embassy employees complained about inadequate security in the Green Zone. The embassy staff of 1,000 has not been reduced, despite calls on the Bush administration to do so. Officials stated that important security precautions (such as the required usage of bulletproof vests and helmets, and the use of warning sirens) have been set aside during highly publicized visits, such as the March 31 visit of Sen. John McCain, and Vice President Dick Cheney (Insert Date).⁹¹

On April 12, a suicide bomber penetrated numerous security checkpoints, detonating an explosive belt in a cafeteria in the Iraqi parliament building, killing one Iraqi lawmaker.⁹² The attack targeted a cafeteria frequented by Iraqi politicians in the well-secured Green Zone. The bomb detonated when Parliamentarians were eating lunch, and killed Mohammad Awad, a

member of the Sunni National Dialogue Front; 22 were also wounded. The “Islamic State of Iraq” – headed by Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia – claimed responsibility for the attack. It was the second attack in the Green Zone in recent weeks; in March, mortars struck nearby as UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was holding a press conference.⁹³ US troops later found identification cards allowing entry into the Green Zone and the US embassy in an insurgent safe haven in western Baghdad.⁹⁴

On May 14, rocket attack in the Green Zone wounded nine people.⁹⁵ On May 16, mortar shelling in the Green Zone killed two people. In May the U.S. Embassy ordered diplomats to wear flak jackets and helmets while outdoors or in unprotected buildings. Other attacks in the Green Zone include: May 3, four Asian contractors were killed in a rocket attack. March, a rocket exploded near Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s office during a news conference for visiting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon. A few days later, two suicide vests were found unexploded in the Green Zone. On May 19, during Prime Minister Tony Blair’s visit to Iraq, an artillery strike (either a mortar or rocket attack) hit the Green Zone wounding one. One round hit the British embassy compound.⁹⁶

At the end of May, four British contractors and their bodyguard were kidnapped from the Green Zone. The gunmen who abducted the British civilians did not have to fire their guns, leading some to believe that militants had infiltrated the police and received assistance from those working at the Finance Ministry complex.⁹⁷ General Petraeus said he suspected that the kidnapping was carried out by “the cell whose leader, Azhar al-Duleimi, we killed a few weeks back.”⁹⁸

On the same day, an Iraqi husband and wife were kidnapped from the U.S. Embassy and allegedly killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq.⁹⁹ On June 3, ten Mahdi Army militiamen were arrested in Numaniya, west of Kut, during an Iraqi army offensive against the militia. U.S. officials said four men were killed and six more were arrested while they were caught setting up rockets to shoot into the Green Zone. The four men were shot by Apache Longbow helicopters, and the remaining six fled to Sadr City, where they were found and arrested.¹⁰⁰

Eight people have been killed due to attacks on the Green Zone since late March, including two American soldiers and about 25 people have been injured. According to U.S. military and government officials, the biggest problem is the psychological impact of the strikes on the supposedly safe and fortified area.¹⁰¹ “The mortars are coming from the same place every day,” one Iraqi man living in the Green Zone said, “and no one is doing anything about it. Stuff like that gets to people” even more than the attacks themselves.¹⁰²

On March 28, a rule was enacted, requiring everyone in the Green Zone to wear helmets and body armor outdoors. On May 3, the rule was expanded to require all residents to “remain within a hardened structure to the maximum extent possible and strictly avoid congregating outdoors.” On May 19, an announcement strictly prohibited congregating outdoors “until further notice,” and ordered that the palace pool area be closed.¹⁰³ Following the June 13 attack on the Askariya mosque, seven mortar rounds hit the Green Zone, killing three civilians.¹⁰⁴

Diyala and Operation Arrowhead Ripper

It is far too soon to judge whether the overall pattern of US operations in Iraqi will succeed, but the surge strategy failed in a narrow sense during the spring of 2007. .As U.S.-Iraqi operations

secured parts of Baghdad and tribal resistance grew in Anbar, al-Qa'ida in Iraq members moved to Diyala, making it the center of their operations. According to official estimates, Diyala had as many as 2,000 Sunni insurgents as of June 19.¹⁰⁵

Insurgent activity in Diyala province continued to increase throughout the spring of 2007. 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.

US military officials in Diyala estimated that in broad terms, there were some 2,000 insurgents operating in Baquba alone. The insurgents belonged to a wide range Sunni groups, including former Ba'athists, Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia, the 20th Revolutionary Brigades, Ansar Al Sunna, foreign terrorists, and disorganized criminal gangs. Tribal loyalties in Diyala were also strong; there were 25 main tribes and at least 100 sub-tribes.¹⁰⁶

Baquba Becomes a New Center of Violence

Attacks on US troops in Baquba more than doubled over the same period in 2006, and although US and Iraqi troops had uncovered a growing number of weapons caches, the stockpiles left over from Saddam Hussein's regime more than adequately supplied the insurgents. Like in Baghdad, the number of sectarian murders decreased with the influx of US troops, but the number of roadside bombs rose from 267 in April 2006 to 438 in April 2007, and the number of direct fire attacks quadruples from 52 to 220 over the course of a year.¹⁰⁷

US forces also noted that the insurgents were increasingly well organized and well trained in 2007. For example, they staged several attacks to takeover American and Iraqi outposts in Baquba that were well coordinated and clearly had been planned in advance. In the case of the Iraqi outposts, the insurgents succeeded, and they were only rebelled from the US post after troops fired 2,000 rounds from their Bradleys and 13,000 rounds from M-240 machine guns. In early March 2007, insurgents also almost captured a four-man US sniper team after they cut off their escape routes and chased them through Baquba for four hours.

The growing intensity of the fighting in Baquba brought normal life to a standstill. Most basic services like food and fuel supply had collapsed and it was too dangerous for contractors or NGOs to enter the town. Unemployment was rising, which helped create volunteers for the insurgency, which often paid \$300 to plant a roadside bomb.

Sectarian cleansings and displacement in the provincial capital was as devastating and as intense as in Baghdad. Large numbers of Sunnis had fled Baghdad for Baquba in 2006 after being displaced by Shi'ite militias. The influx of Sunnis to Baquba then displaced Shi'ite families. The Shi'ite dominated Diyala provincial council responded by appointing a sectarian police chief who alleged arrested dozens of Sunnis for no reason.

US military officials and members of the Diyala PRT were increasingly aware that the insurgents' tactics of intimidation and monetary rewards would be difficult to combat. The 5,000 member Third Brigade Combat Team of the First Cavalry Division was responsible for all of Diyala province and parts of neighboring Salahaddin province, and as more insurgents fled north from Baghdad, they would be increasingly stretched to provide basic security for civilians.¹⁰⁸

In a joint Iraqi-US operation, which began in the last week of March northeast of Baquba, more than 30 insurgents were killed and 28 detained, the U.S. military said. Over 15 weapon caches were found and two insurgent safe havens cleared.

The insurgents' ability to predict US offensives also grew. In several instances in March and April 2007, offensives involving several hundred US soldiers accomplished little because insurgents had already fled the small towns. Troops were unable to get much information out of the remaining women and children, and were forced to return to base without any detainees. US forces were also given faulty intelligence by civilians and Iraqi police officers, which sometimes led to an ambush.

More Sophisticated Insurgent Attacks

Insurgents also launched more coordinated attacks. US troops said that insurgents clearly had planned out their attacks in advance, using mortars, RPGs, and machine guns. The military estimated that insurgents carried out 27 coordinated and complex attacks in March 2007. US forces in Diyala increasingly called it the "worst place" in the country, and it had become the third most dangerous province in Iraq, after Anbar and Baghdad.¹⁰⁹

A large-scale attack against US troops in Diyala on April 23, 2007 underscored the intensity of the insurgency as well as the exposure of US troops in the new "surge" strategy. A suicide bomber drove his truck into the US military outpost in Baquba, killing nine and injuring twenty. It was the largest single attack on US troops since August 2005. Another bombing the same day at an Iraqi police checkpoint killed seven policemen and injured thirteen.

In mid-May, Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. "Randy" Mixon asserted that he lacked a sufficient amount of troops to secure the Diyala province. Mixon blamed the Iraqi government for allowing bureaucracy, sectarian discord and corruption impede its ability to assist U.S. troops in Diyala. Only one U.S. Army brigade, or about 3,500 troops exist in the Diyala province, compared to Al Anbar that has four brigades, and the areas in and around Baghdad, which have ten.¹¹⁰

On May 18, about 50 suspected insurgents attacked a U.S. base in Baqouba, sparking a clash involving U.S. soldiers and helicopters that left as many as six suspected insurgents dead.¹¹¹ On May 19, gunmen dressed in Iraqi police and military uniforms attacked Hamid Shifia village of Shiite Kurds northeast of Baghdad in the Diyala province. Police said 13 people were killed and 12 were wounded, however the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan reported 15 dead and one wounded. The PUK website said that the gunmen, suspected of being Shiites from the Islamic State of Iraq, entered the village under the guise of conducting a military raid. They separated the men from the women and opened fire on the men, according to the PUK website. Diyala province police Lt. Mohammed Hakman said that the gunmen also set fire to 30 houses.¹¹²

Residents of the village had posted guards at the entrance to the town, anticipating an attack by Sunni Arab insurgents. However, with the gunmen arrived in Iraqi police and military uniforms the guards waved the gunmen through. "Our area was very quiet and there was no violence until a month ago when some Sunnis helped Qaeda find a safe haven in nearby villages," said Ahmed Qasim Mula, a village resident.¹¹³ On May 21, gunmen ambushed a minibus passing from Gisaireen to Hibhib in Diyala province, killing five passengers, including a child.¹¹⁴

U.S. troops were increasingly vulnerable to these kinds of attacks as a result of the new counterinsurgency offensive.¹¹⁵ On May 12, an organized attack on a U.S. military patrol left four soldiers and one interpreter dead and three soldiers missing 12 miles west of Mahmudiyah, a

city in the region south of Baghdad nicknamed the “Triangle of Death.” The ambush followed several similar attacks against U.S. troops, producing high daily death tolls. A senior military official said that the attack was carefully planned.¹¹⁶

Military spokesman in Baghdad, Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said that the two soldiers were stopped in two Humvees out of view of the rest of their unit. Their assignment was to watch for insurgents planting bombs on the road. The two vehicles were incinerated in the attack. Members of the unit heard the explosion and called for a pilotless reconnaissance aircraft to search the area, which detected the vehicles 15 minutes later.¹¹⁷ The victims were assigned to the 10th Mountain Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team.¹¹⁸

Approximately 4,000 American troops searched for the three who were allegedly kidnapped during the ambush in Mahumudiyah. American troops were deployed in search of the three soldiers, conducting the searches southwest of Baghdad around Yousifiya, a market town of about 5,000 people in the predominately Sunni area ranging 20 miles south of Baghdad. Thousands of U.S. forces were involved in the search more than 900 residents were detained and a bomb killed an American soldier.¹¹⁹

On May 14, the Islamic State of Iraq claimed that it was holding the three soldiers who were abducted on May 12 no proof was offered.¹²⁰ The insurgent group claimed on a website that the search warning the U.S. military to stop the search, and suggesting that the abductions were meant to avenge the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in the same area, as well as abuses committed by U.S. troops at Abu Ghraib.¹²¹

One of the missing soldiers, Pfc. Joseph J. Anzack Jr., was found in the Euphrates River 12 miles south of the site of the attack. Reports from Iraqi police said that witnesses saw two other bodies in the river clad in U.S. uniforms but the bodies had become submerged before this could be confirmed.¹²²

Operation Arrowhead Ripper and Baquba

On June 19th, American forces launched an offensive against Sunni insurgents in Baquba. This offensive was part of Operation Arrowhead Ripper operation which was expected to last for 30 to 60 days.¹²³ Operation Arrowhead Ripper aimed at eradicating al-Qa’ida’s influence in Baquba and simultaneously allowing the provincial government in Diyala to gain support there. Brig. Gen. Mick Bednarek, deputy commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division in Baquba, said, “The key significance, though, is getting the Iraqi ministries engaged to provide fundamental goods and services, such as food, fuel, displaced persons support, and education. The governor will have oversight and the people will start to see improved basic services which will build the trust and confidence of the people not only in the provincial government, but in the central government as well.”¹²⁴

Gen. Petraeus said on June 21 that Arrowhead Ripper was targeting al-Qa’ida operatives who had moved from the Anbar province from mid-March to late June. On June 21 he said that similar operations were occurring all around Baghdad, using the five brigades and a combat aviation brigade and Marine Expeditionary Unit.¹²⁵ Approximately 3,000 additional U.S. troops were deployed to Diyala at the end of May.¹²⁶ About 10,000 soldiers were deployed in Operation Arrowhead Ripper.¹²⁷

The attack was part of a larger campaign targeting IED and VBIED operations in the area. American officials estimated that the majority of car and truck bombs being used by al-Qa’ida

were built outside of Baghdad. However, the bombing of the Khalani Mosque on June 19 was used with a bomb rigged with TNT a little less than a mile away from the Mosque. Brig. Gen. Qassim Atta, an Iraqi spokesman for the Baghdad security plan, said on June 20, that insurgents began building car bombs within the city so as to avoid checkpoints.¹²⁸

More than 2,000 U.S. troops were deployed in the initial attack. The operation was led by the Third Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Second Infantry Division, supported by two other brigades.¹²⁹ In the first phase of the attack, U.S. forces cut off the western part of Baquba, where an estimated 300 to 500 al-Qa'ida fighters had been operating. Helicopters and tanks were used to cut off escape routes from the city.¹³⁰ In the second phase of the attack, troops began clearing the area, house-by-house and street-by-street.¹³¹

Plans for the operation called for securing the area in which they were fighting, preventing insurgents from fleeing to other areas. Stryker armored vehicles were used to block the Western outskirts of Baquba and a main north-south route that runs through the center of the provincial capital.¹³²

Col. Steve Townsend, the commander of the Third Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Second Infantry Division, said, "Rather than let the problem export to some other place and then have to fight them again, my goal is to isolate this thing and cordon it off."¹³³ American forces stopped any resident in Baquba who was seen as a potential fighter, took biometric data, and tested them for the presence of explosive material.¹³⁴ Over 100 Iraqis on the eastern side of the city worked with American troops to prevent insurgents from escaping Baquba.¹³⁵ Members from Sunni insurgent groups, operating under the umbrella group, United Jihad Factions Council, worked with U.S. forces in the offensive against al-Qa'ida in Iraq.¹³⁶

On June 22, Lt. Gen. Ordierno reported that three brigades were operating in the Baghdad "belt" to the north and east of Baghdad, in Diyala, and three more brigades were operating in other parts of northern Iraq. Two of the three Brigades operating in Diyala were focused on capturing or eliminating the enemy as they tried to escape from the capital of Baqubah toward other areas such as Baghdad.¹³⁷

It was reported on June 22 that 17 al-Qa'ida fighters were killed by coalition forces in the operation. However news emerged in the following week that the fighter may have been civilians or militants from another organization.¹³⁸

Though the first phase of the operation was intended to keep insurgents from escaping the area, on June 22, General Ordierno stated that an estimated 80% of al-Qa'ida leadership had fled Baqubah before the start of the operation. Ordierno said that somehow al-Qa'ida had anticipated the attack and fled the area, leaving midlevel operatives and fighters to fend for themselves. It was suspected that the 1920's Brigade fighters could have indirectly leaked information regarding the attack, tipping off al-Qa'ida.

Southern Iraq and Operation Marne Torch

The security situation also continued to deteriorate in Southern Iraq. Shi'ite militia, tribes and factions aligned with either the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, the Fadhila Party, the Office of Martyr Sadr and other various organizations in order to gain greater control over local resources. Intra-Shi'ite violence among these groups led to greater attacks on Iraqi and Coalition forces. Also in this area, the Iraqi police continued to fail to challenge Shi'ite militias, partly because of tolerance or allegiance to the activities of either party.^{139 140}

The British Presence in Southern Iraq Declines

On April 9, 2007 the British military formally handed over the largest base in southern Iraq to Iraqi security forces. The Shatt-al-Arab Hotel near Basra had housed 600 British soldiers and would be the new base for the 10th Iraqi Army Division. The British troops would return home shortly, the first of the 1,700 soldiers that Prime Minister Blair announced would leave Iraq in 2007.¹⁴¹

The British troops in southern Iraq continued to hand over control to Iraq. On April 18, 2007 they officially handed over control of Maysan province, bordering Iran. It was the third British province to be transferred. British officers maintained that reducing their troop presence would reduce the tensions in the south. One officer said, "Ninety percent of the violence down here is all against us. You put more people on the ground, you are creating more targets."¹⁴²

The reality, however, was that the British had failed, if success meant establishing any kind of lasting national unity. The police forces were sectarian and had been repeatedly accused in instances of "soft sectarian cleansing." There were also serious internal rivalries between competing Shi'ite parties that often became violent. It was far from clear that the local Shi'ite governments spoke with a unified voice even in the south, and most made few efforts towards conciliation and national unity.

Some expected the incoming British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to announce troop withdrawals from Iraq within 100 days of taking office. Britain is in the process of reducing its troops in Iraq from 7,1000 to 5,000 but there has been no official timetable for full British withdrawal.¹⁴³

Operation Marne Torch

The rising level of violence in the south forced the Coalition to react in spite of the British desired to cut the level of British activity. On May 25, British troops and Iraqi Special Forces troops killed Wissam al-Waili, also known as Abu Qadir, the leader of the Mahdi Army militia in Basra, while attempting to detain him. The clash took place in Jumhoriyah, a middle class, residential area. The killing was followed by three hours of continuous retaliatory fire from the Mahdi Army militia on British positions in Basra.¹⁴⁴ Five other people, including Qadir's younger brother also died in the incident, and 15 people were wounded.¹⁴⁵

On June 4, militiamen from the Mahdi Army fought Iraqi soldiers and police in Diwaniyah, as security forces conducted raids in the city, while U.S. aircraft flew overhead. The fighting killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded 16 other people.¹⁴⁶ Al-Sadr's spokesman said that the clashes occurred when the Iraqi police violated a signed truce by attempting to arrest Kifah al-Kuraiti, a local militia leader. The Iraqi police said the arrest was carried out with a warrant.¹⁴⁷

Operation Marne Torch began on June 15, engaged in areas that were previously untouched by Coalition forces for the three years prior. The operation began in the area near Arab Jabour along the Tigris River, and included additional operations to prevent al-Qa'ida from moving into Baghdad and Baqubah. The operation was being carried out by four brigade combat teams, including two infantry divisions, an Airborne brigade and a Mountain division. Very few Iraqi security forces were participating in the operation. However, Sunni militias were being allowed to occupy areas as a "neighborhood watch."

The operation focused on the Arab Jabour region belonging to Doura, a Sunni-dominated suburb south of Baghdad. The region along the Tigris River was the first target of the operation, where the military blew up 17 boats as of June 24. The airborne division in Operation Marne Torch also used “a fair number” of air strikes by B-1 bombers to destroy entire roads in the area, believed to be used by insurgents. U.S. troops are also blocking the exit routes from the city, preventing insurgents from escaping. On June 22, Lt. Gen. Ordierno said the units were successful in killing or detaining 100 enemy fighters.¹⁴⁸

On June 24, the U.S. army reported that 4 American soldiers died in the operation and 26 had been seriously wounded. 9 Iraqi Army troops and 8 Iraqi police were killed and about 40 Iraqi security forces were injured. 12 enemies had been killed in action, and 142 were detained, including 30 high-value detainees. 48 IEDs were found and 4 weapons caches had been cleared. The operation was expected to last through at least the end of July.

Rising Ethnic and Sectarian Tension in Northern Iraq

Another key indication of the failure of a Baghdad-centric strategy occurred in Northern Iraq. US and Iraqi officials said in the first week of April that the security plan would be extended to Mosul to quiet sectarian tensions, although they did not say when new US and Iraqi troops could be expected in the northern city. Attacks against Iraqi security forces in Mosul had recently increased. Mosul would be the second city to take “surge” forces originally planned for Baghdad; 700 troops and armored vehicles were transferred to Baquba, Diyala Province in March.¹⁴⁹

A Yazidi woman was stoned to death on April 7, by members of the Yazidi community for having romantic relations with a Sunni Muslim man. A video was taken with a cellular phone of the woman's death. Tina Susman of the Los Angeles Times describes the scene as follows:

Someone slams a concrete block onto the back of her head. A river of blood oozes from beneath her long, tangled hair. The girl stops moving, but the kicks and the rocks keep coming, as do the victorious shouts of the men delivering them.¹⁵⁰

Kurds who include Yazidis have accused Sunni Arabs of circulating these images to undermine the Kurdish and Yazidi community. Two weeks after the stoning, more than 20 Yazidi men were dragged off a bus in Mosul by gunmen and executed. The next day, Kurdish political offices were target of a car bombing in northern Iraq. The attack claimed by a Sunni insurgent group linked to al Qaeda, claiming to avenge the death of the young Yazidi woman.¹⁵¹ Tensions between Arab Muslims and Yazidis in Mosul had been rising over the course of the war, but most involved individual cases of mixed marriages and tribal rivalries.¹⁵²

On May 9, a suicide truck bomber killed 14 people and wounded 87 when he blew up his payload near the Kurdish Regional Government's interior ministry in Arbil. And on May 13 50 people were killed and 70 wounded when a suicide truck bomb exploded near the local office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Makhmour, near Arbil.

Christians have also been targeted in northern Iraq. Al-Qa'ida presented Christians in Baghdad with ultimatums- to either convert to Islam, marry their daughters to al-Qa'ida fighters, pay the Islamic tax or leave without their possessions.¹⁵³ The U.S. military said they became aware of the problem in May, and built barriers around the largest Christian enclave in the Dora neighborhood in Baghdad.¹⁵⁴

Approximately 19,000 Iraqi Christians registered with the United Nations refugee agency in Damascus.¹⁵⁵ On June 4, gunmen killed a Catholic priest and three assistances in Mosul.¹⁵⁶ In Mosul, eight Christian students and their professors were kidnapped on June 20.¹⁵⁷ On June 5, a Catholic priest and five boys were abducted.¹⁵⁸

Ceasefires and Local Alliances in Anbar and Elsewhere

The most serious operation success on the part of Iraqis occurred spontaneously and without any link to the surge strategy. The broad rise of civil conflict in Iraq, and the need to find substitutes and supplements for weak Iraqi security forces, led U.S. military officials and advisors in Iraq to begin focusing their efforts on small achievements to reach more easily accomplished benchmarks, necessary to build up toward the larger goals of national reconciliation.

These efforts included working with Sunni tribal forces in Anbar, recruiting Sunni Arab nationalists into security forces, initiating local agreements among neighborhoods of rival groups, and establishing businesses in newly stabilized areas. A senior military official in Baghdad described the steps being taken, "Some of it will be infrastructure that is being worked, some of it is local security for neighborhoods, and some of it is markets reopening."¹⁵⁹

Tribal Forces in Anbar

In Anbar, a group of tribal sheiks created a group that opposed Al Qaeda and supported the efforts of the US troops. It was based off of the tribal association formed in al Anbar province in the fall of 2006.¹⁶⁰ All 23 of the major tribes in and around Ramadi joined the "Anbar Salvation Council," or "Anbar Awakening" as of May 2007.¹⁶¹ The number of police in Anbar reached 10,000, with 4,500 stationed in Ramadi alone. American casualties also fell, although it remained one of the three most dangerous governorates. Attacks in March 2007 averaged four a day, compared with 25 a day the previous summer.

Various sources noted that the decline in violence in Anbar province in early 2007. US forces stationed in the majority Sunni province said that the change was a result of a majority of tribes working with rather than against US forces. In Anbar there was a 50% drop in violence after local tribes joined U.S. and Iraqi forces in combating Al-Qaeda. In May, there were 400 incidents of violence, compared to the 810 incidents that occurred in May of 2006. The average weekly rate of attacks in Anbar dropped from about 250 last year to 100 in May 2007. In Ramadi, there were only 30 attacks, compared to the 254 attacks in May of last year.¹⁶²

In the first six months of 2007, 12,000 Iraqis volunteered for the Iraqi security forces in Anbar, compared to the 1,000 that volunteered in 2006.¹⁶³ A police officer in Anbar commented on local members of Al Qaeda in Iraq, saying, "They are rapidly losing ground in Anbar and have been pushed out gradually, now there are only a few elements remaining, mostly in Fallujah."¹⁶⁴ The deputy commanding general of the Second marine Expeditionary Force in Anbar, Gen. John R. Allen, described the province as "a laboratory for counterinsurgency." The number of attacks dropped two thirds from the previous figure of 500 a week. Discoveries of weapons caches have risen nearly 190%, due primarily to the sympathy of local residents. The local police force rose from 20 recruits to 8,000 in the past year.¹⁶⁵

When the tribal leaders agreed to work with the US "occupation" in the fall of 2006, the number of police recruits increased exponentially. However, the US was not able to keep up with training and equipping. New policemen were pushed through the training program and ended up

patrolling the streets in several weeks without a uniform or issued weaponry. Some US troops also questioned whether the recruits had been properly vetted, and worried about insurgent infiltration.¹⁶⁶

One of the American officers most involved in the effort in Anbar, Col. Sean MacFarland, said that police recruitment increased when the US agreed to let them serve in their own tribal areas, protecting their families. MacFarland was instrumental in creating the alliance of tribal leaders in Anbar province in the latter half of 2006 that agreed to work the Americans to fight the insurgency. He said, "The prize in the counterinsurgency fight is not terrain. It's the people. When you've secured the people, you have won the war. The sheiks lead the people." The tribal associated had grown to 200 members by February 2007, and was planning on forming a political party. In the process of securing Ramadi, MacFarland's brigade lost 95 soldiers and 600 were wounded.¹⁶⁷

The downturn in violence in Ramadi was a result of a sustained military presence. In the spring of 2007 there were 6,000 US troops, 4,000 Iraqi soldiers, 4,500 Iraqi policemen, and 65 police stations and joint combat outposts. The offensive in Ramadi was now in the "holding" phase, and history showed that the insurgency was quick to take advantage of any reduction in US force.¹⁶⁸

Insurgent attacks did continue in Ramadi in May 2007, but far less often than they had just one year earlier. For example, on May 7 two suicide car bombs killed 25 people and dozens more were wounded. The US military attributed the attacks to al Qa'ida in Iraq. A member of the Sunni tribal alliance in Anbar said, "This is a cowardly attack, and they will not succeed in destabilizing the situation in the city."¹⁶⁹

In al Qaim, a farming community along the Syrian border, Marines reported a shift in strategy in late May, in correlation with the broader coalition strategic changes that took place since the end of 2005. Marines became responsible for policing operations rather than "hunt and destroy" missions. Capt. Luke Gove, the company commander reported that the key choice he must make is when to "not act- which is the hardest thing for a Marine to do." Foreign jihadists in al Qaim threatened the Sunni tribal leaders and American forces since used that distrust to recruit Iraqi army and police personnel. The goal of the Marine company was to create a local security force, acceptable to residents of al Qaim.¹⁷⁰

Army Col. Sean MacFarland of the First Marine Expeditionary Force commanded by Maj. Gen. Richard Zilmer, recalled the process of forming an alliance with the Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar to combat al-Qa'ida forces. MacFarland described the alliance as a "chemical reaction" needing "two compatible ingredients and a catalyst... The two ingredients were some frustrated sheikhs who were frozen out of the provincial government due to a bad decision to boycott the first elections and a new brigade combat team in town." The "catalyst," he described, was a rise in al-Qa'ida attacks. The results, he said, "could not have been more dramatic. When a tribe 'flipped' [referring to its decision to align with U.S. forces], attacks on U.S. soldiers and Marines in that area dropped to zero almost immediately."¹⁷¹ MacFarland said the lessons for U.S. forces are two-fold. One, "there are local solutions to be had if we are willing to look for them;" and two, "Our avowed enemy, al-Qaeda, is beatable in Iraq."¹⁷²

U.S. troops allowed local sheiks to do background checks of the new recruits into the police, because they did not want to appear to be taking a stance on whether to grant or deny amnesty to former insurgents. Col. Charlton explained, "Some police could've been insurgents at this time

last year. But the sheiks have changed their fundamental understanding of who the threat is – and the threat is Al Qaeda.”¹⁷³

This progress may reflect a major new trend inside Iraq, but it has obvious limits and presents significant risks. Basic services were still limited, unemployment was high, local governments existed in name only, and most importantly, it was far from clear that alliance with US forces to fight insurgents would translate into support for the central government in Baghdad. Most Sunnis continued to feel alienated by and underrepresented in the Shi’ite-led government. Col. John Charlton, commander of U.S. troops in central Anbar warned that political trouble would be caused if reconstruction were not enacted in the area promptly. Charlton said, “They want electricity back. They want things fixed now. The question is, can the government step up and deliver the goods?”¹⁷⁴ Sheikh Ahmed Abu Rica of Anbar Province reported that “central-government support is taking forever” to reach the people of Ramadi.¹⁷⁵

On June 14 it was reported that the Anbar Salvation Council was splitting apart, as some of its leaders were establishing a new group. The leaders who were defecting apparently were not from the area. They criticized the Council for relying too heavily on Americans, and that some of its leaders were using the Council for personal and political gains.¹⁷⁶

Attacks also targeted the leaders of the U.S. alliance in Anbar. On May 31, a suicide bomber exploded in Ramadi, killing five people, including 3 policemen. A second suicide bomber on the same day exploded at a police recruitment center in Fallujah, killing one and injuring eight people.¹⁷⁷ On June 26, a suicide bomber attacked the Mansour Melia hotel in Baghdad, where the tribal sheikhs of the Anbar Salvation Council were meeting. The blast killed 12 people, including four Sunni sheikhs, a popular TV correspondent and poet, Rahim al-Maliki, and Aziz Yasiri, and a former army general under Saddam Hussein who worked with the American military and recently joined the opposition to the Maliki government.¹⁷⁸ The suicide attacks were part of a series against the followers of tribal sheiks leading local forces against Al Qaeda.

Trying to Build on the “Anbar Model”

On May 30, the U.S. military announced it was planning to initiate cease-fire agreements with Iraqi insurgents in order to establish order in and around Baghdad.¹⁷⁹ “We believe a large majority of groups within Iraq are reconcilable and are now interested in engaging with us. But more importantly, they want to engage and become a part of the government of Iraq,” said Ordierno.¹⁸⁰ He said that, as part of the U.S. Military push to generate political reconciliation, he gave U.S. Commanders the authority to pursue such agreements locally with insurgents that have tried to attack U.S. and Iraqi forces.¹⁸¹

In the past, Sunni insurgents were traditionally allied with al-Qa’ida in Iraq and their umbrella group, the Islamic State of Iraq. In some areas Sunnis suspected that the Iraqi government and security forces were collaborating with radical Shi’ite militias to push Sunni residents from mixed areas of the country. Attacks forced Sunnis to align themselves more closely with groups like al-Qa’ida in Iraq.¹⁸²

Ordierno said, “There are insurgents reaching out to us... so we want to reach back to them. We’re talking about cease-fires and maybe signing some things that say they won’t conduct operations against the government of Iraq or against coalition forces.”¹⁸³ Ordierno said that he believed 80% of insurgent groups in Iraq were “reconcilable,” including Sunni insurgents, Shi’ite

militia such as the Mahdi Army, and possibly a few groups affiliated with al-Qaeda in Iraq.¹⁸⁴ However, Ordierno cautioned that the process of local reconciliation would be slow. U.S. military leaders pursued talks with Muqtada al-Sadr both directly and through the Iraqi government. Lt. Gen. Raymond Ordierno said, "He has a grass-roots movement that he's always going to have; we have to recognize that... We're trying to talk to him. We want to talk to him." Ordierno was unsure of the significance of Sadr's resurfacing, whether it would be positive or negative for U.S. troops.¹⁸⁶

Amb. Ryan Crocker announced on June 3rd that the U.S. was considering granting amnesty to insurgents who have fought in Iraq, in an effort to consolidate forces against al-Qa'ida in Iraq. "As a part of a political reconciliation process, amnesty can be very important," Amb. Crocker said. "It can also be important in this particular context as we seek to draw as many elements as we can away from the fight... against us and into the fight against a common enemy, al Qaeda."¹⁸⁷

Iraqi President Jalal Talibani confirmed that the Iraqi government was negotiating with members of the "national resistance," and was similarly prepared to give amnesty to those elements. "Then only al Qaeda will remain as the main criminal terrorist group, and it will be easy to eradicate it," Talibani said. Mr. Talibani was optimistic about getting Muqtada al-Sadr to negotiate with the Iraqi government, saying Sadr's movement "announce that they will... support political process, very peaceful, and he asked his followers not to fight against Iraqi soldiers."

Commanders tested the "Anbar model" across areas that are Sunni-dominated, including: Parts of Baghdad, particularly Amiriya; the Ariei south of the capital of Babil, known as the Triangle of Death; Diyala Province, north and east of Baghdad; and Salahuddin Province.¹⁸⁸ Approximately 2,000 people unaffiliated with the Iraqi security forces are working with American troops at checkpoints and gun positions in the Abu Ghraib area, west of Baghdad.¹⁸⁹

U.S. commanders held talks with Sunni groups in at least four insurgent strongholds in central and north-central Iraq. If local leaders cooperated, the deals brought members of a tribe or sect into the security forces, provided them with armored vehicles and weapons. However, if local cooperation was not found, military forces conducted neighborhood sweeps, raided homes and sought out insurgents.¹⁹⁰

U.S. field commanders met in June with Gen. Petraeus in Baghdad and formally discussed the conditions Sunni groups would have to meet in order to be considered for U.S. support. The conditions included requiring fighters have biometric tests to confirm their identity through retinal scans and fingerprinting, and registering the serial numbers of all weapons.¹⁹¹

Sunni groups who declared they supported the central government were provided with arms, ammunition, funding, supplies, and fuel by Iraqi military units allied with Americans. In some areas Sunni groups agreed to alert U.S. troops to the location of IEDs and other booby traps. Referring to the fact that the U.S. has supplied and funded a predominately Shi'ite security force, and now are doing the same for Sunni groups, American officers said this policy could result in the arming of two sides in a civil war. Without signs of reconciliation between Sunnis and Shi'ites in the near future, there is a risk that weapons given to Sunni groups could be used against Shi'ites.¹⁹²

In at least some cases, however, Sunni groups that declared for the government and worked with U.S. troops were anything but loyal to the central authorities. Shi'ite political leaders were

suspicious of the new practice of arming Sunni groups, many of whom would like to see a return to Sunni dominance.¹⁹³ “The government’s aim is to disarm and demobilize the militias in Iraq,” said Sadiq al-Rikabi, a political adviser to Mr. Maliki. “And we have enough militias in Iraq that we are struggling now to solve the problem. Why are we creating new ones?”¹⁹⁴ By agreeing to arm Sunni groups, the U.S. has in effect relinquished the initial demand to disarm Shi’ite militias.¹⁹⁵

Abu Ibrahim, a former colonel in the Iraqi army, who switched over to fight with the Islamic State of Iraq, said, “Our ultimate objective is to reach a compromise with the occupation, which we recognize, as opposed to the so-called Iraqi government, which we don’t want to do anything with. Once we reach an agreements with the occupation and a timetable for their withdrawal, we will organize a national conference of the resistance in order to decide the future of Iraq.”¹⁹⁶

General Lynch, commander of the Third Infantry Division south of Baghdad, said that enmity toward Americans and Shi’ites is not a secret among many Sunni allies in the area. “They say, ‘We hate you because you are occupiers’” he said, “ ‘but we hate Al Qaeda worse, and we hate the Persians even more (referring to Shiites).’”¹⁹⁷ But, even commanders who were suspicious of this practice said that potential gains against Al Qa’ida are worth the risks that come with arming Sunni groups.¹⁹⁸

Diyala

American military officials said they were negotiating with local tribal leaders in Diyala in early June. “Within the last three or four months we’ve seen a much greater interest in tribal reconciliation and we’ve seen a shift in tribal attitudes,” said Maj. Time Brooks, a staff officer of the Army brigade in Diyala.¹⁹⁹ The rise in violence in Diyala was due to the fact that American troops were entering areas they had not previously held, which were often insurgent strongholds.²⁰⁰

U.S. commanders worked with tribal leaders in Diyala for several years, but in the spring of 2007, the stakes rose as the province became more violent. U.S. military deaths in Diyala increased since January 2007. In May, 126 U.S. troops died in Iraq, including 21 in Diyala. Diyala was then the second most deadly province, other than Baghdad.²⁰¹

Analysts noted that Diyala is different from Anbar in that it is mixed with Sunnis and Shiites, with about 25 major tribes and more than 100 minor groups or offshoots. Anbar is almost entirely Sunni, with a few dominant tribal leaders.²⁰²

Maysan

Lt. Col. Dale Kuehl, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Infantry Division in Amiriyah, granted the militiamen the power of arrest, allowed the Iraqi army to supply them with ammunition, and fought with them against Al-Qa’ida in Iraq. The process of alignment signified a new American military strategy of looking beyond Iraqi security forces for assistance in securing neighborhoods.²⁰³

The group, who called themselves the Baghdad Patriots, killed about 10 suspected al-Qa'ida members and detained 15, compared to the sparse progress made by Iraqi and U.S. forces in the previous six months.

On June 5, the Islamic Army in Iraq said that it reached a cease-fire agreement with Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia after the two groups clashed in Amariya in late May.²⁰⁴ The groups claimed they did not want to spill Muslim blood or deter the "project of jihad." The two groups clashed in Amiriyah, killing 30 fighters. The Islamic Army is predominately Sunni, made of mostly of fighters that disbanded from the army of Saddam Hussein. They said they rose up against al-Qa'ida in Iraq because it was too religious, imposing rules on the neighborhood and killing fellow Sunnis without provocation or reason.²⁰⁵

The Islamic Army said the groups agreed to stop all operations against one another, stop criticizing each other publicly, and stop taking prisoners. The groups planned to create a "judicial committee" to resolve their differences.²⁰⁶

However, many U.S. officers were wary that the long-term agenda of the Baghdad Patriots is unknown, and that the alignment developed out of the desperation of U.S. troops. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has declared that no groups aside from the Iraqi and American security forces should possess weapons. Some feel that arming the Sunni militia could deliver negative consequences in the future if the group turns on the United States.²⁰⁷

Members of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment recalled the quick process of forming an alliance with the Baghdad patriots in an article written by Damien Cave, published in the Washington Post on June 9²⁰⁸:

It was about 2 a.m. on May 30 when Capt. Andy Wilbraham, a 33-year-old company commander, first heard military chatter on his tank radio about rumors that local gunmen would take on al-Qaeda. Later that morning, a noncommissioned officer turned to him with the news: "They're uprising."

"It was just a shock it happened so fast," Wilbraham said.

By noon, loudspeakers in mosques throughout Amiriyah were broadcasting a call to war: "It is time to stand up and fight" al-Qaeda. Groups of men, some in black ski masks carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades descended on the area around the Maluki mosque, a suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq base of operations, and launched an attack. For the most part, Kuehl's soldiers stood back, trying to contain the violence and secure other mosques, and let the gunmen do their work.

The next day, a Thursday, al-Qaeda counterattacked. Using machine guns and grenades, its fighters drove the militiamen south across several city blocks until they were holed up in the Firdas mosque, soldiers said. "I was getting reports every 10 minutes from one of the imams: 'They're at this point. We're surrounded. We're getting attacked. They're at the mosque,' " Kuehl recalled. He dispatched Stryker attack vehicles to protect the militiamen.

"We basically pushed that one back just by force," said Capt. Kevin Salge, 31, who led the Stryker team of about 60 men to the mosque. "We got in there. Our guns are much bigger guns. Then freedom fighters, Baghdad Patriot guys, started firing."

Spec. Chadrick Domino, 23, was with a Stryker unit that drove north of the mosque to set up a perimeter to prevent others from joining the fight. About

noon, he was the first member of his team to walk into a residential courtyard. He may not have had time to see the machine gunner who killed him.

By afternoon, the Americans had secured the Firdas mosque and were helping treat the wounded who lay in the courtyard. Kuehl drove out from his headquarters to meet with the leaders of the militiamen and work out the terms that would guide their collaboration in coming days. Kuehl agreed to help if the militiamen did not torture their captives or kill people who were not affiliated with al-Qaeda in Iraq. The militiamen agreed to hold prisoners for no more than 24 hours before releasing them or handing them over to the Americans. They in turn wanted the Americans not to interfere and to provide weapons.

"We need them and they need us," Kuehl said. "Al-Qaeda's stronger than them. We provide capabilities that they don't have. And the locals know who belongs and who doesn't. It doesn't matter how long we're here, I'll never know. And we'll never fit in."²⁰⁹

The American troops complained that the fighters on both sides looked identical, wearing similar sweat suits and carrying the same kind of guns. They initially asked their allies to wear white headbands and ride in Strykers. However, al-Qa'ida members began wearing the white headbands, and it was difficult for the allied fighters to maintain their orientation in the Stryker vehicles. Eventually, the fighters were issued reflective armbands and allowed to ride in Humvees, instead. The fighters were also supplied with plastic flex cuffs for making arrests, red and green flares to signal if they are in trouble or when they have completed a raid.²¹⁰

After the first successful raid turned up an arms cache, the American troops were faced with the question of whether or not to assist in arming the fighters.²¹¹

On June 1, a Friday, the fighters directed the soldiers to a large weapons cache. Sniper rifles, Russian machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition were stashed in a secret room, accessible only by removing a circuit-breaker box and crawling through a hole. While the Americans were tallying the haul, an explosive detonated outside, wounding several soldiers, including one whose feet were blown off. In return for their services, the militiamen had one request: Give us the weapons in the cache.

"Who are these guys really?" Salge remembered worrying. He told them to talk to the battalion commander.²¹²

Kuehl said he would most likely supply the militiamen with weapons in limited amounts. The fighters gave the Americans their fingerprints, addresses and retinal scans.²¹³

When the Baghdad Patriots and al-Qa'ida in Iraq forces arrived at a ceasefire agreement on June 6, the American tank unit planned with the allied militiamen to carry out arrest raids against al-Qa'ida, but the militiamen called off the raid. The tank driver, Spec. Estevan Altamirano, 25, was skeptical about the intentions of the Baghdad Patriots. "Pretty soon they run out of al-Qaeda, and then they're going to turn on us," he said. "I don't want to get used to them and then I have an AK behind my back. I'm not going to trust them at all."²¹⁴

Efforts to Secure the Borders

US and Iraqi forces did make some gains against the insurgency. CENTCOM Commander Admiral William Fallon announced that the US was making a renewed effort to stop the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. Since 2003, the Iraqi-Syrian border had been the portal for jihadists to

join the Iraqi insurgency. Fallon said that the help of Sunni tribes in al Anbar province allowed US forces to detect and capture the foreign volunteers before they made it to insurgent safe havens.²¹⁵

However, Iraqi officials stated that the border could not be fully controlled without the help of Syria. Some 15 to 20 foreign fighters were captured along the Syrian border each month, but many successfully entered Iraq. The number of Iraqi border guards had increased sharply in 2005 and 2006, but there were 30 miles between each border fort and the guards lacked adequate technology and equipment. The border also remained a trade route for Sunni tribes, and it was difficult for Iraqi border guards to pick out the foreign fighters.²¹⁶

Increased Coalition Air Operations

The use of fighter jets and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft doubled over the past year in Iraq. Col. Gary Crowder, the deputy director of the Combined Air Operations Center in Southwest Asia, said, "The capabilities that we are providing have increased substantially. We've moved all of our fighters to in-country. We used to have some outside of the country, but to reduce the tanking bill and increase their responsiveness, increase time on station for each flight, we've moved them inside country."²¹⁷ "[The increase in air use] has a lot to do with increased pressure on the enemy by MNC-I, combined with more carriers," said Col. Joe Guastella, Air Force operations chief for the region.²¹⁸

The U.S. Air Force added two squadrons at Balad Air Force Base in Iraq over the six months preceding June 1. The number of munitions dropped by coalition forces in Iraq since January nearly equaled the number dropped in all of 2006. From January until May 1, 2007, U.S. and coalition aircraft delivered 222 munitions in Iraq, compared to 39 during the same period of the previous year. Since the surge of troops began in January, the number of missions and air strikes rose as well. Coalition aircraft dropped 36 bombs in February 22 in March and 45 in April, compared to the 2006 figures of 10, three and six respectively.²¹⁹

Air Force tankers transfer an average of 3.2 million pounds of fuel to ISR platforms every day. In addition The Air Force supported Naval jets operating off the two aircraft carriers located in the Persian Gulf, including Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet fighters. In the summer, high desert temperatures limit the amount of fuel a KC-135R Stratotanker, RC-135 Rivet Joint or E-8 Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) can carry by 15 to 20 percent.²²⁰ The aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf help support the need for additional tankers.²²¹ A second American aircraft carrier added in the Persian Gulf in February provided access to 80 more warplanes.²²²

Air Force missions and Navy "close air support" missions have also increased by 30 percent to 40 percent this Spring.²²³ The Air Force transports 3,000 to 3,500 troops per day and about one million per year.²²⁴

In the first 4 ½ months of 2007, the United States Air Force dropped 237 bombs and missiles in Iraq, surpassing the 229 that were dropped in all of 2006.²²⁵ U.S. aircraft increased attacks by twice the rate of last year's air attacks in Iraq. The increase in air attacks appears to be correlated with an increase in Iraqi civilian casualties.²²⁶

In addition, the number of civilian casualties due to U.S. air strikes appeared to have risen dramatically in the same period of time, according to Iraq Body Count. The monthly average of civilians killed by U.S. air strikes rose steadily in 2006 from just a few every month to 40 a

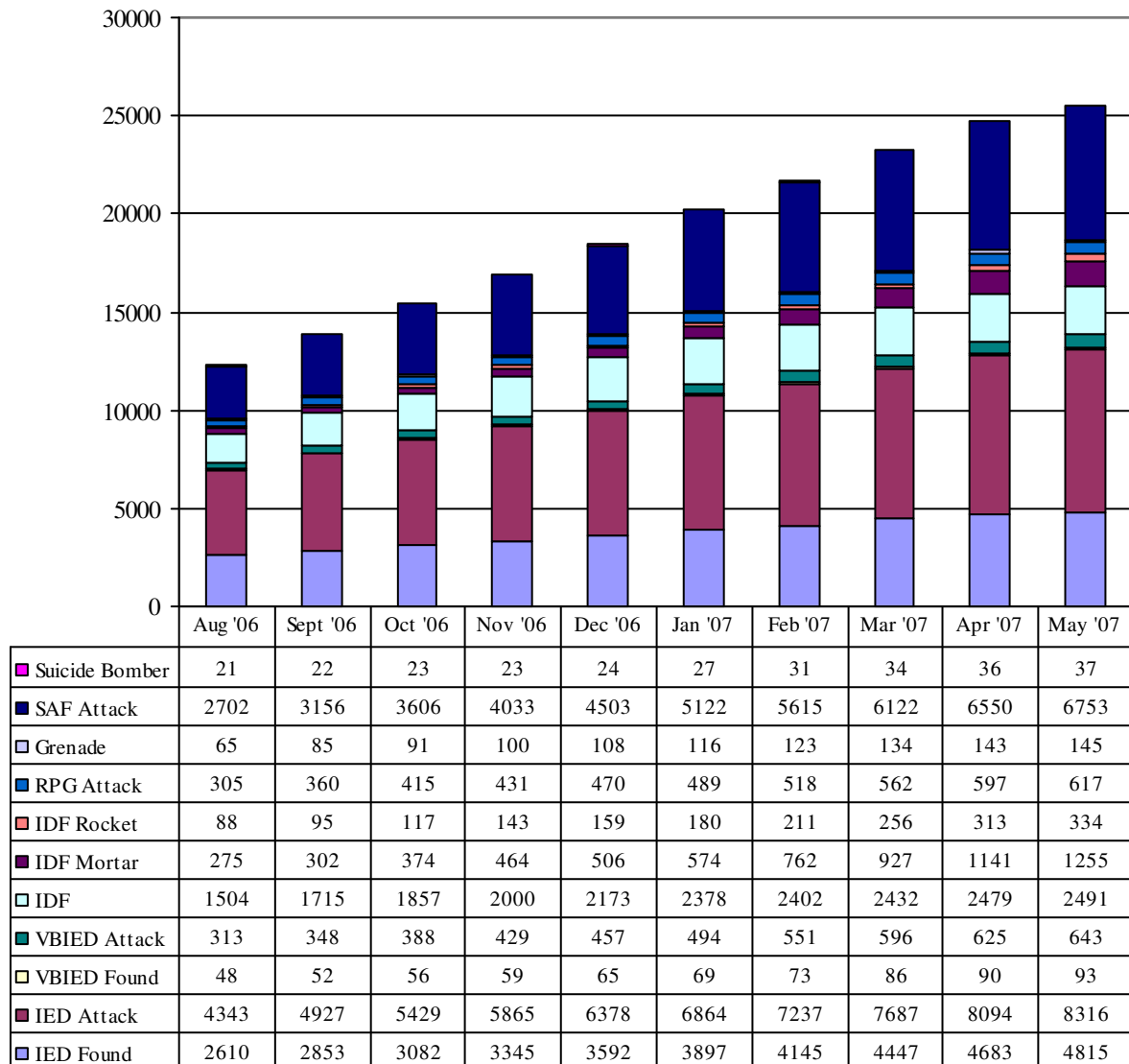
month by the end of the year, to a rate of 50 a month in the first half of 2007.²²⁷ John Sloboda, of Iraq Body Count, said “The reality of civilian deaths is a year-on-year increase. This particular part of it – air strikes – have rocketed up more than any other.”²²⁸

III. Looking at the Numbers: Attack Patterns and Levels of Violence

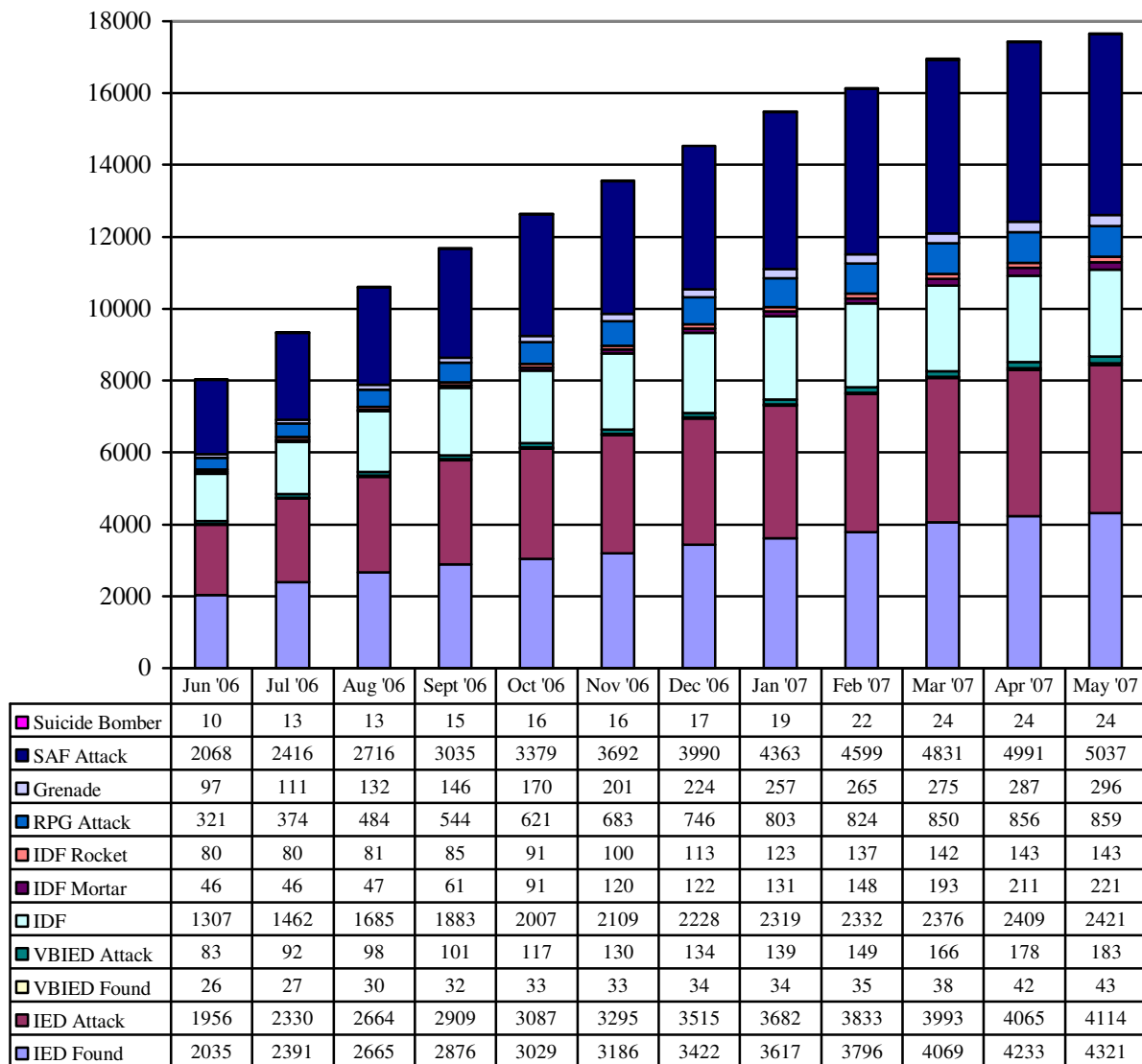
As has been noted earlier, attack numbers and Iraqi casualty numbers have severe limits, both in terms of accuracy and meaning in a nation filled with diverse civil conflicts and where the most violent insurgent acts are only an uncertain indicator of the trends in security and stability. Even so, the data on attack numbers and patterns still have some value, as do those on casualties,.

The broad trends in Iraqi violence have already been discussed in Chapter II, but **Figures 3.1, through 3.7** provide a more detailed analysis of the patterns involved.

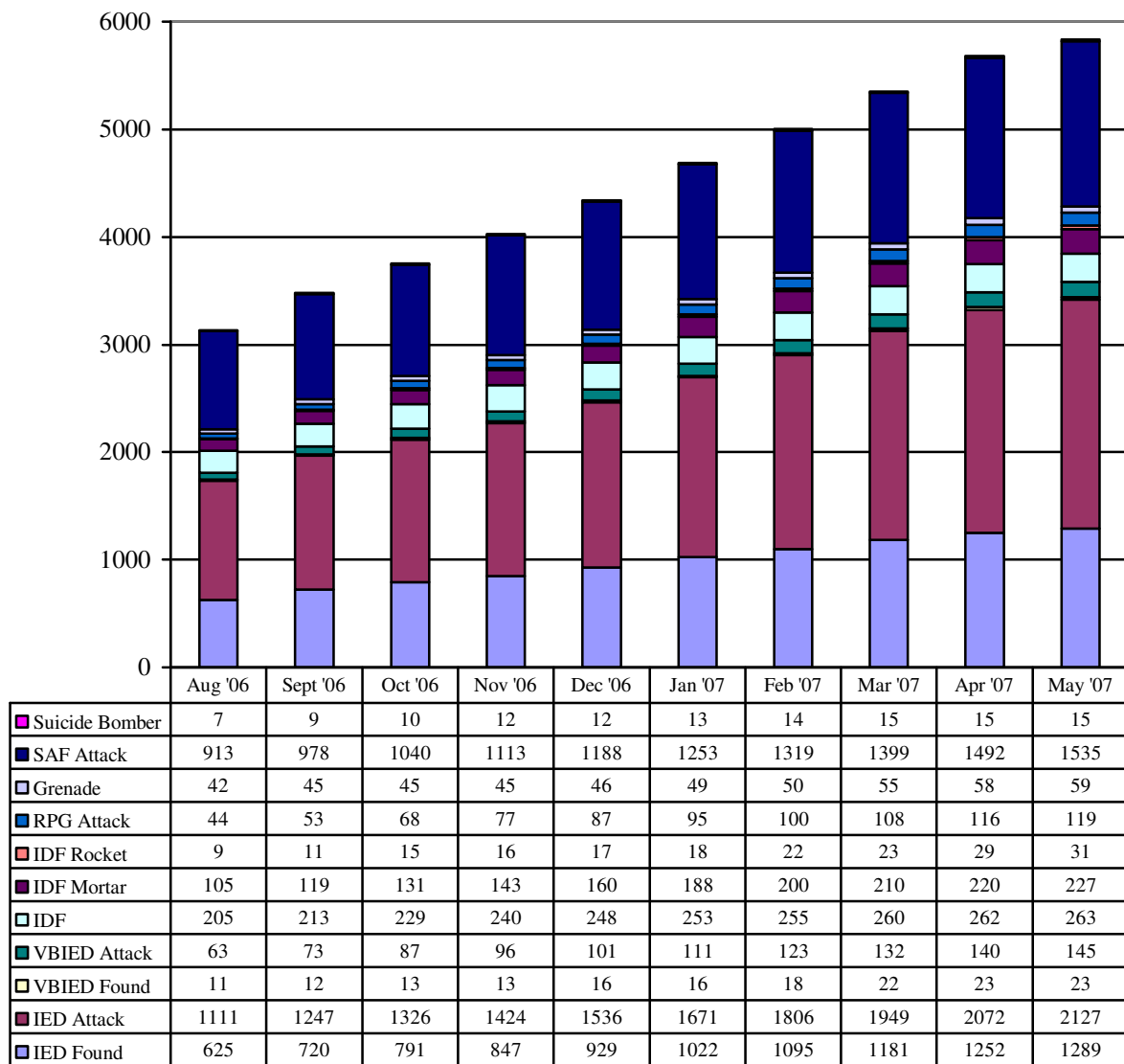
- **Figure 3.1** shows the cumulative attacks in Baghdad from August 2006 through May 2007. IEDs were consistently the most common type of attack. IED attacks occurred approximately 40% more often than IEDs were been found. Suicide attacks increased steadily, but remained the least occurring type of attack in Baghdad.
- **Figure 3.2** shows the cumulative summary of attacks in Fallujah from August 2006 through May 2007. Small Arms Fire and IEDs were consistently the most frequent type of attacks. Small Arms Fire increased at a slightly higher rate than IED attacks, beginning in the fall of 2006. Approximately the same amount of IED attacks occurred as the number of IEDs found.
- **Figure 3.3** shows the cumulative summary of attacks in Mosul from August 2006 through May 2007. Attacks in Mosul occurred much less frequently in Mosul than in other areas. Small arms fire has occurred more frequently than any other type of attack in Mosul. While about IEDs found account for one-third of IED encounters, VBIEDs are not found as often. VBIED attacks have occurred at a rate of about 9 per month, while less than one per month have been found before detonation.
- **Figure 3.4** shows the cumulative summary of attacks in Basra from August 2006 through May 2007. Attacks in Basra have occurred much less frequently than in other areas. Small arms fire accounts for approximately one-third of all attacks. No VBIED attacks have occurred and no VBIEDs have been found since August 2006. In addition, only one suicide attack occurred during the reporting period.
- **Figure 3.5** shows the cumulative attacks in major Iraqi cities from September 2005 – April 2007. From September 2005 through January 2006, Fallujah suffered the greatest number of attacks, aside from the month of December 2005, when attacks in Baghdad outnumber those in Fallujah. From February 2006 to April 2007, Baghdad incurred the most number of attacks, while Tikrit and Fallujah took turns accounting for the second highest rate of attacks. Basra suffered the least number of attacks from September 2005 until September 2006, when Diwan began to account for less attacks than Basra.
- **Figure 3.6** shows the cumulative attacks by province from February 13, 2007 – May 4, 2007. Over 50 attacks per day occurred in Baghdad, while less than 30 a day occurred in Salah ad Din, Anbar and Diyala, and less than 20 a day in Ninewa. Less than ten attacks per day occurred in the rest of the country, and no attacks were reported during the period for Maysan, Karbala, Sulaymaniyah, Muthanna, Najaf and Dahuk.
- **Figure 3.7** shows the average weekly attacks from April 1, 2004 – May 4, 2007. The number of attacks reported during this period was only slightly higher per week than those reported during the period of Jan 1, 2007- February 9, 2007. Attacks targeting Iraqi security forces were more frequent than those during the last reporting period, and attacks against civilians were slightly higher, while attacks against Coalition forces appeared to have been the same.

Figure 3.1: Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Baghdad through May 2007

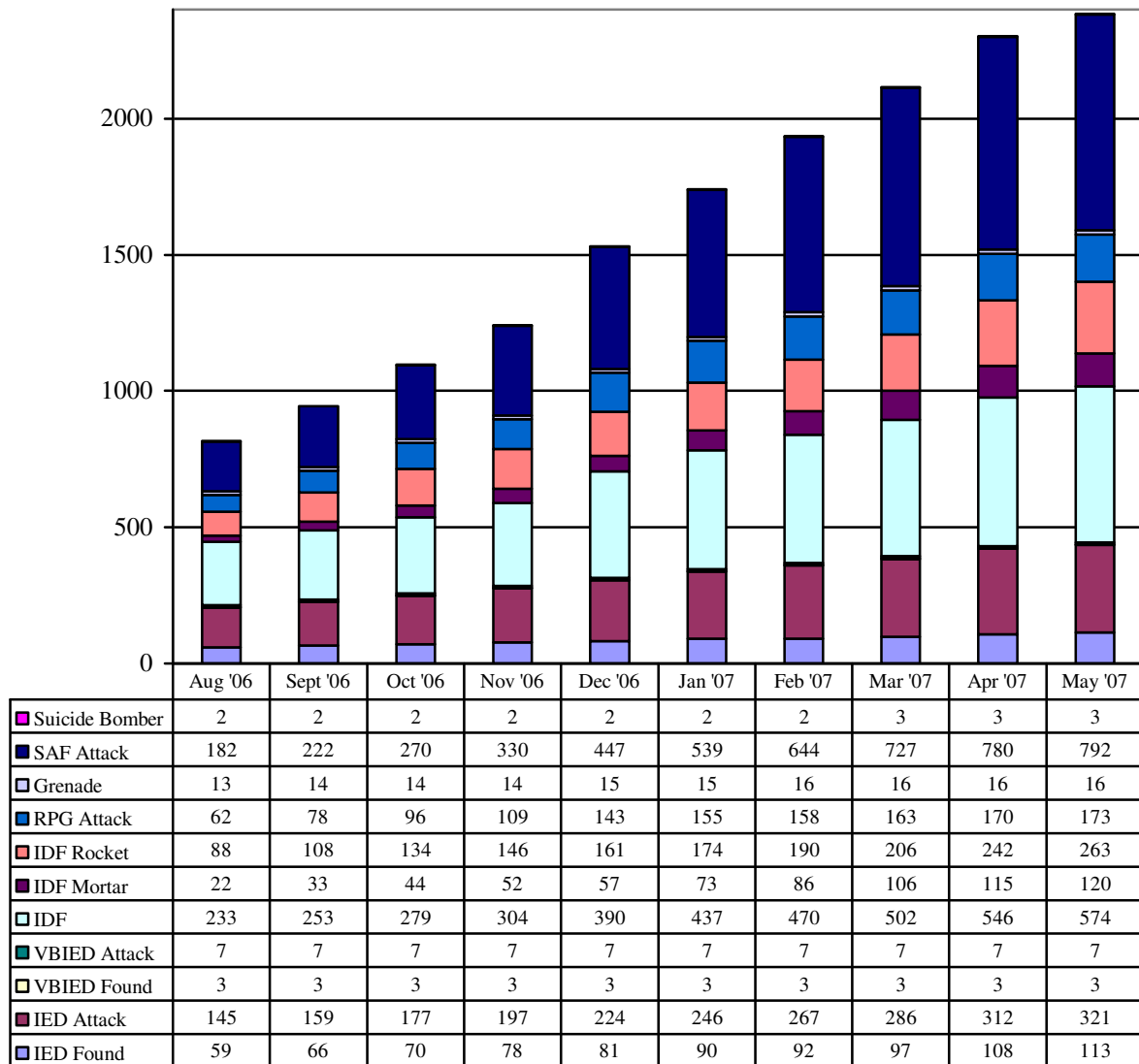
Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data has been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official US government data.

Figure 3.2: Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Fallujah through May 2007

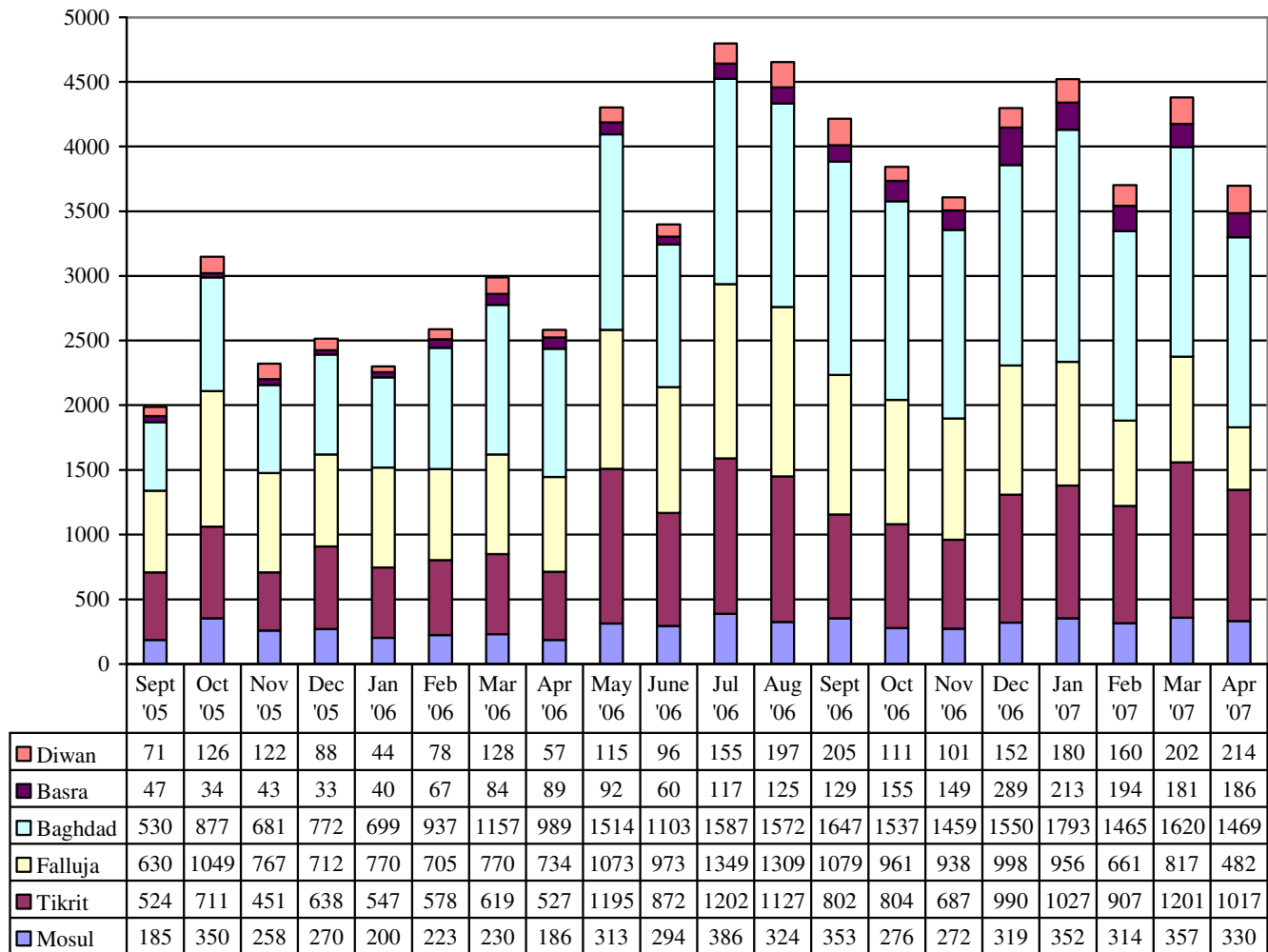
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Figure 3.3: Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Mosul through May 2007

Source: Material adapted from 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, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official US government data.

Figure 3.4: Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Basra through May 2007

Source: Material adapted from 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, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official US government data.

Figure 3.5: Cumulative Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005 – April 2007

Source: Material adapted from 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, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official US government data.

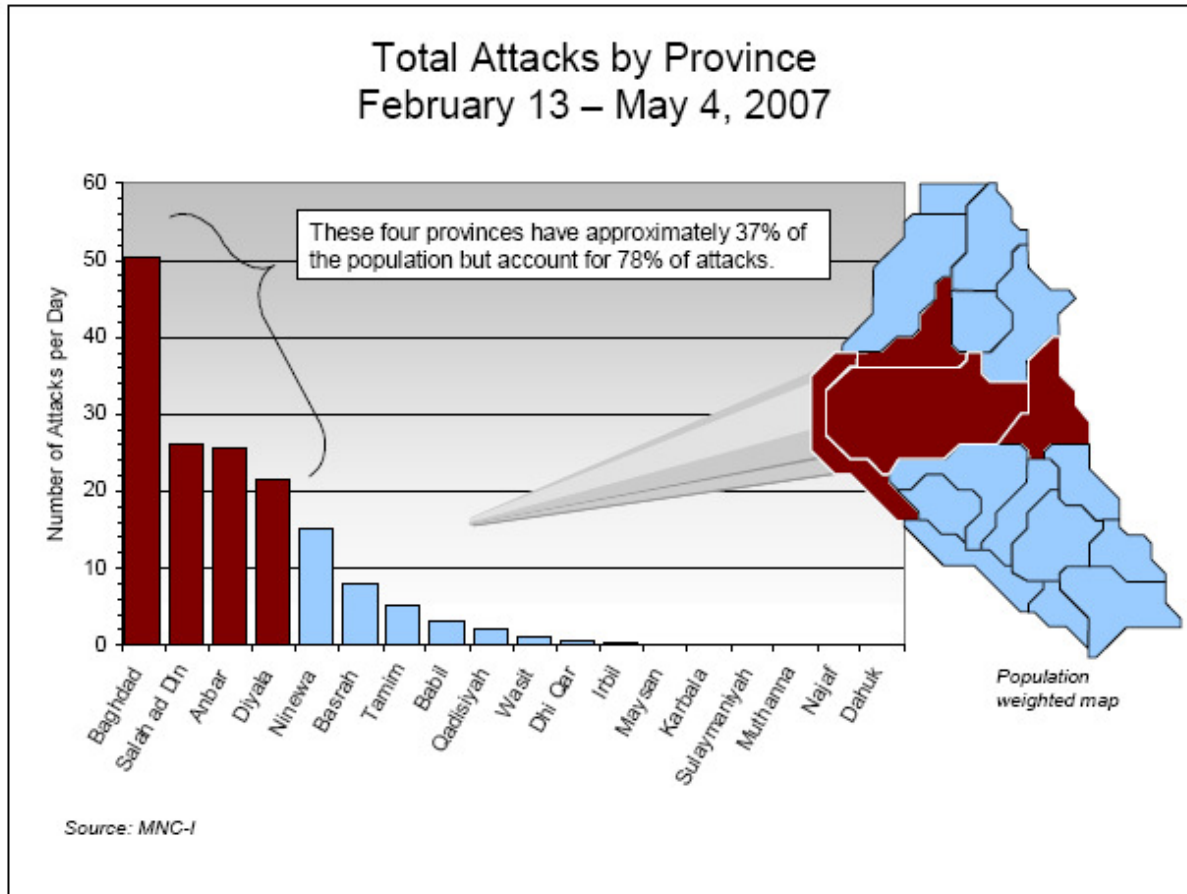
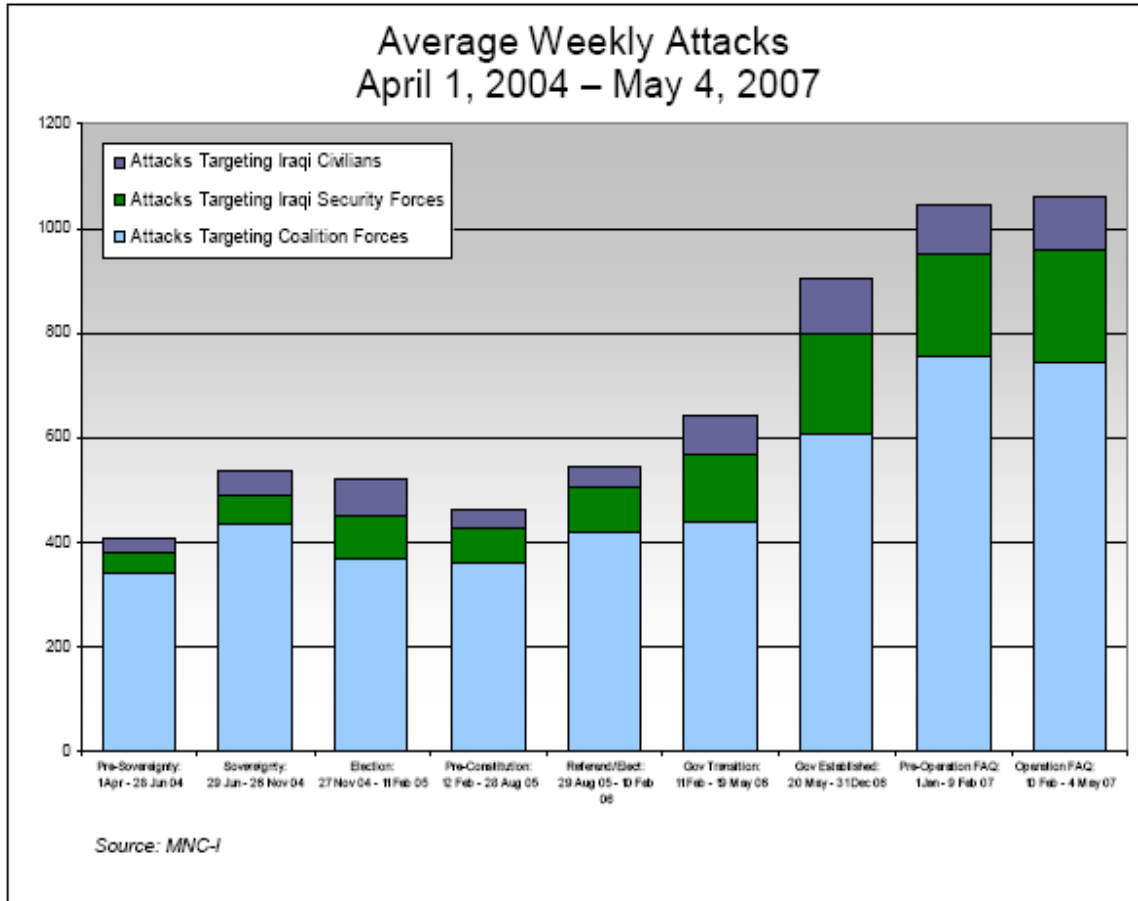
Figure 3.6 Total Attacks by Province

Figure 3.7 Average Weekly Attacks

IV. Effects of Ongoing Violence

If the US is to succeed in Iraq, and in any similar conflicts, it must develop far better and more comprehensive ways of measuring the nature of civil violence, progress towards conciliation, and level of local security, governance, rule of law, and economic conditions. So far, the US has at best reported on limited aspects of the insurgency, and provided metrics of narrow – if any – value. It continues to treat Iraq as an insurgency rather than a series of civil conflict, and the battle as a narrow counterinsurgency effort rather than a broad exercise in armed nation building.

There are, however, broader indications of the trends in violence that do shed some light on the war that is actually being fought, as distinguish from the war the US chooses to report on.

Sectarian Displacement

The ongoing violence continued to force Iraqis to leave their homes in mixed areas for a location in which their sect was the majority. The number of internally displaced persons since the February 2006 Askariya mosque bombing reached 736,422 at the end of March 2007, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI). Of those, 200,000 were displaced since December 2006.²²⁹

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said on June 5 that the number of Iraqis who have fled the country as refugees rose to 2.2 million in June 2007. An additional 2 million were internally displaced within the country, increasingly driven to “impoverished shanty towns.” The UNHCR heard “disturbing reports” of regional authorities failing to provide the displaced Iraqis with food, shelter and other basic services. An average of 30,000 Iraqis flee to Syria each month, which is now home to 1.4 million Iraqi refugees. An additional 750,000 Iraqi refugees are now living in Jordan.²³⁰ 80,000 have fled to Egypt and about 200,000 to the Persian Gulf.²³¹

Baghdad continued to be the destination of the majority of internally displaced Iraqis despite the security crisis. Of these 120,000 IDPs that were displaced to Baghdad, many had been displaced from the capital itself, moving from areas in which they were a sectarian minority to ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods. The region of Kurdistan continued to attract some IDPs due to better security conditions, but the KRG only allowed IDPs to enter the region if they could name a guarantor in Kurdistan. Thus, some 87% of IDPs relocated to areas in the south and center of the country.

IDPs continued to cite threats to their lives due to their religious sect or ethnic group as the primary reason for their displacement. UNAMI also found that women and children made up about 75% of the newly displaced. Displaced persons continued to face greater health risks and many lacked access to basic services, such as electricity, water, healthcare, and education. The UNAMI report stated that ten governorates had imposed stricter laws on the entry of IDPs, making it difficult to obtain residency permits and access to these basic services.²³²

In one case on March 27, a Sunni resident of a predominately Shiite neighbourhood in western Baghdad was unofficially evicted from her home by an Iraqi Finance Ministry worker who was later fired for this incident. The woman, who refused eviction was killed by Shiite militiamen the day after she was asked to leave by the ministry worker. This was the first time a ministry worker was fired for attempting an illegal eviction.²³³

The Humanitarian Crisis

The affects of sectarian displacement lack of security, and shortage of basic services contributed to a growing humanitarian crisis in Iraq. UNAMI estimated that up to 8 million people could be classified as “vulnerable” and in need of immediate assistance; 2 million people were actively seeking asylum or refugee status outside of Iraq; 1.9 million were internally displaced; and 4 million lacked sufficient food.

Daily conditions continued to deteriorate at a rapid rate for many Iraqis. The UN report stated that:²³⁴

An estimated 54% of the Iraqi population is living on less than US\$ 1 per day, among whom 15% is living in extreme poverty (less than US\$ 0.5 per day); acute malnutrition rapidly rose from 4.4 to 9% from 2003 to 2005, as per the latest available data. Some 432,000 children were reported to be in immediate need of assistance, while the annual inflation rate in Iraq jumped to an estimated 70% in July 2006. The unemployment rate has risen to around 60%; only 32% of Iraqis have access to drinking water and health facilities lack critical drugs and equipment.

The January – March 2007 UNAMI report cited women and children as being particularly effected by the ongoing civil war and humanitarian crisis. UNAMI estimated that for every male killed, 5 or more family members became vulnerable and in need of assistance. The UN also stated that the governorates in south and central Iraq were most in need of humanitarian aid, which clearly corresponded with the lack of security in these provinces.

The Detainee Problem

US and Iraqi facilities were increasingly stretched to adequately provide for the growing number of detainees that the Baghdad security plan produced. According to the Ministry of Human Rights, the number of Iraqis detained nationwide from the end of January until the end of March increased by approximately 7,000 to 37,641. U.S. forces arrested 2,000 prisoners a month in March and April, almost twice the average from the second half of 2006. According to the Department of Defense’ Quarterly Report, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, June 2007,” the number of detainees in March and April was almost 20% higher than the average for the monthly average for December through February.²³⁵

At the start of the new strategy in February 2007, the US held some 17,000 detainees in two large facilities – 13,800 at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq and 3,300 at Camp Cropper outside Baghdad. The total number of detainees - in both Iraqi and US facilities - increased by 7,000 to 37,641 by the end of March 2007. US and Iraqi forces detained another 4,000 in April. The Iraqi detention centers across the country held an additional 34,000 people in questionable conditions. Of the US detainees, the average detention was one year, but about 8,000 had been held longer.²³⁶ To accommodate the growing detainee population, the U.S. and Iraqi authorities are building two detention centers in eastern Baghdad, one at an existing prison complex in Rusafa, capable of accommodating 5,250 people, and the other at Baladiyat, with a capacity of 850 prisoners.²³⁷

Human rights officials were especially concerned about the state of Iraqi-run facilities. There was growing evidence that detainees held by Iraqi forces were mistreated and kept in poor conditions. In one instance, Iraqi Army officers handed over three detainees to US troops. The detainees confessed to aiding insurgents and gave the military key intelligence. Before handing

the men over to the Americans, however, the Iraqi Army officials had beaten one of them with what appeared to be an electrical cable. The Iraqi soldiers said that they knew how to get a confession out of suspects, and did not beat them too much. This publicized incident was clearly an isolated instance of abuse, and underscored a dilemma facing the US in handing over more security control to Iraq. Gen. David Petraeus emphasized in an open letter to American advisors that, "It is very important that we never turn a blind eye to abuses, thinking that what Iraqis do with their own detainees is 'Iraqi business.'" Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish legislator stated, "Most parliamentarians have asked the government to investigate this issue." Iraqi commanders say that while individual cases of abuse may exist, they do not represent a systematic problem.²³⁸

Approximately 20,000 people were held in Iraqi-run detention centers as of the end of March. According to a U.N report, the number of detainees increased by 3,500 from the end of January to the end of March. The U.S. military claimed it held 19,500 detainees, up more than 3,000 since the U.S.- and Iraqi-led counterinsurgency campaign began in mid-February. Because Iraqi detention facilities have become overcrowded, they many untried detainees have been transferred to live with convicts. 1,843 detainees, more than 15 percent of the Justice Ministry's prison population, are currently untried military detainees, transferred from military detention centers.²³⁹

The International Red Cross has visited more than 17,000 detainees held by U.S., Kurdish and British forces but was not allowed to visit the 18,000-20,000 people being held at Iraqi government facilities. Red Cross chief Jakob Kellenberger said, "It's the modalities of our visits which we have to negotiate with the Iraqi authorities," citing security considerations as a "huge challenge" to the ICRC staff visitations of detainees.²⁴⁰

The Iraqi soldiers said that they knew that the Iraqi Army forbade abusing detainees, but they said that the insurgents' force needed to be answered with force. They also said that many suspected insurgents captured by US and Iraqi forces did not want to be part of the insurgency and therefore were quick to talk. One Iraqi soldier said of the detainees, "They are young people. They are having to stay home without employment. They want food. They want money. They want to be able to marry. But there are no jobs. If you offered them jobs, most of them would not be working for Al Qaeda."²⁴¹

The January – March 2007 UNAMI report confirmed allegations of torture and abuse in Iraqi detention centers. The report did note, however, that 1,300 Iraqi prisoners had been transferred from Baghdad to Sulaimaniya to make room for the increased number of detainees. AT the end of March 2007, the total number of detainees held by MNF and Iraq was 37,641, including those held in the Kurdistan region.²⁴²

The US military disagreed with some of the points made on detainees in the UNAMI report. In a press briefing on April 16, 2007 Gen. Petraeus said:²⁴³

The administrative review process that MNF-I uses is really quite robust, and it has multiple checks and balances. The specific procedures that are followed by Multinational Force Iraq are based on those in the Fourth Geneva Convention, and they're well-rooted in generally accepted law of war principles, all of this supplemented and guided by the field manual that was published this past year, which governed the treatment of detainees, interrogation and so forth.

There is no 60-day period during which detainees are not allowed counsel, although normally there's a 30-day window before which visitors are allowed, although exceptions can be made in the case of an attorney.

After that, an individual can see his attorney. MNF-I maintains Detainee Assistance Center at its theater detention facilities, which again have come light years from where we were in the early days, but which, frankly, still need continued improvement, particularly in the sense that in some cases we have detainees who are truly maximum security type detainees, and we have to improve the facilities, in fact, to accommodate some of those individuals.

The Detainee Assistance Center facilities, the services are available to all detainees. We have the capability to refer a detainee to the Iraqi Bar Association, where he can obtain an attorney at the detainee's expense. Furthermore, the Iraqi government provides defense counsel to any detainee at no expense to the detainee at the time a detainee's case is referred to an investigative hearing at the Central Criminal Court of Iraq -- a process that, as you know, has been ongoing for some time. And additionally, a defense counsel will continue to be provided throughout all subsequent stages of that particular process.

The Kadhimiya detention center in a predominantly Shiite neighborhood of northern Baghdad currently houses more than 1,000 detainees, though it was designed to accommodate only 400. Kadhimiya is known to detain juveniles. Though Interior Ministry spokesman, Brig. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf has denied that detainees are abused at Kadhimiya, former inmates have claimed they were subject to routine ill treatment, abuse and torture. Iraq's minister of human rights said that Iraqi military prison guards are not trained in proper care for detainees. The State Department human rights report in March documented "many, well-documented instances of torture and other abuses by government agents and by illegal armed groups," in Iraqi prisons.²⁴⁴

The Iraqi constitution demands that documents must be submitted outlining the detainee's preliminary investigation within 24 hours of their arrest, with a possible 24-hour extension. However, the sudden increase of prisoners has overburdened the system, and currently many suspects are forced to wait weeks or months before they are brought to trial.

The most serious problem with the detainee process from a war fighting perspective, however, is that it is far from clear whether it is creating more enemies than it finds and detains. Detainment centers inevitably become training and indoctrination centers for insurgents. They breed resistance and do almost nothing to convert those detained. They breed anger in the families and friends of those detained, particularly if those detained are mistreated, killed, or held without cause. Even limited abuses become propaganda weapons for insurgents, and fuel conspiracy theories.

At least to date, the pattern of abuses in various detainment efforts has largely prevented any analysis of the overall effectiveness of the ways in which detainees are selected, how they are held, efforts to win their support, and treatment of their families. This has occurred even though it has been clear since the Boer War that carelessness and/or excessive patterns of detainment can be a way to lose a war rather than win one. It is impossible to judge this aspect of detainments in Iraq, since the US and Coalition have never provided any unclassified reporting to date on the overall effectiveness and impact of the various detainment efforts.

Public Opinion on Security and the "Surge"

Public opinion polls are imperfect tools, but they are the best available way of measuring the trends in what is ultimately a war for hearts and minds. A new poll was conducted by London based Opinion Research Business in Iraq in mid-February 2007. ORB conducted 5,019 face-to-face interviews from February 10-22 using a sample drawn from a 1997, which may not reflect

demographics ten years later. ORB interviewed 104 persons in Anbar Province, 1,200 in Baghdad, and 314 in Diyala. It was not clear who conducted the interviews.

According to the ORB poll, 50% of respondents had experienced the murder of member of their family, the murder of a friend or colleague, the kidnapping of a member of their family, or the kidnapping of a friend or colleague. The most common response, 26%, was the murder of a relative. 58% of Sunnis had not experienced any of the above types of violence, compared with 47% of Shi'ites. A total of 31% of Iraqis living in Baghdad had experienced the murder of a relative. This response was also high in Diyala Province with 35%.

A total of 15% of those interviewed said that a member of their family had moved outside Iraq, and 9% said that someone had moved to the Kurdish areas. Displacement outside Iraq was most common in Anbar, 40%; Baghdad, 35%; and Diyala, 20%. The desire to move outside the country was clearly based on the local level of security; only several people in the Shi'ite south said a family member had left Iraq. A total of 18% of Sunnis and 12% of Shi'ites said a family member has left the country. The destination of the majority of displaced was Syria, 50% and Jordan, 19%.

A total of 27% of Iraqis believed their country was in a state of civil war in February 2007. This response reached almost 50% in Salahaddin, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Diyala, and Ninewa. The majority of the mostly Sunni population in Anbar – 67% - thought that Iraq was in a civil war. A total of 41% of Sunni respondents agreed with this answer, compared with only 15% of Shi'ites. An additional 22% of the population – 22% Sunnis and 21% Shi'ites - thought Iraq was close to a civil, but not in one yet. A similar number, 21% thought Iraq would never reach a civil war. This response was common among Shi'ites – 27% - and the southern Shi'ite dominated provinces. None of the respondents in Sunni Anbar Province believed Iraq would never reach a civil war.

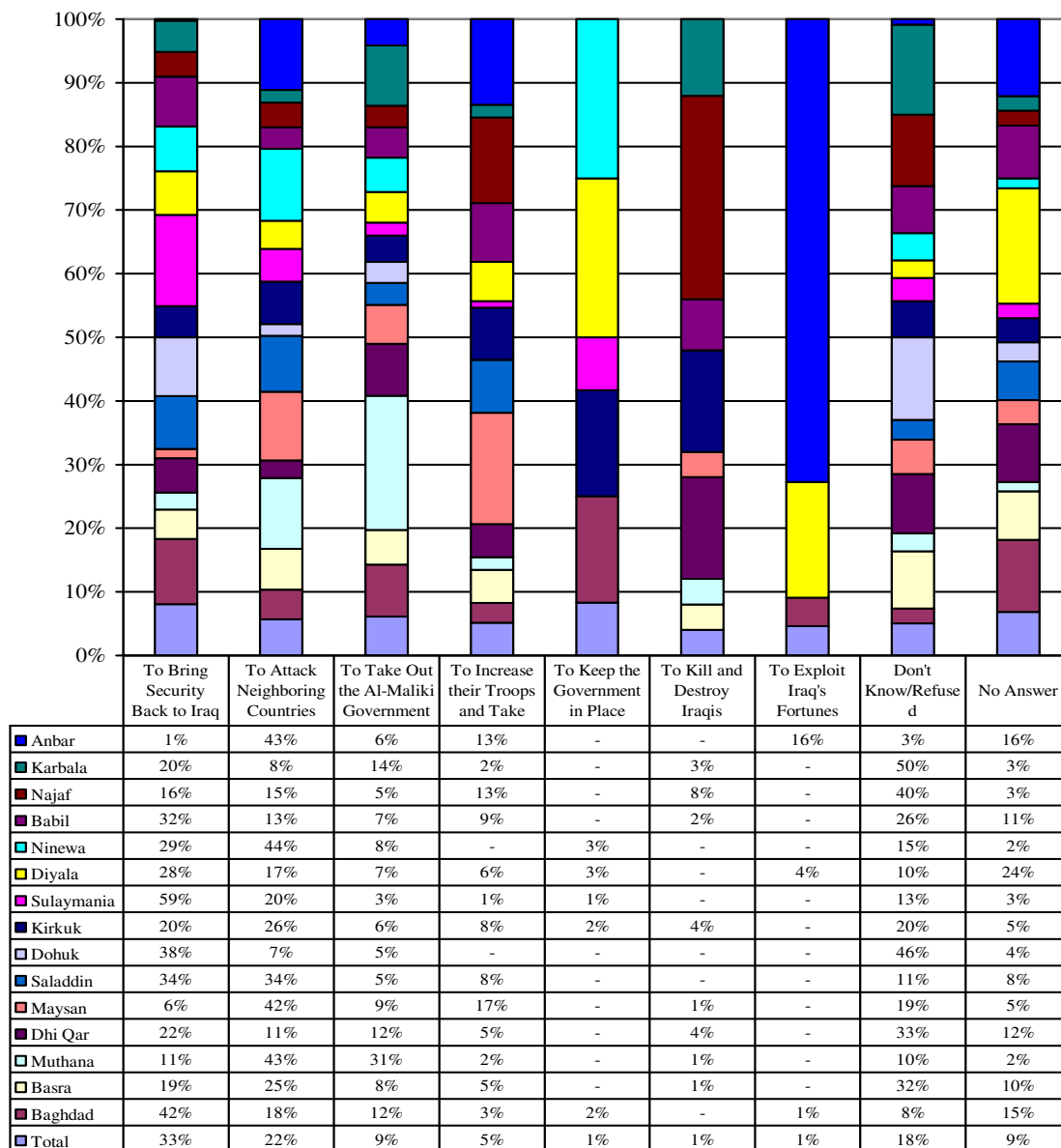
A total of 33% of respondents thought that the “surge” troops were sent to “bring security and stability back to Iraq.” Not surprisingly, this response was least common in Sunni dominated Anbar Province. Another 42% in Baghdad thought that security was the motivation for the surge, but 18% in the capital thought the US had instead sent troops to attack neighboring countries. Some 9% of all respondents thought the “surge” was intended to take out the Maliki government.

The majority of Sunni Arabs – 40% -- thought the goal of the surge was to bring security and stability to Iraq. Fewer Shi'a Arabs – 26% - agreed with that response. 27% of Sunnis and 20% of Shi'ites thought the motivation of the surge was to attack neighboring countries. Another 13% of Shi'ites thought the goal was to take out the Maliki government. A large number of Shi'ites, 24%, said they did not know the motivation for the surge.

Most respondents – 45% - believed that Prime Minister Maliki's security plan would successfully disarm militias. This answer was the most common among Shi'ites – 61% - but only 26% of Sunnis thought the new plan would be successful. About 25% of both sects said they were unsure whether or not the plan would succeed. It should be noted, however, that only a handful of respondents in Anbar province answered “yes, the plan will disarm militias.”

When asked about the withdrawal of US forces, the largest number of respondents, 29%, thought that the withdrawal of Coalition forces would make the security situation better, and another 24% thought it would make it a little better. Only 11% thought withdrawal would make the situation worse.

Figure 4.1: President George Bush has announced that he will be sending 20,000+ troops to Iraq in the coming months? Why do you think he is doing this?



Source: Opinion Research Business (ORB) "Public Attitudes in Iraq: Four Year Anniversary of Invasion," March 2007

Figure 4.2: Do you believe that the security situation in Iraq will get better or worse in the immediate weeks following a withdrawal of Multi-National Forces?



Source: Opinion Research Business (ORB) "Public Attitudes in Iraq: Four Year Anniversary of Invasion," March 2007

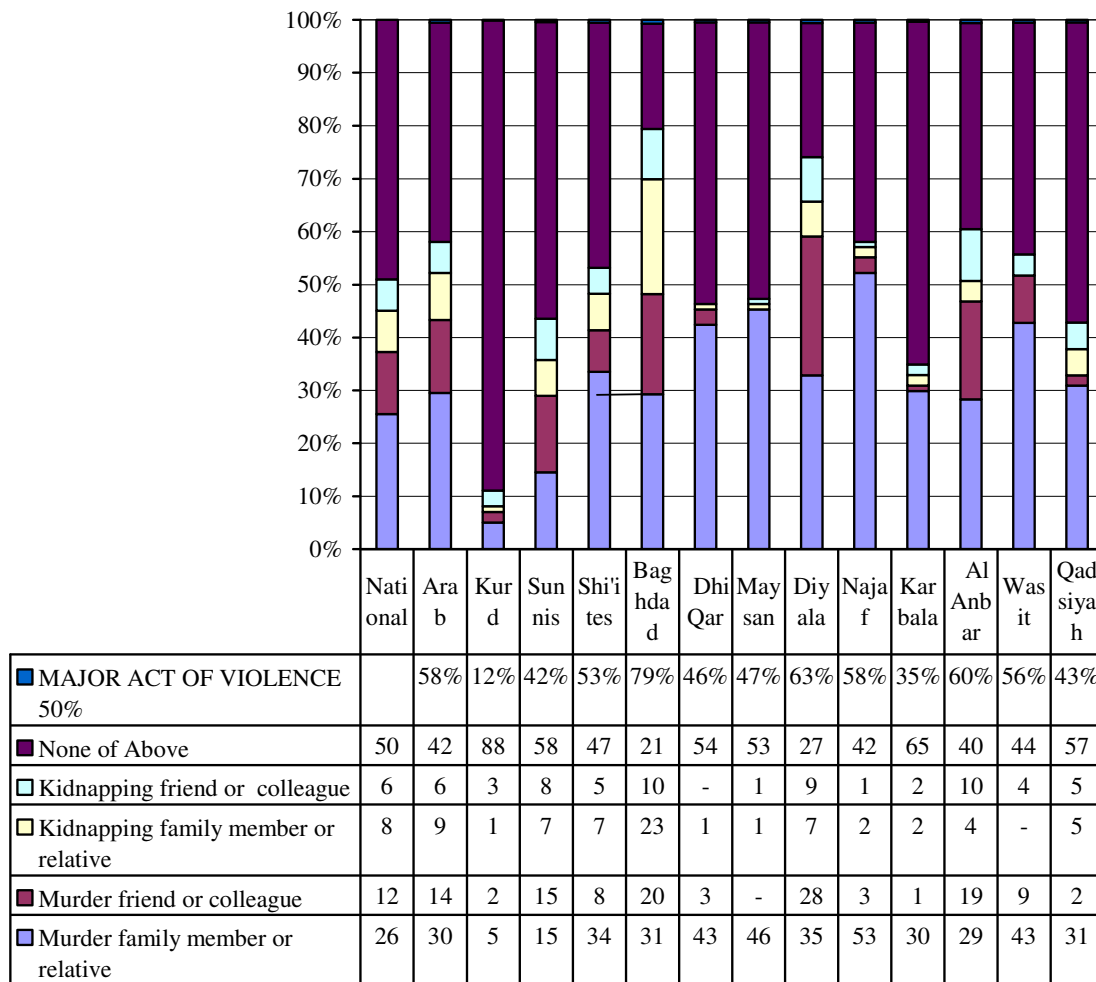
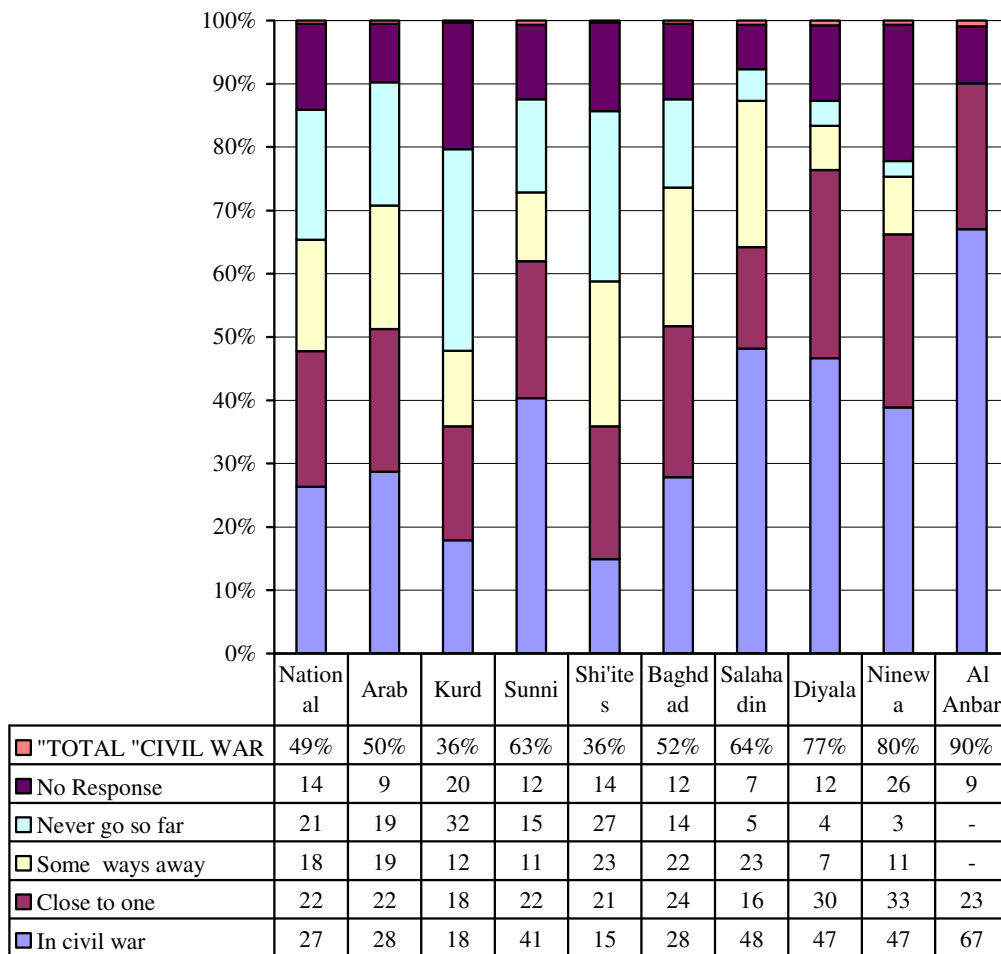
Figure 4.3: Types of Violence Experienced

Figure 4.4: Is Iraq In a Civil War?

Source: Opinion Research Business (ORB) "Public Attitudes in Iraq: Four Year Anniversary of Invasion," March 2007

Coalition/US Casualties

The broad patterns in US and Coalition casualties have 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. They are also a key indication of the domestic political reaction to the war in the US and other countries that provide Coalition troops.

Part of the Baghdad security plan has made U.S. troops more vulnerable, particularly the placement of additional troops in small outposts throughout the capital and in other parts of the country. John Pike, director of Globalsecurity.org, commented that “the closer you get to a stand-up fight, the closer you’re going to get to that 3-to-1 ratio” that was typical of U.S. warfare in the 20th century. The ratio of killed to wounded, which usually stands at an average of 1 to 8, dropped to a ratio of 4.8 to 1 in May. This signified a greater intensity of combat and lethality of attacks.

The increase in U.S. fatalities in May was due to three factors: 1) new tactics that demand a higher profile for U.S. troops in an attempt to secure Baghdad’s neighborhoods and prevent civilian deaths; 2) a greater number of explosives attacks with greater degrees of lethality; and 3) a rise in direct attacks on U.S. troops, involving tactics with greater degrees of strategic complexity.

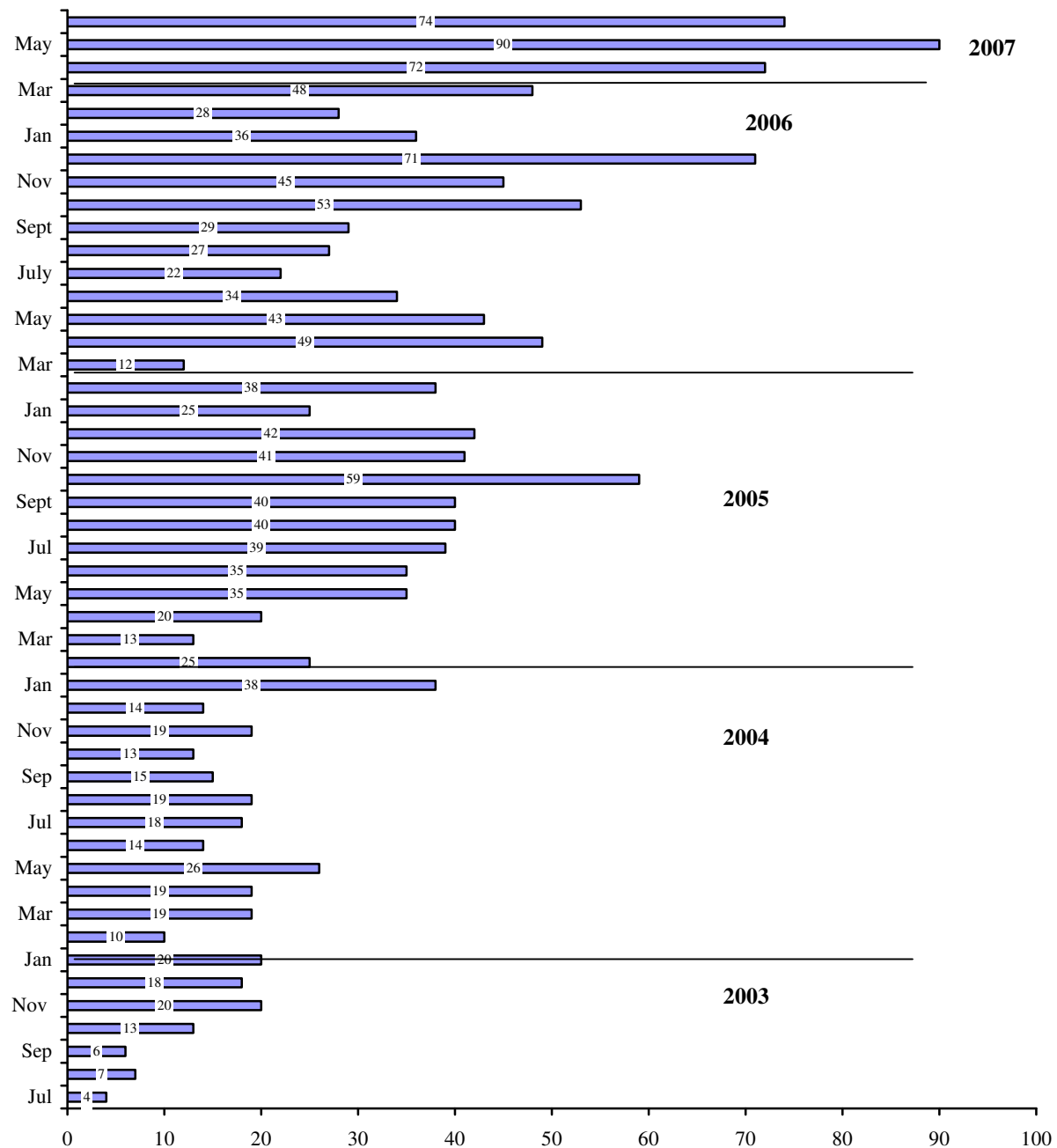
This first quarter of 2007 marked the first time that more than 80 US troops were killed in each of three consecutive months.²⁴⁵ The rate of US deaths in the capital in the first seven weeks of the security plan doubled from the previous seven weeks from 29 to 53. US casualties also increased in Diyala province; 15 US troops were killed between February 14 and April 2, 2007. Deaths decreased in Anbar Province as the focus of the insurgency switched to Baghdad and Diyala. The rate of US deaths throughout the country, however, stayed about the same for those seven weeks; 116 US troops were killed in hostile incidents.²⁴⁶

The US suffered more casualties in Baghdad province than in Anbar province in April 2007 for the first since 2005. Over half of US casualties in April occurred in Baghdad, up from 27% in February as a result of the new Baghdad security plan. During the first month of the new Baghdad security plan, 66 American troops were killed, 36% of which occurred in Baghdad.²⁴⁷ Troops in Anbar had also seen a reduction in violence in the past six months, resulting in part from an agreement with local tribes.²⁴⁸

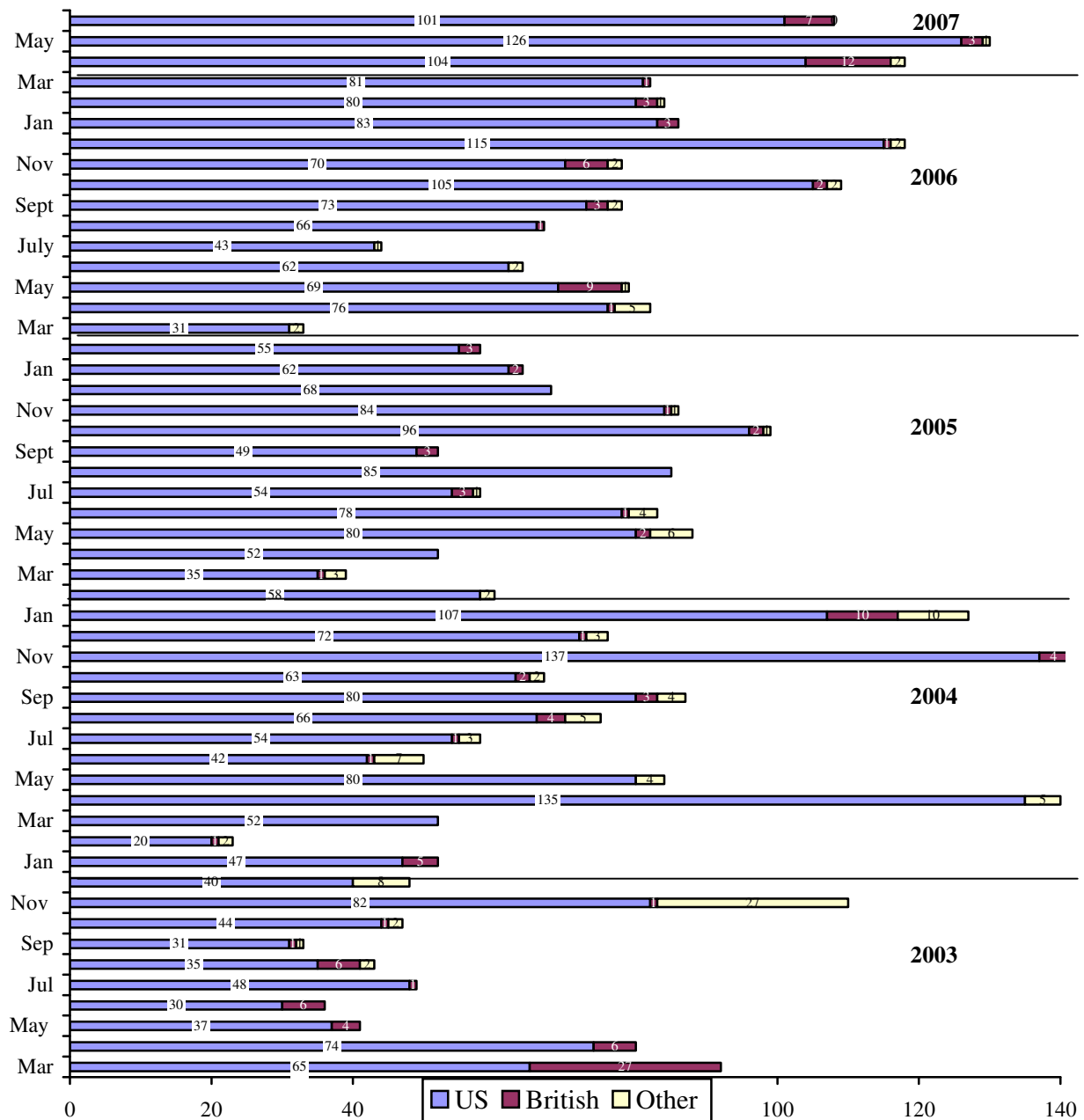
The death toll in May for U.S. troops was the third highest for any month since the onset of the war in March 2003, with 127 American fatalities. The two most deadly months for U.S. troops were 137 in November 2004 and 135 in April 2004. An Associated Press count on May 24, 2007 stated that 3,433 U.S. service members died since the beginning of hostilities in March 2003, at least 2,804 of whom died as a result of hostile action. This count is seven higher than that of the Defense Department.²⁴⁹ April 2007 was also the deadliest month for British forces since March 2003. A total of 11 British troops were killed in combat in southern Iraq.²⁵⁰ A British soldier was shot to death in southern Iraq on June 7, bringing the British death toll to 150.²⁵¹

- **Figure 4.4** shows the deaths caused by IEDs from July 2003 to June 2007. IEDs caused more deaths in May 2007 than any other month since March 2003.

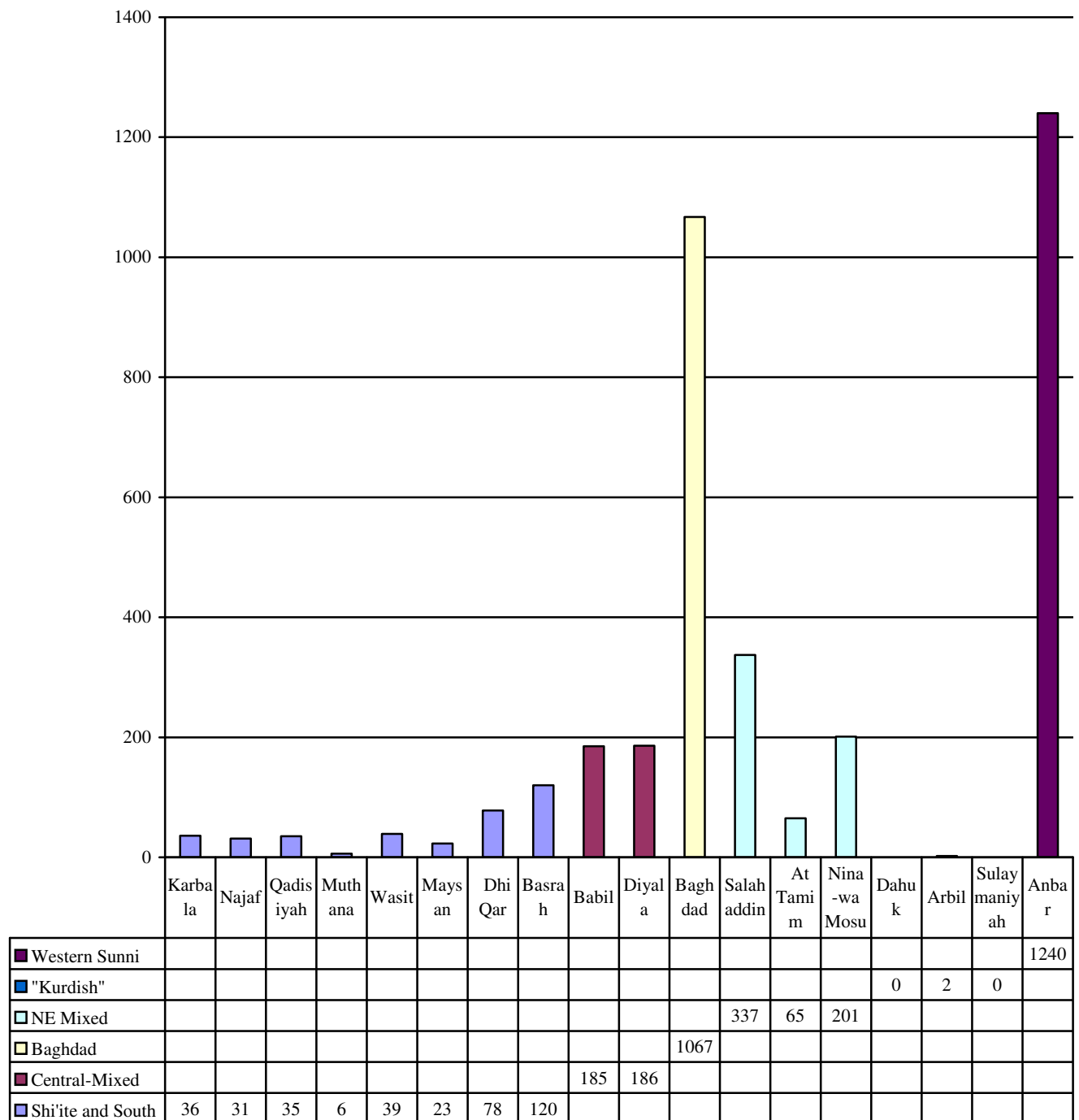
- **Figure 4.5** shows the Coalition deaths by month and nationality from March 2003 to June 2007. The number of Coalition casualties in May was the third highest casualty rate for any month. November 2004 and April 2004 remain the most deadly months for Coalition forces.
- **Figures 4.6** shows the Coalition casualties by province from March 2003 to June 2007. More casualties have occurred in Anbar than any other province, while Baghdad remained the second most deadly province for Coalition forces.
- **Figure 4.7** shows US Casualties in Iraq: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-May 2007, as reported by the Department of Defense. The total number of wounded as of July 6, 2007 was 26,558, while the total number killed was 3,590.
- **Figure 4.8** shows US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003 -- June 2007. April and May showed a higher ratio of killed to wounded US troops. Please note that the source did not list a number of wounded for the month of June 2007.

Figure 4.4: US IED Deaths July 2003- June 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualties, data as of July 6, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IED.aspx>.

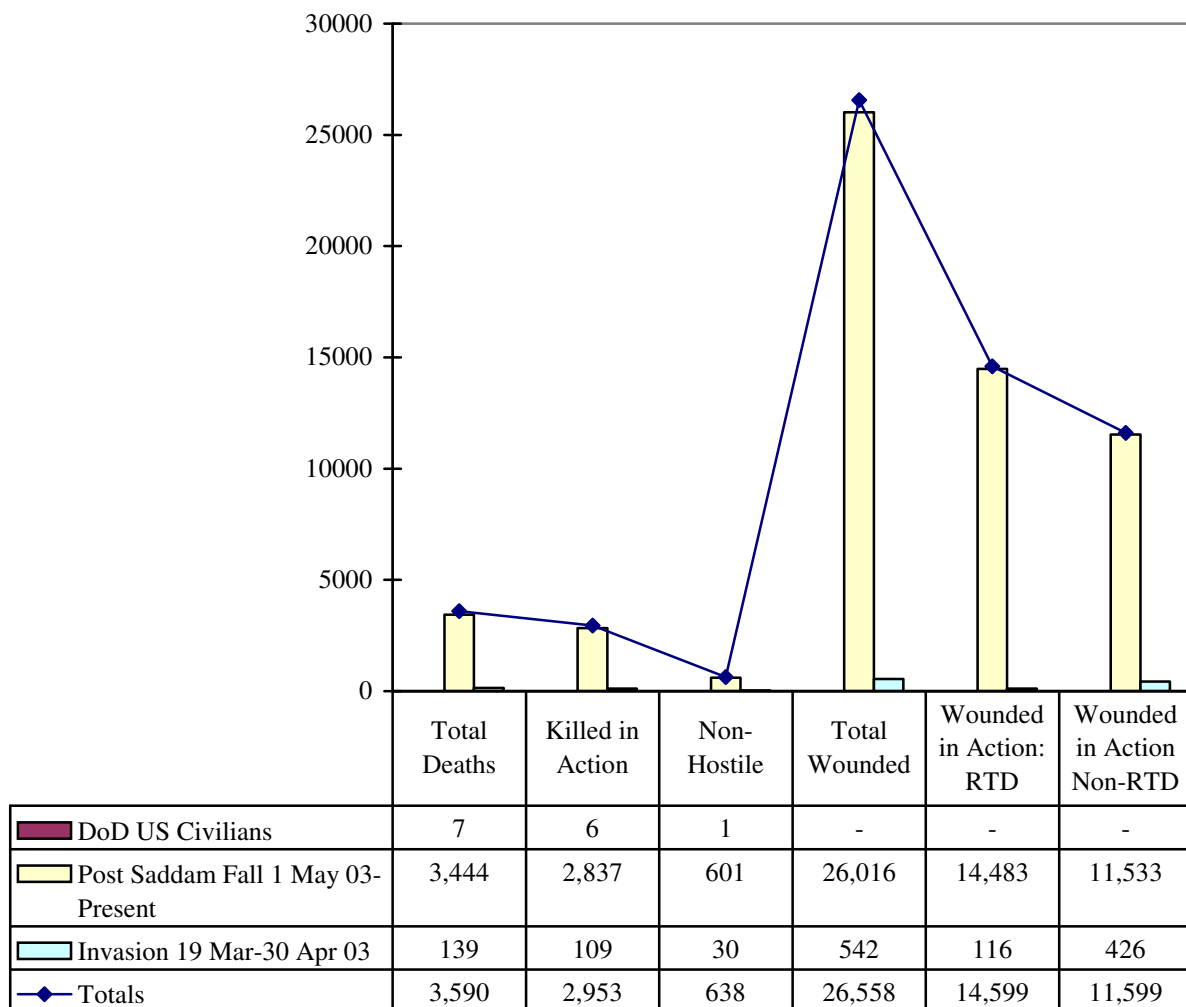
Figure 4.5: Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to June 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of July 6, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

Figure 4.6: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of July 6, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/Province.aspx>

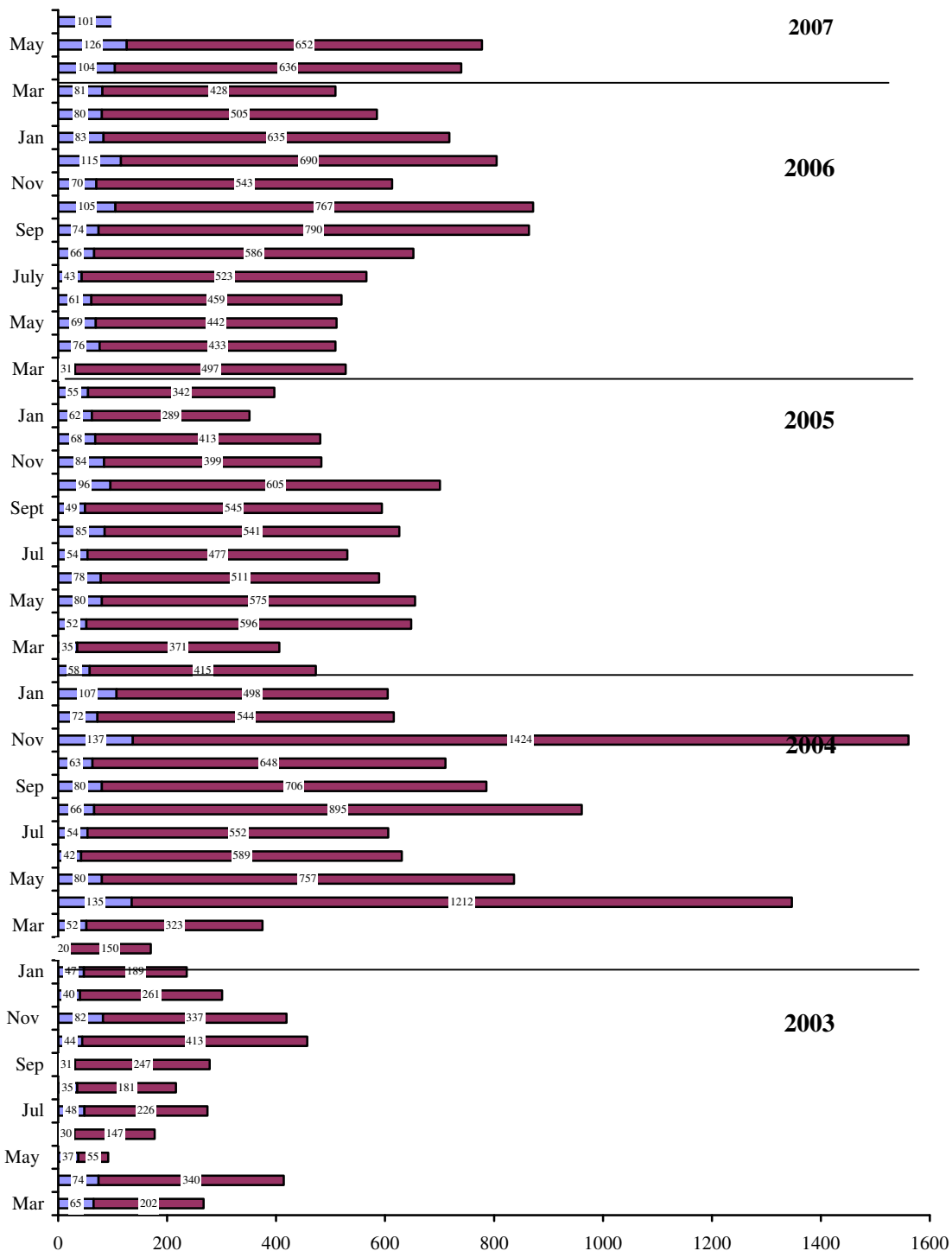
Figure 4.7: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003 -- May 2007



Source: Adapted from material provided by Department of Defense, July 6, 2007, available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>

* 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 soldier could not be returned to duty within 72 hours.

Figure 4.8: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003 -- May 2007



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of July 6, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/US_Chart.aspx and <http://icasualties.org/oif/woundedindex.aspx>

Iraqi Casualties

The trend in Iraqi casualties has been far more consistently upwards, and the rise of sectarian and ethnic fighting in the “war after the war” has had steadily grimmer costs in Iraqi lives. Nevertheless, most of the civil violence in Iraq cannot be measured directly in terms of the numbers of Iraqi killed, even if an accurate count were possible.

As tragic as the numbers in **Figures 4.9 to 4.11** are, however, they do not provide of 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 involved 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.

The various counts of Iraqi casualties (killed) also differ significantly, although it does seem likely that number of “body dumps” found in the capital and surrounding urban belt decreased at the start of the Baghdad security plan in mid-February. Accordingly to Coalition counts, the number of bodies found each day ranged from single-digits to the upper-twenties, down from roughly 50 per day at the end of 2006. Nonetheless, finding even a dozen bodies on the streets of the capital everyday meant that both Sunni and Shi’ite militias were still active at some levels, even if they operated outside of their command.

US/MNF-Iraq

The U.S. military said violence had dropped in Baghdad under the new crackdown, with a 26-percent decline in “murders and executions” between February and March, and a 60-percent fall between the last week of March and the first week of April. However, IEDs, VBIEDs, and suicide bombings kept the overall death rate comparable to past months.²⁵²

US military officials acknowledged that Iraqi casualties actually increased in the provinces of Anbar, Babil, Diyala, and Ninewa, as the insurgency expanded its operations outside of the “surge” area of Baghdad. Civilian casualties dropped 26% from January through March, but the number of mass murders from car bombs and suicide bombings increased.²⁵³

Based on numbers compiled by McClatchy Newspapers, the number of violent deaths was 796 in March, and 691 through April 24. The number of bodies found in February was 596, and fell again in March to 473, nearly half of what it had been in December 2006. The number of people killed in explosive attacks, however, rose from March to April from 323 to 365 through April 24. In a *Los Angeles Times* report, the news service counted 830 unidentified bodies found in Baghdad for the month of January, 542 for the month of March, 440 in April, and 743 in May.²⁵⁴

President Bush announced in the last week of April that “sectarian” deaths had declined by 50% since the start of the Baghdad security plan. President Bush said on May 10, “The level of sectarian violence is an important indicator of whether or not the strategy that we have implemented is working. Since our operation began, the number of sectarian murders has dropped substantially.”²⁵⁵ This number, however, was based on the body count number and did not include deaths from suicide bombs or IED attacks, which were often sectarian in nature.²⁵⁶

Though U.S. government sources and news services cited a dip in sectarian killings in February, March and April, a rise in sectarian killings occurred during May and June. One U.S. source said in January, death squads killed 830 people, in February, 530, and in March, 542. Figures cited in one report estimated a total of 542 bodies found in the month of March, 440 in April, and 743 in May. According to the New York Times, 167 bodies were found in Baghdad in the first six days of June. In the first 24 days of May, 855 bodies were found, according to the Associated Press.²⁵⁷

A U.S. military spokesman acknowledged the upturn in sectarian killings on May 22, but denied that these figures signify a decisive trend.²⁵⁸ Regarding the increase in sectarian killings, U.S. military spokesman Army Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV said that, "there has been a slight uptick, and we're obviously very concerned about it."²⁵⁹ However, Lt. Gen. Aboud Qanbar, the Iraqi commander overseeing the Baghdad security plan, said that the number of unidentified bodies is in fact rising due to an increase in assaults by Shi'ite militias, especially elements of the Mahdi Army.²⁶⁰

Many areas witnessed a resurgence of sectarian killings in April and May. In the Shaab district of Baghdad, for example, Sunnis who initially welcomed the surge of U.S. forces said that they witnessed a return of sectarian killings and the presence of Shi'ite militiamen two months after the new troops were deployed.²⁶¹

The number of unidentified corpses is still far fewer than those found during the peak periods of sectarian violence in 2006.²⁶² The UN, citing Health Ministry numbers, reported that 1,471 unidentified bodies were found in Baghdad in September 2006, and 1,782 in October of that year.²⁶³

Joost Hiltermann, an expert on Iraq's sectarian war at the International Crisis Group in Amman, Jordan, explained that it is only natural that some Shi'ite militiamen would return to action in response to Sunni attacks, since the security plan has failed to reduce attacks by Sunni insurgents on Shi'ite Arabs. Hiltermann observed that the apparent resurgence of Shi'ite attacks, both by the al-Mahdi militia and from the Badr Organization, "is consistent with what we know, which is that the Sadrist movement, which melted away once the surge was announced, is very unhappy about the leadership ordering them to go underground."²⁶⁴

From the start of the war through 2006, at least 479 Iraqis filed claims requesting compensation for casualties or property damage. The maximum amount the U.S. Army will pay is up to \$2,500 to compensate for any claim, including property damage, injuries, or death. Civilian casualties often go unreported because Iraqis do not want to file their claims by physically going to the U.S. military base.²⁶⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* reported at least 18 incidents in which witnesses stated that troops fired indiscriminately in crowded areas. This most often occurred after the troops came under attack, especially when they were affected by roadside bombs. In some places there were often large disparities among U.S. figures and local descriptions of events.²⁶⁶

Iraqi Government Sources

In March, a total of 2,762 Iraqis, including 331 policemen, were killed in violence, according to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior. During the first three weeks of the new security plan, 125 bodies were found on the streets, but that number rose to 230 the following three weeks,

according to morgue data.²⁶⁷ Police reported fewer than 10 sectarian murders in the last half of February and early March. However in May they reported approximately 30 per day or more.²⁶⁸

Iraqi civilian deaths rose in May from April, however killings remained below pre-surge figures.²⁶⁹ According to the Ministry of Health, 1,949 Iraqi civilians died in May, and 2,023 were injured.²⁷⁰ According to the Iraqi Interior Ministry, the civilian death toll rose to nearly 2,000 in May. An Interior Ministry official leaked that 1,944 civilians were killed in May, which was a 29 percent increase from April. In May the Iraqi Health Ministry showed statistics that displayed an increase in sectarian violence since the onset of the Baghdad security plan. In April, Baghdad morgue data showed that 182 unidentified bodies were discovered in the city, and on May 22, the numbers were expected to double for the month of May. In January, 360 bodies were found; in February, 400; in March, 451; in April, 421; and from May 1 to 22, 445.²⁷¹

The Defense Ministry reported that 47 Iraqi soldiers and officers were killed and 63 injured in May.²⁷²

NGO Estimates

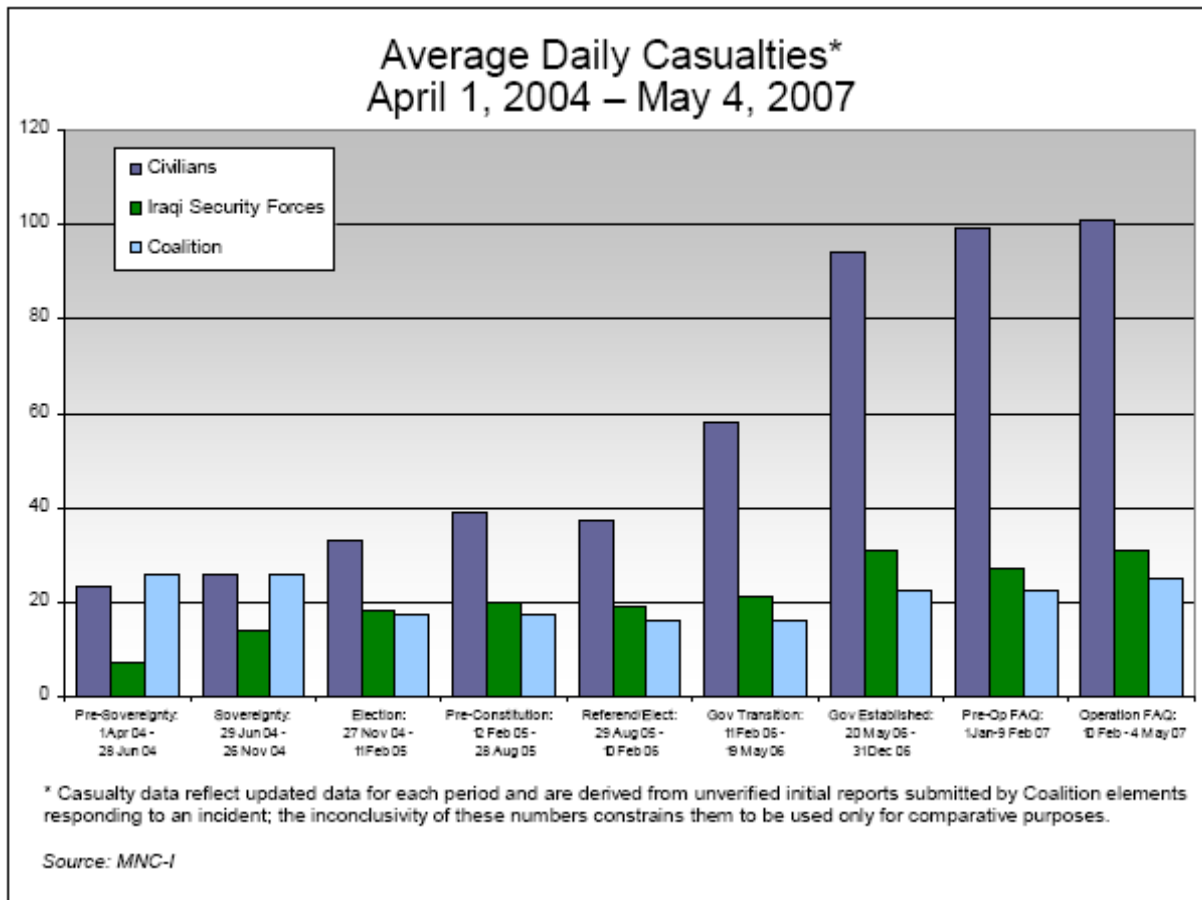
By the late June, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 66,602 and 72,910 Iraqis civilians had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003.

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. The U.N. mission in Iraq said that 34,452 civilians were killed and more than 36,000 were wounded in 2006.²⁷³

Figure 4.8 shows Average Daily Casualties, as recorded by the Multi-National Coalition in Iraq. The period of February 10, 2007 through May 4, 2007 showed a higher number of civilian casualties than any other reporting period, while casualties incurred by the Iraqi security forces remained slightly higher than those reported during January 1, 2007 through February 9, 2007. Coalition casualties remained approximately the same throughout the reporting periods from May 2006 to May 2007. However, all groups incurred a much greater number of casualties over the year from May 2006 to May 2007, compared to the first 2 years of MNC-I reporting.

Figure 4.9 shows the Sectarian Murders and Incidents from January 2006 – April 2007 as reported by the MNC-I. Sectarian murders and incidents decreased from December 2006 to January 2007, and remained lower than numbers during the previous six months. However, a slight increase in sectarian incidents and murders occurred from March to April 2007.

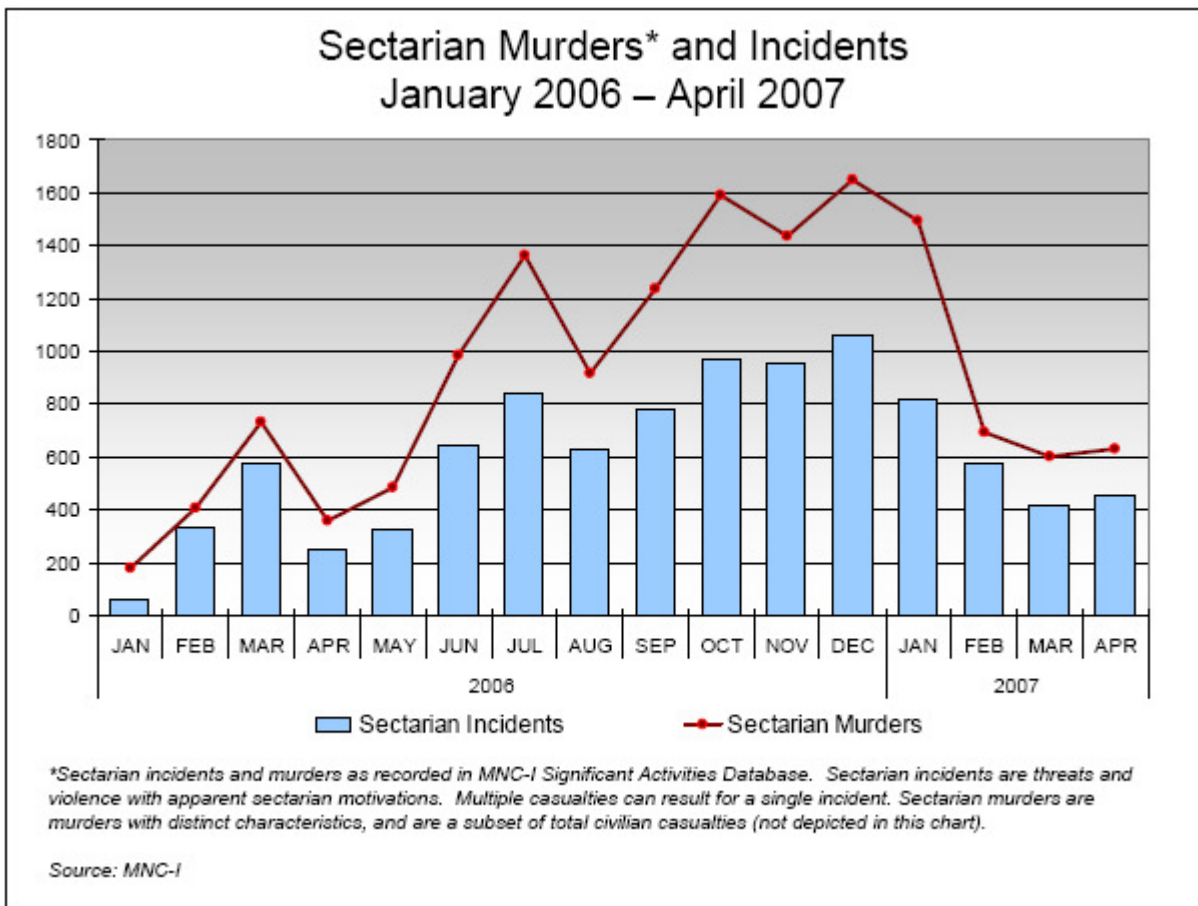
Figure 4.10 shows the Total Iraqi Security Force and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-June 2007. May 2007 showed a higher rate of civilian casualties than any month since September 2006. April had the highest number of casualties incurred by the Iraqi security forces since June 2005.

Figure 4.9 Average Daily Casualties

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

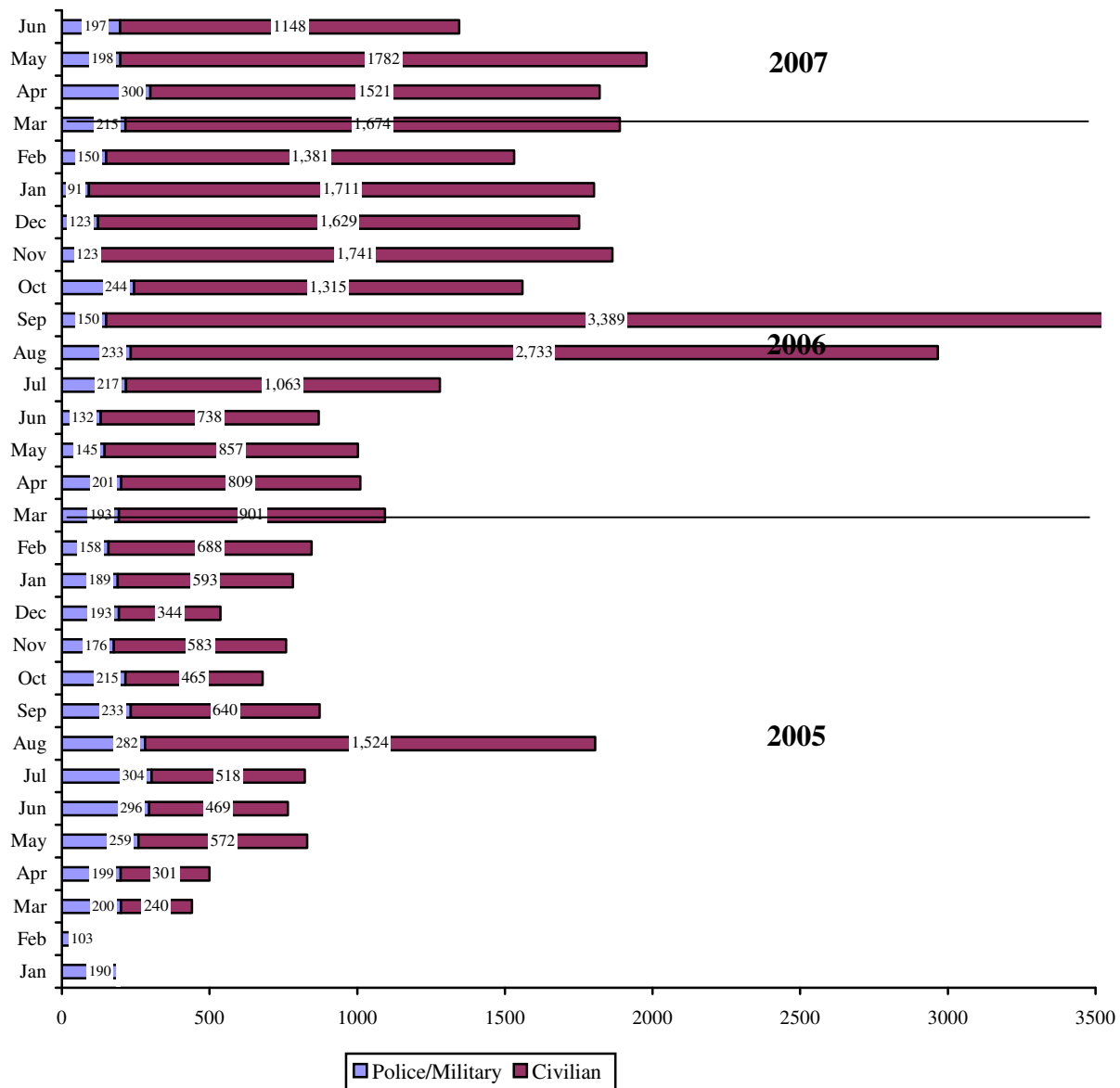
Note: Data points are estimates from material adapted from the DoD report. The DoD has named the time periods used in the graph as follows: Pre-sovereignty: 1 Jan-31 Mar 04, Pre-sovereignty: 01 April 2004 – 28 June 2004, Sovereignty: 29 Jun-26 Nov 04, Election: 27 Nov 04-11 Feb 05, Pre-Constitution: 12 Feb-28 Aug 05, Referendum/Election: 29 Aug 05-10 Feb 06, Gov. Transition: 11 Feb-19 May 06, Government Established: 20 May-11 Aug 06, Government Established: 12 Aug 06 - 10 Nov 06, Transition to self reliance: 1 Jan. - 9 Feb. 2007.

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress, May 2007.

Figure 4.10 Sectarian Murders and Incidents January 2006 – April 2007

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress, May 2007.

Figure 4.11: Total Iraqi Security Force and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-May 2007



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, June 18, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>

VI. The Uncertain Role of Iraqi Security Forces

President Bush and other US and Iraqi government officials claimed that Iraqi Security Forces would lead the new “surge” plan in Baghdad and create lasting security for the population. Iraqi forces were supposed to plan and to “lead” the new security plan, but it was clear that U.S. 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.

Joseph A. Christoff, Director of the International Affairs and Trade committee team at the GAO, said that the number of Iraqi forces overstates their actual preparedness. “Half of them don’t show up for work each day,” said Christoff, “The have divided loyalties – many of the people are loyal to Shia militias. And they are dependent on the United States for their movement, their equipment, their ammunition and their life support.”²⁷⁴

The Iraqi army deals with logistical problems regarding salaries and fuel. Pay and fuel requests must be obtained in person in Baghdad. Lt. Col. Michael Beaudette, who heads the military transition team for the First Brigade said, “The Ministry of Defense, they don’t listen to you unless you drive your fuel request to Baghdad. It can take two weeks for something that needs five signatures.”²⁷⁵

In addition, Iraqi police forces continued to be accused of sectarianism. James Glanz wrote,

“Iraq is the place where there are still wildly conflicting estimates of something as fundamental as how many civilians have died as a result of the war. It is a place where some government officials will swear that there are 348,000 wonderfully trained, motivated and equipped Iraqis in the security forces and other officials will tell you that most of those troops and police either have questionable loyalties, lack equipment or simply do not always report for duty.”²⁷⁶

Despite pledges by the Iraqi government, there were still many signs of Shi’ite and Kurdish political interference in security affairs. The *Washington Post* reported in late April that Maliki’s office was responsible for detaining, firing, or threatening to fire at least 16 army and national police commanders since March 1, 2007. On paper, the reasons for the firing ranged from poor performance to corruption, but U.S. military officials questioned the real motive.

Brig. Gen. Dana J.H. Pittard, commanding general of the Iraq Assistance Group, said that some of the commanders had successfully conducted operations against members of the Mahdi Army. Pittard said, “Their only crimes or offenses were they were successful... I’m tired of seeing good Iraqi officers having to look over their shoulders when they are trying to do the right thing.” Another U.S. officer working with Iraqi troops said of the problem, “The politicization of their officer corps is the worst I’ve ever seen.”

The *Post* article also focused on the Iraqi Office of the Commander in Chief, a small group that provided military advice to Prime Minister Maliki. U.S. officials, however, were concerned that the department held too much influence and was responsible for the series of firings.²⁷⁷

President Jalal Talibani told students at Britain’s Cambridge University on May 11, 2007, “I think within one or two years, we will be able to recruit our forces and prepare our armed forces and tell goodbye to our friends... We are concerned. We hope that Congress will review this decision and help the American Army to stay until the Iraqi Army will be able to replace them and protect the security of Iraq.”²⁷⁸

The Iraqi defense minister, Abdul-Qader al-Obeidi, said the Iraqi military is planning its coping strategy in case the U.S. military decides to withdraw its troops. "The army plans on the basis of a worst-case scenario so as not to allow any security vacuum," said Mr. Obeidi. "There are meetings with political leaders on how we can deal with a sudden pullout."²⁷⁹

Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey said on June 12 that Iraqi forces are improving but that they are still sectarian and corrupt in many respects and suffer from a lack of leadership and a trend of attrition. Currently Iraq's security forces have 348,000 members. Dempsey said that the police force needed an additional 195,000 to bring stability.²⁸⁰ The annual rate of attrition is 15- to 18-percent and 25-percent of Iraqi soldiers are on leave at any given time.²⁸¹

Iraqi army units still needed to gain proficiency in manning checkpoints, running patrols, handling payrolls, promotion, contracting and logistics. Dempsey noted that Iraqis will need help in those areas for an extended period of time.²⁸²

The U.S. military began issuing American-made M-16 rifles to some Iraqi troops in exchange for their AK-47 rifles. The U.S. military officials said that the switch was part of a \$2 billion arms deal for Iraqi troops, aimed at modernizing and showing confidence in Iraqi Security Forces. The switch also prevents against stealing, since the ammunition for the M-16 is different than that of the AK-47, which is still used by Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militiamen. One Iraqi security officer reported that, prior to the switch, Iraqi troops only got "half of the ammunition" they should, "because the other half is stolen."²⁸³

As of June 4, 2007, more than 1,000 Iraqi soldiers possessed M-16s. The first rifles were given to Iraqi troops and officers working alongside American troops in Baghdad. Three-fourths of the cost was covered by the Iraqi government.²⁸⁴

VII. Reconstruction, Development, and Aid

Economic development remained a weak and 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 U.S. and Iraqi governments made aid a key tool in trying to deal with these problems. The U.S. 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 be seen for some time. The International Monetary Fund anticipated that the economy of Iraq would grow by over 10% and the non-oil sectors would grow by 7% in 2007.

The number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq doubled from 10 to 20, several of which were embedded into Brigade Combat teams to help "build" after areas were made secure. The PRTs were sent to help build the capacity of Iraq's local, municipal, and provincial governments, and to provide essential goods and services temporarily to the Iraqi people.

Reconstruction oversight

The Iraqi government has tens of billions of oil revenue dollars to spend on reconstruction, but a lack of systems for negotiating large construction contracts, overseeing work, or making payments to foreign contractors has led to the hiring of inexperienced and incapable foreign contractors.²⁸⁵

Recently complaints were made regarding a lax oversight of the \$35 billion in taxpayer money spent so far on Iraq reconstruction. Pentagon auditors said there are about 100 primary contractors in Iraq, and they have identified \$10 billion in questionable and unsupported spending unaccounted for. Six companies have been banned from contracting, three suspended and one fined. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction announced that it would be auditing four companies with combined contracts worth \$3.3 billion in Iraq, in the broadest audit since the beginning of the war. The four companies to be audited are: Parsons Corporation, Blackwater USA, Aegis Defence Services and BearingPoint.²⁸⁶

Parsons is a construction company with more than \$2 billion worth in Iraq contracts. Parsons has been accused of mismanaging accounts in the past, however the group's spokeswoman claims that what seems as excess spending is legitimated by security costs. The Army is considering banning Parsons from further contracts, a move that may signal a greater inclination toward holding large contractors accountable. Scott Amey, a lawyer for the Project on Government Oversight, said, "Making Parsons put all their cards on the table and prove they're a responsible contractor is a huge step for the government in protecting taxpayers."²⁸⁷ Companies may be penalized by withholding payment, suspension or debarment, fines, or criminal prosecutions or civil lawsuits.²⁸⁸

Debate over employing Iraqis

Debate existed among State and Defense Department officials as to what economic policy would be most effective in the long and short-term in Iraq. State Department officials pushed for the deployment of reconstruction teams to two Shi'ite-dominated provinces in central Iraq, while Defense officials preferred to deploy the troops that would have been required to protect those

teams to Baghdad instead. Paul Brinkley, a deputy undersecretary of defense, was accused by U.S. diplomats in Iraq of aiding insurgents because of his work in helping to rehabilitate state-run factories. Brinkley's initial mission was to simplify Defense Department contracting to give Iraqi firms a better chance of providing goods and services to the U.S. military. However, Brinkley decided to rehabilitate Iraqi factories in order to decrease Iraqi unemployment, which has been high since the beginning of the war.

The U.S. Agency for International Development estimated that nearly half of Iraqis are unemployed or work fewer than 15 hours a week, not including hundreds of thousands who used to work for state-owned enterprises. Brinkley estimates that the true figure for unemployed and underemployed Iraqis may approach 70 percent.

The CIA found no statistically significant correlation between unemployment and terror attacks, and that the vast majority of insurgents questioned by the CIA claim to be employed. While the Joint Strategic Planning and Assessment Office issued a memorandum stating "resuscitating state-owned enterprises is a bad idea," the military's Joint Warfare Analysis Center asserted that a slight increase in job satisfaction led to a 30-percent decrease in attacks on coalition forces. Brinkley plans to receive loans from two Iraqi banks totaling \$5.6 million to six factories, and will announce a second round of loans totaling \$20 million. The White House approved Brinkley's initiative and asked Congress earlier this year for \$100 million to underwrite his efforts.²⁸⁹

Risks to Contractors

There are an estimated 126,000 Defense Department civilian contractors in Iraq, not including the thousands more under contract to other U.S. government agencies.²⁹⁰

The U.S. military used 20,000 to 30,000 contracted security personnel to supplement armed forces. Contractors protected convoys carrying reconstruction material, as well as vehicles, weapons and ammunition for the Iraqi army and police. Contract workers said that as the military has increased its operations, attacks against contractors have become more frequent. Company officials said insurgents did not frequently distinguish between the military and private forces.²⁹¹

According to U.S. Labor Department statistics, the first three months of 2007 brought the highest number of contract worker deaths for any quarter since the beginning of the Iraq war. At least 146 contract workers were killed, topping previous quarterly record of 112 killed at the end of 2004, during the American offensive in Fallujah.²⁹² A top security industry official stated that he was told recently by American military and contracting officials that 50 to 60 percent of all truck convoys in Iraq were being attacked. He said the previous rate had only been about 10 percent. The official who spoke anonymously stated, "There is a definite spike in convoy attacks."²⁹³

The Department of Labor counted 917 contractor deaths since March 2003, including 146 during the first quarter of 2007. Another 12,000 have been wounded.²⁹⁴ Attacks against supply convoys went up from 5.4 percent in 2005 to 9.1 percent in 2006, and then again to 14.7 percent through May 10.²⁹⁵

Private security companies endured an increasing number of attacks resulting in hundreds of casualties. These numbers were often underreported or concealed, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials. The U.S. military only released incomplete statistics on contractor casualties or the number of attacks on guarded convoys.

According to Victoria Wayne, the former deputy director for logistics, the military censored statistics from reports issued by the Reconstruction Logistics Directorate of the Corps of Engineers. One in seven convoys protected by private forces came under attack in 2007. On security company reported almost 300 “hostile actions” between January and April of this year.²⁹⁶ The logistics directorate reported the deaths of 132 privately contracted security personnel and truck drivers, and 416 wounded since fall 2004. Four security contractors and one truck driver remained missing as of June 17, and 208 vehicles were destroyed.²⁹⁷

Almost 300 U.S. and international companies supplied workers to Iraq, who are a force comparable in size to the uniformed military. According to the Pentagon, about 126,000 men and women working for contractors served alongside about 150,000 American troops. In the Persian Gulf War of 1991, only 9,200 contractors operated alongside 540,000 military personnel, mostly operating advanced weapons systems.²⁹⁸

In two separate incidents on May 23 and May 24, two Blackwater contracted workers exchanged fire with insurgents in Baghdad. On May 23, a Blackwater-protected envoy was ambushed in downtown Baghdad. U.S. Apache helicopters of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division arrived and unleashed fire in a congested area. Casualties were not reported, however eyewitnesses reported “at least for or five” people “who were certainly dead.”²⁹⁹ On May 24, a Blackwater guard shot and killed an Iraqi driver near the Interior Ministry in Baghdad.³⁰⁰

Security and the Rule of Law versus Crime and Corruption

The insurgency and Iraq’s civil conflicts also interacted with the lack of an effective 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 U.S. 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.

The head of the Iraqi Commission on Public Integrity, Radi al-Radhi, said on April 4, 2007 that \$8 billion in government money was wasted or stolen in the past three years. The largest chunk of the money, \$2 billion, disappeared from funds to rebuild the electricity sector. He also said that his commission had investigated 2,600 corruption cases since 2004, for which he received numerous death threats. Arrest warrants were issued for some 90 former officials, most of whom fled the country.

Al-Radhi blames some of the corruption on clause 136B in the Iraqi Constitution, which gave Cabinet minister the power to block the commission’s investigations. These ministers had blocked investigations into an estimated \$55 million in public funds.³⁰¹

The Health Care Crisis, Insurgency, and Civil Conflict

The growing public health crisis in Iraq would have a serious impact on future generations of Iraqis. An April 2007 study by the World Health Organization found that 70% of Iraqis lacked access to clean water, which helped account for two-thirds of the deaths of children under five, and 21% of Iraqi children were chronically malnourished. The report said that the public health

system was crippled by displacement of people, the loss of nurses and doctors, and the lack of basic medical supplies.

The report also estimated that an average of 100 people were killed everyday, and the number of wounded was far higher, but could not be estimated with any accuracy. The Iraqi government told the W.H.O. that nearly 70% of critically injured patients died in hospital as a result of lack of staff, drugs, and equipment. Further, Iraqis suffering from injuries or illness not related to the violence, including pregnant women, often avoided going to hospital for security reasons, leading to increased deaths from preventable ailments.³⁰²

Many of Iraq's doctors and health care staff had fled the country since 2003 to escape debilitating work conditions and threats to their lives. The insurgency continued to target doctors and nurses, many of whom were seen as being aligned with the Sadr controlled Health Ministry, regardless of their ethnicity and sect. The "brain drain" and the public health crisis in Iraq would clearly have adverse affects for decades to come, and without a minimum level of security, it would almost impossible for USAID and NGOs to alter the outcome. The UN estimated that some 200 academics had been killed between 2003 and March 2007.³⁰³

In an effort to stem the brain drain, the Iraqi government forbade Iraqi medical schools from issuing certificates and transcripts to graduating doctors that would allow them to leave the country. The system had been previously used in the Hussein regime. Government spokesman said that the medical students could obtain the certificates after completing six years of work in Iraqi hospitals. The decision underscored the dire situation of Iraq's medical system.

The Iraqi Medical Association estimated that some 40,000 doctors had fled the country since 2003. Some hospitals were running with half of their staff, and were increasingly unable to teach at medical schools. Students at one university in Baghdad attended class only 25% of the time due to the violence.³⁰⁴

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 Iraq'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.

National Intelligence Council assessments distributed to U.S. government officials in January 2003 anticipated that Iraq's oil production would increase "within several months of the end of the hostilities" after the U.S.-led invasion.³⁰⁵ However, oil production and exportation continued to fall short of goals. Crude oil production averaged 1.95 mbpd in the first quarter of 2007. The Iraqi government, however, still predicted that production would reach 3.1 mbpd by 2008.³⁰⁶

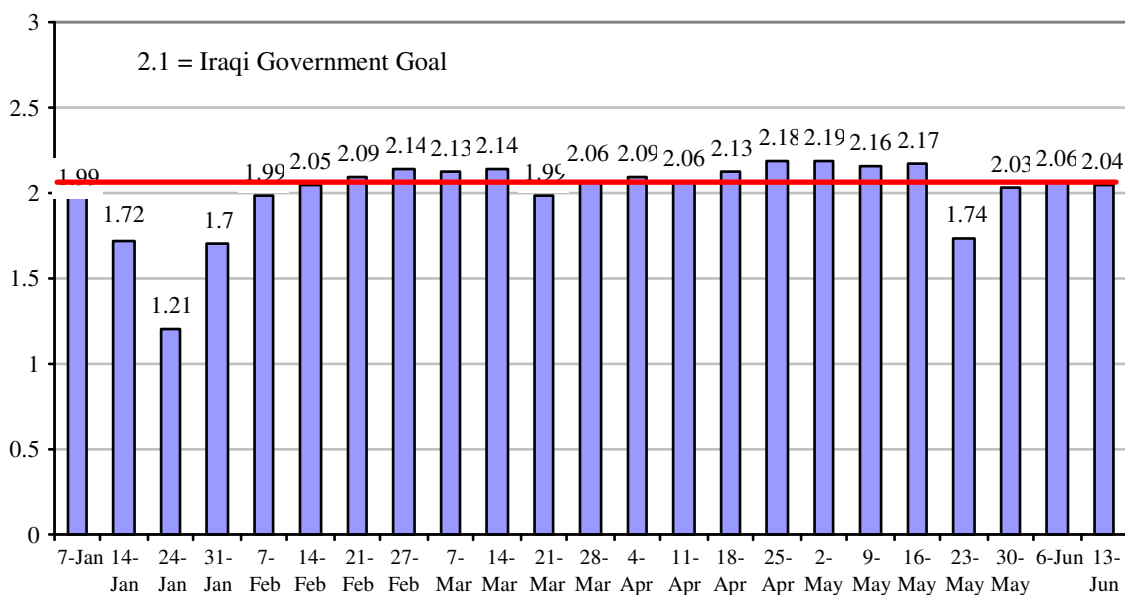
On May 13, Iraq declared that between 100,000 and 300,000 barrels of oil a day over the past four years have been unaccounted for. The discrepancy has been valued at \$5 million to \$15 million dollars, averaging \$50 dollars per missing barrel. This discrepancy could be due to a loss of oil through sabotage of pipelines or inaccurate reporting of production in southern Iraq, where water is pumped along with oil in the fields. Though crude oil is not as lucrative and much more difficult to smuggle, the State Department has not ruled out the possibility of theft. While Sunni insurgents have reportedly benefited from the smuggling of refined products in the north, it is more likely that Shi'ite insurgents would be profiting from the smuggling of crude oil in the south. Philip K. Verleger Jr., an independent economist and oil expert, noted that a ready market

exists for crude oil smuggled from Iraq in smaller refineries not under the control of large Western companies in places like China, the Caribbean and possibly small European countries.³⁰⁷

The GAO report concludes that the U.S. has spent \$5.1 billion of the \$7.4 billion in American taxpayer money originally set aside to rebuild the Iraqi oil and electricity sectors. In addition, the U.S. has spent \$3.8 billion of Iraqi money on those sectors. Despite expenditure figures, the output of Iraq's national electricity grid and national oil fields are below American goals, and discrepancies in Iraqi oil figures in particular are reminiscent of discrepancies accounted for during the Saddam Hussein era oil-for-food scandals.³⁰⁸

The Department of Defense quarterly report for June 2007 reported that the illicit sale of oil was being used by insurgent groups to fund their activities. Members of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Oil's Oil Protection Force, who are obligated to protect infrastructure, were sometimes suspected in being complicit in these activities. In the Salah ah-Din province, the Bayji refinery reported a loss of 70% of the fuel it processed, amounting to as much as \$2 billion a year.³⁰⁹

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



Source: "Iraq Weekly Status Report", US Department of State, available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/>

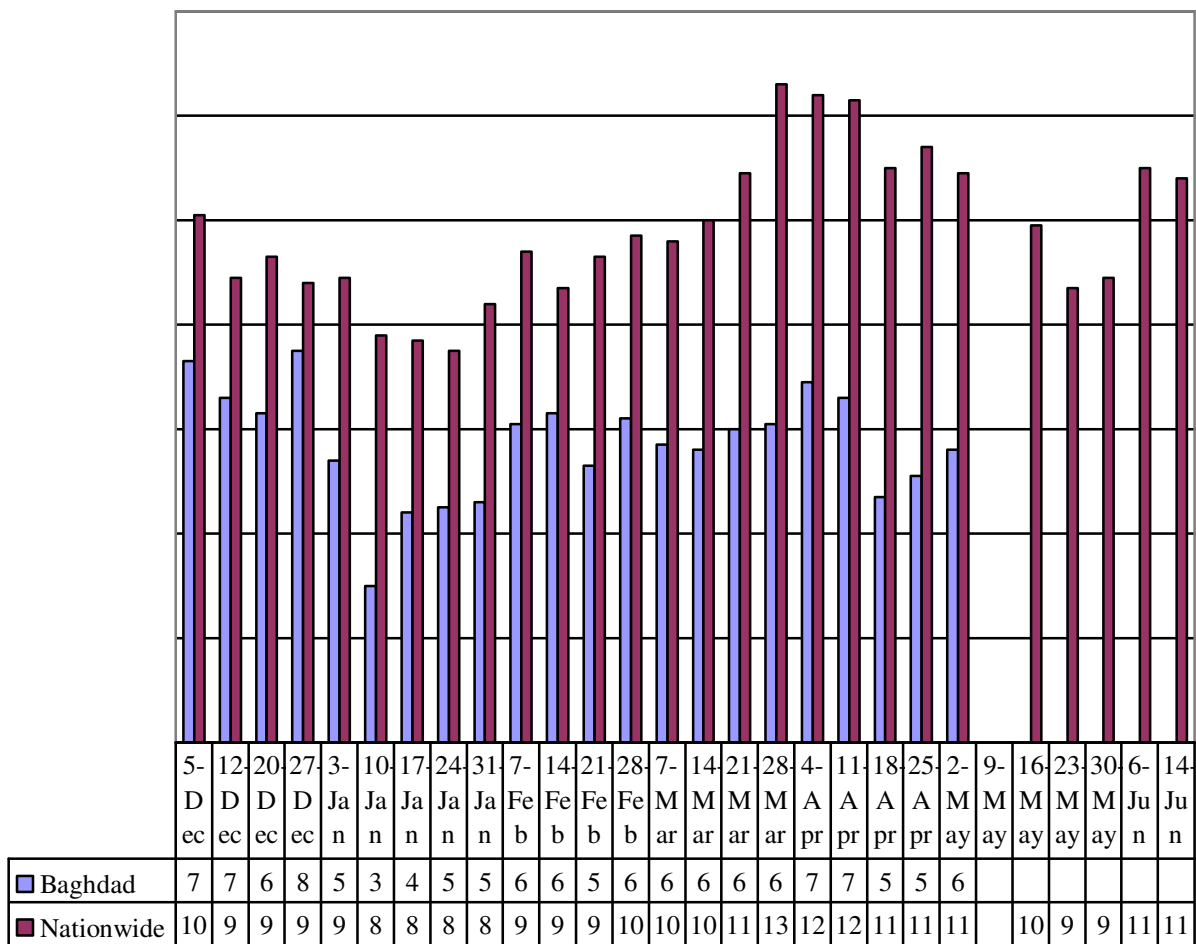
The Problem of Electricity

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 U.S. government exhausted all but 15% of its reconstruction fund of \$4 billion for Iraq's electoral sector as of June 2007. The fund has provided for 1,500 to 2,000 megawatts (MW) of capacity. When the fund is exhausted, which was anticipated to happen by late fall 2007, the Iraqi government will transition to take full control of rebuilding the electoral sector. The Iraqi government allotted \$10 billion in reconstruction and infrastructure projects in its 2007 budget.³¹⁰

For January through April 2007, the Defense Department reported that an average of 3,973 MW were provided, compared to other 3,898 MW provided during the same period in 2006. Based on the average daily demand and power generated, electricity was provided for an average of 14.5 hours per day in April nationwide, and 8.4 hours per day in April for Baghdad. About 2,000 MW were also provided by off-grid private owners of small generators.³¹¹

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

Source: "Iraq Weekly Status Report," US Department of State, available at:
<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/>

*Beginning in April, the average power production, demand and equivalent hours of power were reported.

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. Though the U.S.-Iraqi offensive in and around Baghdad specifically targeted al-Qa'ida, about 30 groups existed during the reporting period that claimed responsibility for attacks against American and Iraqi government targets. A former American political advisor in Baghdad said, "I talked to a lot of guys over there (U.S. officials in Iraq) and they are aware that the majority of fighters are not al-Qaeda." Terrorism analyst Lydia Khalil at the Jamestown Foundation research group, said that the U.S.-allied government is in the process of forming negotiations with some of these groups, and "that would be thrown off balance if the U.S. military put an emphasis on them," rather than al-Qaeda, which lacks the potential of forming an alliance.³¹²

The new Commander of CENTCOM, Adm. William J. Fallon, told Congress on April 18, 2007 that Sunni Neo-Salafi insurgents – namely al-Qa'ida in Iraq – were now the most "destabilizing element" in Iraq. He added, "Of all the things that we have on the plate in Iraq, the one that I think is first and foremost as a target for us to try and get a grip on and to neutralize is the group that is very clearly al-Qa'ida motivated that is linked to Sunni extremists in this country that are perpetrating these big suicide bombings."³¹³

The insurgency continued to be dominated by the eight members of the Islamic State of Iraq, which was led by al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The Mujahedeen Shura Council, created in January 2006, had announced the ISI in October and declared Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi the emir. In April 2007, ISI announced on a website that Abu Ayub al-Masra, leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, was the "minister for war" for the Islamic State. The announcement said that ISI was in the process of forming a "cabinet". Other positions included ministers of information, "prisoners and martyrs", agriculture, and health.³¹⁴

American troops fighting the insurgency said the conflict could best be described as a very intensive game of cat and mouse, and the mouse was very smart. Officials also noted that al-Qa'ida and its umbrella organizations did not falter after the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in June 2006. Maj. Gen. Michael Barbero, a defense department spokesman, said, "It has been able to replace leaders... We are very active in, almost nightly, going after these leaders and trying to take down this network. And whenever you do that, then more intelligence pops up as they try to react and adjust their network... These are new leaders emerging."³¹⁵

On May 1, 2007 U.S. troops killed Muharib Abdul Latif al-Jubouri, a senior figure in al Qaeda in Iraq linked to the kidnappings of Americans Jill Carroll and Tom Fox and other foreigners. From May 17 to May 24, the military conducted 48 operations focusing on al-Qaeda in Iraq, in which 19 suspects were killed and 88 were detained.³¹⁶ In Karmah, a small town nine miles from Fallujah, the military uncovered two of al-Qaeda's hideouts, freeing 17 kidnapping victims including a 13-year-old boy who had been tortured.³¹⁷

The tactical aspect of the insurgency remained low-tech, but an increase in suicide bombings and chemical bombs targeting Shi'ite civilians made it difficult for US troops to win even tactically against the insurgency, let alone on a strategic level.³¹⁸

Internal Sunni Tensions

There was some evidence that even though elements of the insurgency had united under the title of the “Islamic State of Iraq,” they were increasingly factionalized and in some cases, took up arms against each other. Some sources indicated that there were twelve major insurgent groups, all of which were fighting Shi’ite militias, US forces, and other Sunnis.³¹⁹

Some Sunni insurgent groups accused Al Qa’ida of killing and kidnapping their fighters and others said that their association with al-Qa’ida in Iraq was “tainting their image as a nationalist resistance force.” Since 2003, nationalist insurgents groups had focused their goal on removing foreign troops from Iraq, while al-Qa’ida’s long-term goal was part of a greater global struggle.

A leader of the Mujahideen Army, based in Baquba, said, “We do not want to kill the Sunni people nor displace the innocent Shia, and what the al-Qa’ida organization is doing is contradictory to Islam... We will strike whoever violates the boundaries of God, whether al-Qa’ida or Americans.”

The spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella Sunni insurgent organization headed by al-Qa’ida in Iraq, said that the small insurgent groups could either join the Islamic State or they would be considered enemies.

It was unclear which small insurgent groups had broken away from the Islamic State, but local insurgents in Baquba, Diyala Province, said that they had erected checkpoints and barriers throughout the city and captured some 100 al-Qa’ida fighters in recent weeks. The smaller insurgent groups also made it clear that they had many disagreements amongst themselves, and would not be uniting against al-Qa’ida.

The Islamic State of Iraq continued to claim responsibility for many of the large-scale attacks in the spring of 2007, such as the April 12 bombing of the Iraqi Parliament building. It was far from clear that the growing fracturing of the Sunni insurgency would benefit the US and Coalition, and all the groups continued to oppose the “occupation” and Shi’ite dominated Iraqi government.³²⁰

There was also evidence of divisions in the Ba’athist elements of the insurgency. US and Iraqi intelligence officials suspected a split between the leader of the ex-Ba’athist movement former top aide to Saddam Hussein, Izzat Ibrahim, and a former general in Hussein’s army, Mohammad Yunis Ahmad. It appeared that the former general was trying to take control of the Ba’athist insurgency from Ibrahim.³²¹

Evolving Tactics

Most tactical operations remained low-tech. However, the variety of tactics employed and changing methods of implementation helped the insurgency cope with new Coalition tactics and US military technological superiority. As the Coalition improved their tactics and manpower, insurgent groups responded with a “surge” of their own. Army Col. Casey Haskins, who served in Iraq for 18 years as a senior planner and now commands the Infantry Training Brigade for recruits at Fort Benning, Ga., likened trying to secure the insurgency to “trying to nail down smoke.” “It’s different from one side of Baghdad to the other,” he said. “Every time we counter something [the enemy does], they counter our counter, and we counter their counter to our counter.”³²² Iraqi insurgents have developed ways to supplement the traditional tactics of

ambush, explosions and propaganda, with simple modern technology such as cell phones garage door openers and internet advertisements.³²³

Maintaining Mobility

As the Anbar offensive took hold, Sunni insurgent groups began to move toward Diyala where lush vegetation, including thick palm trees and orchards, provide more cover than the desert terrain of Anbar. From these hiding places, insurgents are able to carry out hit-and-run attacks.³²⁴

In early June, al-Qa'ida operatives were reportedly trying to establish their headquarters in Dora, a majority Sunni neighborhood in South Baghdad. The group was pushed out of al-Anbar, apparently due to the three weeklong U.S.-Iraqi offensives in the area, the latest of which began on May 25.

Large-Scale Bombings

There were signs that the troop surge may have caused a shift in insurgent strategy. The increased presence of security forces in Baghdad made large-scale attacks in public places more difficult to carry out. In late May and early June, a drop in car bombings and mass-casualty explosions in civilian areas coincided with a rise in attacks targeting bridges and security facilities. The number of Iraqi civilians killed in mass-casualty bombings fell from 634 in April to 325 in May, according to the Brookings Institute, while high-profile attacks, specifically targeting bridges, became more prevalent. Attacks on police stations, checkpoints and neighborhood combat outposts also occurred more frequently during this time period. U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said, "The car bombs you see in Baghdad now are at police checkpoints as opposed to the intended targets like markets... where there are a lot of people congregating."³²⁵

A TIME interview with a Sunni insurgent did not reveal the actual name of the fighter, or his location, but it detailed the technical strategies being advanced by the operative who deals arms and technical assistance to Sunni insurgent groups, specifically al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The insurgent explained, "Once the American s were fully deployed, it would be hard to move bombs around, so we had to make them quickly and distribute them." To deal with the surge, many insurgents moved their operations to areas with less U.S. presence. Al-Qa'ida elements moved from Anbar to Diyala, and groups have moved farther north to Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan. Many elements of al-Qa'ida moved toward the increased U.S. troop presence in Baghdad, away from Anbar. They began to attack non-traditional targets such as helicopters and bridges that connect the capital to other parts of the country. One commander in Baghdad said, "These were all new kinds of attacks, and there were so many of them it was hard to keep track... The message from al-Qa'ida was, "You do your surge, we'll do ours."³²⁶

U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver stated that the shift in strategy signified a "classic goal of any kind of insurgency." "What (insurgents) are trying to do is separate the population from the government and convince the population that the security forces can't protect them."³²⁷ Owen Cote, associate director of the security studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said, "The goal of the insurgents [in bombing bridges] is to demonstrate that we can't be everywhere at once and that they can keep this up as long as the occupation lasts, no matter how much we surge."³²⁸

U.S. officials suspect that Sunni Arabs are responsible for the large-scale bridge bombings, in attempts to fuel the anger of Iraqis against the central government and U.S. military.³²⁹ Bridge bombings are also suspected to be aimed at limiting U.S. supply convoy access and isolate sectarian groups. They also, however, impede on the movement of insurgents, who are restricted to ground movement, while U.S. forces can maneuver through the air.³³⁰

Structure, Technology and Propaganda

The political organization of the Iraqi insurgents lagged behind their technological advancement. Their decentralized tendency allows the groups to operate, even when lead figures such as Zarqawi are killed. It is also more difficult for the United States to negotiate with the groups, since no central leadership exists to negotiate with. However, decentralization causes the groups exhaust energy on each other, rather than directing their efforts toward attacking occupation forces. Sunni Arab insurgent groups are fractured among themselves, and often clash with one another.³³¹

Soldiers in Diyala who had served throughout Iraq often described the province as the most dangerous and the most “war-like.” One soldier said of the insurgents, “These guys know what they’re doing. They’re controlled, their planning is good, their human intel network and early-warning networks are effective.” US troops increasingly found that insurgents knew US troops movements and offensives before they occurred.

Insurgents in Diyala appeared to have more sophisticated technology than those in other provinces. For example, US troops found that insurgents had complex radio communication patterns and used night-vision goggles.

Bruce Hoffman, an expert in terrorism at Georgetown University, said, “A cult of the insurgent has emerged from Iraq that’s going to inspire imitation elsewhere, because it has shown that a bunch of guys with garage door openers and cellular phones can inflict pain and suffering on the most technologically advanced military in the history of mankind.”³³²

Local groups continue to carry out operations and send the video footage to umbrella organizations who would distribute the video online. “Every time someone, say, shoots down a helicopter, they post a video of it,” said Andrew Teekell at Strategic Forecasting. “And in the lower right-hand corner will be the little logo of the Council of Bearded Clerics, or whatever. You can consider that advertising.”³³³

On May 7, 2007 the “Islamic State in Iraq” said it was holding nine Iraqi police and defense personnel and demanded the release of all Sunni Muslim women prisoners in exchange for their freedom. The group said the policemen being held included high-ranking officers. Three days later the “Islamic State” posted a video on a website showing the killing of the detainees.

The Islamic State of Iraq released a video on June 4, claiming responsibility for the abduction and slaying of the three American soldiers who were missing in the May 12 ambush in Mahmoudiyah. U.S. military officials doubt the authenticity of the claim made in the video, citing a lack of graphic evidence of the deaths of the two young men who were yet to be found.³³⁴

The video mocked the efforts of the 4,000 American troops deployed to search for the missing troops in Baghdad, saying, that despite their efforts, “they failed.”³³⁵ One analyst noted the advanced nature of the propaganda video, stating that it had a “disturbing power” as a

“compelling visual document” that set up “a stark series of oppositions that transcend linguistic barriers: occupation vs. resistance, outsiders vs. locals...”³³⁶

IEDs

IEDs have killed or wounded almost 20,000 U.S. troops in Iraq since March 2003. Almost 1,400 Americans have been killed by IEDs since March 2003.³³⁷ Roadside bombs were responsible for four out of every five American deaths in combat during the months of February, April and May.³³⁸

According to the Pentagon, IEDs have killed 1,570 U.S. troops in Iraq from the start of the war through May 5, making up 57% of the 2,741 total deaths due to hostile action. In response the Pentagon has changed its tactics, up-armored vehicles and funded the joint IED Defeat Organization. The number of U.S. forces killed by homemade bombs in Iraq has nearly doubled this spring, since the beginning of the “surge.” IEDs accounted for 265 of the 377, or 70%, of U.S. troop deaths under hostile circumstances since January 1. In April and May the share of deaths attributed to IEDs rose to 83%. The total number of service members killed by IEDs rose from 39 in January to 78 in April, and 48 in the first 22 days of May.³³⁹

Deaths from IEDs rose from 25 in May 2004 to 88 in May 2007. In the first 12 days of June, roadside bombs accounted for 69% of U.S. troop deaths. IEDs have killed 303 of the 516 soldiers who died in the first half of 2007. Marines in Anbar province started detailed tracking of IED attacks in January 2006, and found that there had been 1,100 attacks on Coalition vehicles during that period.³⁴⁰

IEDs are so common because materials are cheap, explosives are simple to mix, and diagrams for wiring are accessible on the internet. Insurgents have about \$3 trillion in new communications technology used to combine and detonate explosives, using cell phones or garage door openers to transmit codes.³⁴¹

Insurgent groups have obtained upgraded equipment, including high numbers of powerful IEDs, capable of outperforming EFPs. They are lined with concrete, and, according to the insurgent interviewed by TIME, capable of “turn(ing) an Abrams tank into an airplane.” The U.S. believes these were coming from Iran. New IEDs were being buried deeper on the outskirts of the capital along roads where U.S. patrols pass. Some of them were being buried in sewers, irrigation culverts. They were often used to target minesweeping vehicles such as Buffalo counter-IED vehicles and Meerkat mine detectors.³⁴²

Militants became more adept at hiding and strategically placing IEDs. One account described how insurgents placed an IED in loose rubble, topped with human feces, so that soldiers were less likely to search through the pile. Insurgents began to hide bombs in places where soldiers would most likely take cover – behind a bush or a pile of bricks – and then assault them with sniper fire. Garrett Therolf of the Los Angeles Times reported while traveling with a platoon in the Amiriya and Khadra districts of Baghdad that insurgents took advantage of their road-repair efforts by disguising the placement of IEDs as road repairs.³⁴³

IEDs were hidden in human bodies. On June 13, two people were injured by an exploding corpse that they sought to rescue from a street in the Mansour district of Baghdad. Later that day two other corpses exploded as they were dragged by security forces from ropes, after being advised

not to handle them manually.³⁴⁴ An Iraqi official said, ‘They know that we can’t just leave a body to rot in the street. They are counting on us to do the right thing, then hit us when we do.’³⁴⁵

A battalion commander in Baghdad’s Karradah district said that there was an increasing pattern of bombers allowing U.S. patrols to pass IEDs, later detonating them upon the arrival of Iraqi forces.³⁴⁶

In late 2004 the JIEDDO was established and has since grown into a defense agency with 358 military and civilian staffers. The organization has been funded with \$6.3 billion since its inception and the Bush administration wants to give it \$4.5 billion more for the fiscal 2008. While the U.S. casualty rate has not fallen since the creation of the JIEDDO, Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs, director of JIEDDO claims that this is because the troops are exposed to more bombs. In June 2003, insurgents detonated about 500 IEDs, while this March there were six times as many attacks. The exact figure of IED attacks is classified.³⁴⁷

Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs, director of JIEDDO said, “This is a long-term problem, and it is not peculiar to Iraq and Afghanistan. This is going to be a permanent aspect of our military and diplomatic life, regardless of [what happens in] Iraq and Afghanistan.”³⁴⁸

After the Defense Science Board reported in April 2006, that the Pentagon’s counter-IED efforts had become too focused on the technical, defensive and adaptive efforts, JIEDDO has concentrated more on attacking the networks behind IED attacks, focusing more on jammers and sensor technology.³⁴⁹ Congress has criticized JIEDDO for not effectively reducing the number of U.S. troop casualties due to IEDs.³⁵⁰

The head of the agency, Montgomery Meigs, said that the percentage of casualties due to IEDs has stayed the same, however the increase in deaths from IEDs was a result of an increase in the usage of IEDs by insurgents. Meigs claimed that insurgents have to plant six times as many IEDs to kill the same number of forces. Meigs said that JIEDDO committed almost all of its current funding as of mid-May 2007.³⁵¹

The combat approach to defeating IED attacks is three-pronged: 1) “Defeat the device,” 2) “Attack the network,” and 3) “Train the force.” “Defeat the device” refers to the development and fielding of items such as jammers and route clearance devices. Budgeting for this tactical consideration covers jammers, equipment and gear to enable route clearance, as well as research and development for MRAPs. JIEDDO’s greatest expense is the vehicle-mounted Warlock Duke jammer. “Attack the network” refers to technical and human intelligence to needed to spot IED’s, while “Train the force” refers to the training given to troops before and during deployments in IED defeat techniques, ranging from interrogation techniques to jammer and aerial electronic warfare exercises.³⁵²

Lt. Col. Gregory Baker, an Air Commander in Baquba said that the number of IEDs placed in the area rose “exponentially” from July 2006-June 2007, but the number of effective IEDs has remained constant. According to the commander, this is because the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade in Baquba has been successful in eliminating IED placement teams. Also, he said, the U.S. military has stepped up its human intelligence effort to tie IEDs back to their financiers, bomb makers, and placers.³⁵³

Manned and unmanned aircraft were used to track suspected IEDs and bomb-planters on key roads and intersections. Surveillance was also kept from towers and tethered balloons. Snipers

often shoot people who they suspect of planting an IED, or follow the suspects to gather more information on their organization.³⁵⁴ The EA-6B Prowler, a secret aircraft from the Vietnam-era, is used to jam small signals put out by IED detonators. Its mission is to control the electromagnetic spectrum so that it remains in the exclusive control of American allies.³⁵⁵ U.S. troops are using Small Unmanned Ground Vehicles to clear caves and bunkers, search buildings, cross minefields and defuse IEDs.³⁵⁶

However, an insurgent interviewed by TIME revealed that he developed a way to surpass electronic jammers by reconfiguring the signal of his cellular phone, so that IEDs may be detonated despite efforts by U.S. forces to interfere with transmission signals. The insurgent said, "It took me just one day to figure it out."³⁵⁷

Better armored vehicles are being provided, along with flameproof jumpsuits, quick-release seatbelts and training on evacuating overturned vehicles.³⁵⁸ Despite the increased efforts to armor vehicles, Meigs said, "Every time you add armor to a vehicle it is very easy for the enemy to adapt." 700 soldiers and almost 100 Stryker vehicles from the Army's 2nd Division were sent to Diyala in March to fortify an infantry brigade.³⁵⁹ However, an infantry company in Diyala lost five Strykers in less than one week in May.³⁶⁰ "They are learning how to defeat them," a U.S. official said about Iraqi insurgents.³⁶¹

Strykers can carry two crew members and 11 infantrymen, as well as offer firepower and mobility.³⁶² In Iraq, where roadside bombs are accountable for a majority of casualties, heavily armored tracked vehicles are more capable to withstand blasts. Lighter, wheeled vehicles are more appropriate for situations in which the enemy uses more rocket-propelled grenades or small-arms fire.³⁶³

Lt. Col. Bruce Antonio, who commands a Stryker battalion in Diyala, said that some insurgents found "the right mix of explosives and IED positioning to inflict severe damage on the vehicle." He also noted that tanks have been vulnerable to attacks as well.³⁶⁴ Insurgents began to reinforce their bombs with cement to channel blasts upward. Bombs are now so powerful that Abrams main battle tanks have proven vulnerable to them.³⁶⁵ In August 2005 an IED blew up a 37-ton amphibious tractor, killing 14 Marines. Three 70-ton Abrams M1A2 tanks were disabled by IEDs.³⁶⁶

In a memo on May 30, Gates established an MRAP Task Force in order to speed up production of the vehicles, now possessing "highest acquisition priority," for the Pentagon. John Young was named director of defense research and engineering. Young was mandated to "integrate planning, analysis and actions to accelerate the acquisition" of MRAPs. The Army may end up buying the largest number of them.³⁶⁷

On May 31, the Marine Corps announced a \$623 million contract to buy 1,200 MRAPs from the International Military and Government. The Army considered expanding the proposal to buy 7,000 MRAPs to buying thousands more.³⁶⁸ The MNC-I asked the Pentagon for enough MRAPs to replace every armored Humvee used by the Army in Iraq. The total size of the MRAP program was estimated to extend beyond the 23,000 vehicles requested, totaling more than \$23 billion.³⁶⁹

VBIEDs and HBIEDs

VBIEDs reached an all time high in February 2007; nearly 1,100 people were killed. An additional 783 were killed in March by 108 car bombs throughout Iraq.³⁷⁰ The US military announced that it shut down a major network of car bomber that were responsible for killing some 650 Iraqi civilians in past months.³⁷¹

Landmines that first emerged in Karbala in February 2004, were triggered by the Humvee's front tire, totaling the vehicle but sparing its passengers. This evolved into a more sophisticated tactic that caused more damage to the vehicle and targeted its drivers. Mines were planted upside down in a conical hole, leaving space below the mine. The front tires of a vehicle would then push the mine down, shoving its pressure plate against the bottom of the hole, and preparing to explode only when the rear tires hit the mine. The explosion would occur then directly beneath the passengers.³⁷²

On May 11, Truck bombs detonated on three bridges around Baghdad, killing 25 people and injuring 69. The attacks damaged two of the bridges that connect a largely Shiite-populated area of east Baghdad to a mostly Sunni area of west Baghdad. The attack came one month after a truck bombing collapsed the Sarafiya Bridge over the Tigris River, killing 11 people.³⁷³

On May 18, four truck bombs targeting two bridges over the Tigris River near the city of Mosul exploded, killing five Iraqi police, and wounding four Iraqi soldiers and one civilian. Later three car bombs attacked a jail, damaging the jail and killing five Iraqi police, and wounding 21 police and 17 civilians.³⁷⁴

On May 20, six U.S. Troops and an interpreter were killed by a roadside bomb in western Baghdad, while looking for insurgent arms caches. Numbers listed on the Iraq Casualty Count website indicates that the roadside bomb caused the highest number of U.S. Troop deaths in any single bomb attack this year in Baghdad.³⁷⁵

On May 22, a car bomb in a Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad killed 25 people and injured 60 at an outdoor market.³⁷⁶ Lt. Gen. Aboud Qanbar said that Iraqi forces in January, February and April had acquired some high-tech devices to detect car bombs and were focusing their efforts on uncovering car-bomb factories.³⁷⁷

On May 26, Col. Steve Townsend of the Third Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Second Infantry Division heading Operation Arrowhead Ripper in Baqubah, said they were faced with an onslaught of house-rigged IEDs, or HBIEDs. The brigade destroyed 21 HBIEDs within the first 12 days of fighting. Col. Townsend said that insurgents buried bombs beneath roads and attacked troops with small-arms fire, prompting them to take cover in the explosives-rigged houses. The adjoining homes were also rigged, causing a domino effect once the first was detonated. HBIEDs require air strikes or artillery fire to be destroyed, because they are particularly dangerous to infantry.³⁷⁸

EFPs and Suicide Bombs

Explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) continued to be a problem for US troops in Iraq. EFPs are about the size of a coffee can with a disk at one end. Upon explosion, the disk forms into a slug of molten steel that burns through armor and explodes inside the vehicle, dispersing hundreds of lethal droplets of burning metal.³⁷⁹

The number of EFP attacked reached an all time high of 65 in April 2007. EFPs were found largely in Shi'ite areas in Baghdad. The US military believed that parts of the bombs were made in Iran and smuggled over the border. However, there was only circumstantial evidence that the top levels of the Iranian government were involved.³⁸⁰

On May 18 U.S. troops captured six men suspected of smuggling materials to form EFP's (Explosively Formed Penetrators). The military said in a statement that the group was known for "facilitating the transport of weapons and explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs, from Iran to Iraq, as well as bringing militants from Iraq to Iran for terrorist training."³⁸¹

Gen. Petraeus said that the US military still believed that 80-90% of all suicide bombings were carried out by foreigners.³⁸² Suicide bombing were averaging 42 a month in the first quarter of 2007.³⁸³

Attacks on Helicopters

Helicopter operations claimed 5 percent of the U.S. deaths from January to June 2007, accounting for 27 soldiers.³⁸⁴ 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.³⁸⁵ Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia claimed responsibility for three of the attacks.³⁸⁶ On May 21, U.S. Military said that it succeeded in breaking up a network of insurgents behind a series of fatal attacks on U.S. Helicopters in Iraq over the past winter. There were no fatal helicopter attacks from February until May 29, when two U.S. soldiers were killed when their patrol was hit by a roadside bomb in southern Baghdad.³⁸⁷

Complex attacks

The insurgency was also growing more effective at launching well-coordinated attacks against US troops. In one offensive in March 2007, insurgents planted 27 IEDs along a one-mile stretch of road, but three-quarters of the bombs were decoys. The decoys stalled the US convoy, and insurgents launched an attack from several directions using RPGs, mortars, and machine-gun fire. The following battle lasted three days, and US troops were continually impressed by the level of insurgent coordination.³⁸⁸

Insurgent groups operate in small groups, usually three or four. However, some times they can organize in groups of 100 or 200 fighters, attacking military forces after an initial barrage of suicide bombs, intended to "soften up" U.S. or Iraqi targets. The initial attack would then be followed by a combination of IEDs, sniper fire, and cameramen to record and distribute the footage of the attack.³⁸⁹

A double bombing occurred in Rabia, about 75 miles northwest of Mosul on June 7. The explosions destroyed at least one building and damaged others. Capt. Mohammed al-Zebari of the Iraqi Army division in the area, said "This is a new tactic for us... to start with one explosion and then have the second bigger than the first." The second bomb was made of approximately 500 pounds of explosives packed into a minibus. After a suicide bomber tried to enter the police station and blew himself up, the second bomb detonated.³⁹⁰

On June 9, U.S. troops in Baquba averted a suicide bomb attack outside a government building that was planned in two stages. One bomber on foot was wearing an explosive belt, but was shot to death while detonating his device and killing one Iraqi policeman. The second bomber exploded before reaching his target.³⁹¹

On June 3, a car bomb exploded outside Forward Operating Base Warhorse in Diyala, discharging a gas that sickened dozens of people. The “unconfirmed report of off-color smoke” that caused soldiers “minor respiratory irritations and watery eyes” was suspected to be chlorine gas. Chlorine began to be used more frequently by Sunni insurgents against U.S. forces.

The Role of Foreign Fighters

Foreign volunteers continued to make up only a fraction of the insurgency, but they composed the vast majority of suicide bombers. The number of suicide bombings in Iraq in 2007, roughly 42 a month, made it clear that foreign fighters were still entering the country in large numbers. Iraqi border guards arrested some 15-20 suspected insurgents a month, but estimated that dozens more entered Iraqi undetected through the Syrian border.

Syria increased its security presence along its border with Iraq, but the numbers on both sides were not sufficient to counter a now well-established insurgent smuggling route. Aspiring insurgents traveled to the Syrian-Iraqi border with the name of smugglers who would take them into Iraq for about \$150. If they made it across the border, they traveled to insurgent safe-havens and prepared for suicide bombing missions. If they were caught the border, they were placed in Syrian prisoners and eventually sent back to their home countries.³⁹²

IX. The Role of Shi'ite Militias

Shi'ite militias largely stood aside in the areas where US force operated, avoiding direct conflict and essentially allowing US, British, and Iraqi government forces to win their battles for them. There were, however, some clashes between the militias and US, British, and Iraqi government forces. There also were significant low level clashes between the forces of Shi'ite political parties and factions, and the level of Iranian support for Shi'ite militias rose significantly.

Sadr and the Mahdi Army

Members of Sadr's Mahdi Army clashed with US and Iraqi forces on April 6 and 7, 2007 in the southern town of Diwaniya. The US was conducting missions aimed at capturing Mahdi Army fighters when militiamen began attacking the US troops. Spokesman for Sadr insisted that the militiamen were acting out of self-defense and were not defying Sadr's order to stand down. Some 39 suspected militiamen were detained, and several were killed in the two day battle for control of the town. The Iraqi forces involved in the operation were generally believed to be loyal to SCIRI.³⁹³

Sadr issued a statement the day after major fighting ended in Diwaniya and the city was still under a 24-hour curfew. He said, "We see what is happening in Diwaniya of preplanned troubles to drag brothers into fighting and struggle and even killing. My brothers of the Imam al Mahdi Army, my brothers in the security forces, enough fighting among you. This is giving success to our enemy's plans."³⁹⁴

Tens of thousands of Iraqi Shi'ites traveled to Najaf to mark the fourth anniversary of the ouster of Saddam Hussein and called for US forces to withdraw from Iraq. Sadr had organized the event, although his whereabouts were still unknown. Many of the protesters said they were part of the Mahdi Army, and that the only thing stopping them from attacking US forces was Sadr's word.³⁹⁵ The streets into Najaf were blocked in order to prevent car bombings, and the protest took place without any major incidents. There were reports that Mahdi militiamen had clashed with Iraqi police who were trying to prevent them from traveling to Najaf.³⁹⁶ The same day as the protest, Sadr issued a statement condemning the continued US troop presence. He also urged Iraqis not to fight each other because he said that was what the US wanted. Sadr said, "God ordered you to be patient and to unite your efforts against the enemy and not against the sons of Iraq. They want to drag you into a war that ends Shi'ism and Islam, but they cannot."³⁹⁷

Muqtada al-Sadr emerged after almost four months of hiding, and delivered a speech on May 25 in the holy city of Kufa in the Najaf province, in which he criticized the Iraqi government for not providing services, appealed to his followers to stop fighting with the Iraqi security forces, and reached out to Sunni Arabs. Sadr opened his speech, chanting, "No, no for Satan. No, no for America. No, no for the occupation. No, no for Israel." Sadr's speech called for a withdrawal of occupation forces or the creation of a timetable for such a withdrawal, demanding that the Iraqi government not extend the occupation "even for a single day." "To our Iraqi Sunni brothers," al-Sadr said, "I say that the occupation sows dissension among us and that strength is unity and division is weakness... I'm read to cooperate with them [Sunnis] in all fields."³⁹⁸

Divisions in the Sadr Movement

Moqtada al-Sadr continued to stand down his Mahdi Army and allow the US to conduct operations in Sadr City and other Shi'ite dominated areas. He did, however, continue to oppose

the US troop presence and called for immediate withdrawal. He seemed caught between his political role in the Maliki government and his street credibility with his Shi'ite followers.

On June 12, Lt. Col. Garver, military spokesman in Baghdad, said, "We have seen a fracturing of Jaysh al Mahdi in the last few months. We see elements acting on their own. He may be trying to prevent that. It could be a positive thing for Iraq, the coalition and the Iraqi people or it could be a negative thing, depending on how these new leaders are going to behave."³⁹⁹

Mahdi Army commanders acknowledged in early April 2007 that some of the militiamen were defecting and joining with "rogue" militia leaders because they opposed Sadr's ceasefire. If the Sunni insurgency continued to kill Shi'ites in bombings, Mahdi commanders risked losing control over the militiamen, which would lead to renewed sectarian killings and severely hamper the still new Baghdad security plan. As the Muqtada al-Sadr shifted his policy toward embracing Shiite and Sunni moderates and rejecting extremist elements of the Mahdi army, renegade members of the Mahdi army continued sectarian attacks against Sunnis and coalition forces.

Senior leaders of the Sadr movement also worried that these defecting fighters were traveling to Iran for training, and could potentially clash with Sadr loyalists when they returned. One Mahdi commander acknowledged, "It has happened. Iran has approached people. Iran has paid money for people to attack US soldiers. The order didn't come from us." He added that eight Mahdi members had been fired recently for disobeying Sadr's command to stand down.⁴⁰⁰

For example, in May members of the Mahdi Army in the Hurriyah district of Baghdad chased several Sunni families out of their homes. In response, Sadr's committee based in Najaf, which was created to deal with rogue elements of the Mahdi Army, dismissed 30 militiamen in the area. Across Baghdad, at least 600 fighters have been dismissed from end of February to the middle of May, Sadr officials said. Muqtada al-Sadr replaced 11 local leaders of his movement in south and west Baghdad, after leaders from the Bayaa and Amil neighborhoods acted without orders from Sadr, attempting to rid their neighborhoods of Sunni Muslims. Sadr's top aide, Salah al Obaidi, said, "Sayend Muqtada refuses all kinds of violence and he refuses to answer violence with violence."⁴⁰¹

In another instance, on May 22, a car bomb killed thirty people in a Shiite neighborhood, Amil, prompting dozens of Mahdi Army fighters came to assist the victims, some firing guns into the air and swearing revenge. A few hours later, Mahdi Army fighters entered the neighborhood of Bayaa and kidnapped a few Sunni residents. That evening Sunni insurgents fired mortar rounds and rocket-propelled grenades into Amil. Gen. Qanbar said that many of the Shiite militias that have resumed fighting "are being pushed by outside forces."⁴⁰² Haider Salaam, a senior Mahdi Army commander in Hurriya referred to the actions of the rogue elements of the militia, saying, "Yes, this was self-defense, but they exceeded the orders of the commander. Any breach of the security operations will be blamed on the Mahdi Army."⁴⁰³

Internal Shi'ite Tensions

Clashes between rivaling Shi'ite militias erupted intermittently. In early May, a dispute at a police checkpoint led to heightened tensions between Sadr's Mahdi Army and the SCIRI's Badr Organization. Iraqi police in Najaf, most of whom are affiliated with SCIRI, stopped one of Sadr's top aides at a checkpoint. The aide protested his detention at the checkpoint, and Mahdi militiamen soon appeared in the streets of Najaf. Members of the Badr organization and the

police exchanged mortar rounds and some gunfire with the rival militia, but there were no reports of casualties. The tension spread north to Sadr City, Baghdad, where a local SCIRI office was attacked with mortars. Politicians from the two Shi'ite blocs also exchanged accusations at Parliament meetings the following day.⁴⁰⁴ The incident underscored the complexity of the ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq.

Khadimiyah

Shiite religious and militia leaders have consolidated control in Kadhimiya, a predominately Shiite district of Baghdad. Despite its position along the Sunni-dominated west bank of the Tigris River, attacks in Kadhimiya are relatively infrequent. While a Sunni may be killed in Kadhimiya if he is not under the protection of a resident, Shiites find the district to be a sanctuary. At least 2,000 Shiite families have fled to Kadhimiya.⁴⁰⁵

The Mahdi Army helps keep the area secure through “street justice” and a network of informal courts. The Mahdi Army controls most of the district, except a southern area which is controlled by the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq, formerly known as SCIRI. According to American officials, Mahdi Army members extort money from businesses and doctors in Kadhimiya in exchange for protection. They also try to enforce strict Koranic values by raiding gambling dens or attacking alcohol vendors. Loyalties to factions change on a day-by-day and block-by-block basis, causing militia leaders, politicians, criminals and clerics to vie among each other for influence.⁴⁰⁶

Lt. Col. Steven M. Miska, deputy commander of the Second Brigade, First Infantry Division, charged with controlling northwest Baghdad, said, “The militia influence undermines the rule of law.” The concentration of militia rule in Kadhimiya has encouraged popular distrust of the Iraqi forces in the area. A Sadr loyalist was recently nominated to lead the Iraqi Army battalion in the neighborhood. According to American officers, the loyalist had only served in the Iraqi forces for a few weeks, and currently maintains ties with the Sadr militia. On April 29, Iraqi forces in Kadhimiya allegedly passed weapons to Sadr militiamen in order to fire on American troops who had laid siege to the main Sadr mosque. The following day, the Iraqi parliament voted to bar American troops from approaching the Kadhimiya mosque within 1,000 meters. Prime Minister Maliki did not sign the resolution.⁴⁰⁷

SCIRI's nominal drift from Iran

On May 13, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq announced that the word “revolution” would be dropped from its name and that Iran's top cleric would no longer reign as the party's dominant spiritual leader. This change represented a recent move among the party's leaders to shore up support among Iraqi nationalists and US officials. Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, a Supreme Council leader in the Parliament and a hard-line cleric said, “There is no need to talk about revolution anymore... The word means change, and we have achieved the changes through the Constitution.” It is still unclear whether this nominal change may represent a more significant shift in the party's political platform. For example, the Council continues to advocate a form of government that would allow clerics to override elected leaders, and has not renounced its ties to Iran.⁴⁰⁸

X. The Kurdish Dimension: Compromise or Time Bomb?

The Kurds played an increasingly important role in shaping the future of Iraq, as well as creating the potential for more serious civil conflict. 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.

Qubad Talibani, Kurdistan's representative to the U.S., told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February that "National reconciliation can never be reached unless the status of Kirkuk is resolved... [A delay] will only raise the risk of a situation erupting out of control... The grim reality is that whether we tackle this issue now, or 10 years from now, the final outcome will still be messy... The longer we delay the process, the greater the tensions will become and the uglier the fallout will be."⁴⁰⁹

The Issue of Kirkuk

Violence in Kirkuk continued to escalate as the July 2007 census date approached. For example, on April 2, 2007 a suicide bomber exploded his truck at a police station near an elementary school, killing fifteen and wounding 87, including schoolgirls.⁴¹⁰ Various sources described the security crisis and ethnic tensions in Kirkuk in the spring of 2007 as a "mini-Baghdad." In reality, however, ethnic conflict in Kirkuk had been steadily escalating since 2003, but had been repeatedly overlooked as part of the calmer northern Iraq region of "Kurdistan."

Lt. Col. Michael Browder said that tensions are high in Kirkuk and single attack with mass casualties would be enough to spark clashes. Browder said, "Everybody's right on the envelope." In such a scenario, Kurds could clash with Sunni and Shiite Arabs who are already warring with each other, and neighboring Turkey could potentially invade to protect Kirkuk's Turkish residents. Additionally, instability in the northern region that accounts for approximately 40% of Iraq's oil production would potentially damage the economy for years. "It's a long-term, 1,000-year distrust of each other," says Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, commander of U.S. forces in northern Iraq. "We have to try to build some bridges (as) best we can. But at the end of the day, it's going to be up to (them) to figure out how to make it work."⁴¹¹

Lt. Col. Michael Browder said that a large-scale bomb attack on a Kurdish civilian target would trigger Kurdish leaders to send Peshmerga battalions into Arab areas of Kirkuk, igniting a sectarian battle similar to that between Sunni and Shiite Arabs in Baghdad. Though in late April a Kurdish family of four were killed in their home, the Kurdish response has so far been restrained. Army Lt. Col. Sam Whitehurst, deputy commander of the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, which oversees the Kirkuk area explains the limited Kurdish response as a concern for international support. The Kurds know that if they respond in kind to such acts, they would lose their ability to claim international support for the Kurdish control of Kirkuk.⁴¹²

Howard Keegan and Kt. Col. Chris Brady, of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk, said that there may be tension among groups in Kirkuk, but "for the most part there is no more than in any multiparty system that lends itself to political squabbles in hopes of obtaining strategic advantage for a bloc... Many people in Kirkuk get along with each other – regardless of their sect or ethnicity – and intermarriage is common."⁴¹³

The Sarha bridge, one of the busiest bridges linking Baghdad with Kirkuk, was severely damaged on June 2. The attack appeared to be an attempt by Sunni insurgents to isolate Kirkuk. Salah al-Mufaraji, a tribal leader who lives near the bridge, said that groups affiliated with Al Qaeda in Iraq carried out the bombing. “Gunmen move through the area freely amid the absence of the government and because the security forces can’t control the area,” Mr. Mufaraji said of the area near the Sarha bridge. “All the people living here have announced allegiance to Al Qa’ida out of fear and because they can’t confront it.”⁴¹⁴

A Crisis Group report in mid April described the security challenges in Kirkuk as follows:⁴¹⁵

Today Kirkuk resembles Baghdad in miniature, with shops shuttered in the normally teeming downtown market area, and Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans and Chaldo-Assyrians hunkered down in neighborhoods which, while not entirely segregated, are distinctly hostile to members of whatever community happens to be the minority. Violence at first predominated downtown, where communities commingled, as well as in areas inhabited by the Wafidin (Arab “newcomers” settled in Kirkuk as part of previous regimes’ Arabisation campaigns). But in February 2007 it moved into the heart of Kurdish neighborhoods as if to show that the Kurdish parties’ control over Kirkuk’s security apparatus did not guarantee safety for the Kurdish civilian population

The Referendum Problem

Despite calls from Arabs, other ethnic minorities, and Turkey, Kurds continued to push for the referendum at the end of 2007 – a debate in which the US was largely absent. The referendum on inclusion into the northern region of “Kurdistan” was included as Article 140 in the Iraqi Constitution, which itself was based off of the 2004 Transitional Administration Law. Art. 140 of the Constitution detailed a three step process on the Kirkuk issue: normalization, census, and reformation.

Sheik Hussein Ali Salih, a Sunni Arab leader from the western part of Kirkuk said that a referendum would result in “apartheid” and that “we [Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk] will never accept it... We will stand very strongly against it with all the means we have.” Turkmen in Kirkuk complain about being marginalized by the Kurdish majority.⁴¹⁶

Opponents to the referendum argued that the events since 2004 necessitated postponing the December 2007 deadline. As the Crisis Group report describes, the Kurds and their opponents became obsessed with a “numbers game” as the time progressed:⁴¹⁷

The fiercest disputes concern the alleged influx of Kurds (including non-Iraqis, according to the Kurds’ detractors), and the alleged expulsion of Arabs. The fact that there appears to be no strong evidence of either new Kurdish arrivals (the opposite may even be true) or fresh Arab departures is, in this inflamed context, immaterial.

Technically, the “normalization” process had to be completed before either the census or referendum could take place. Normalization was created to reverse the demographic trend created during Saddam Hussein’s “Arabization” campaign that forced hundreds of thousands of Kurds out for the city. The issue, however, was that many of the Arabs relocated to Kirkuk in the previous decades (Wafidin) – the majority of whom were Shi’ites – did not take the monetary incentive offered to leave Kirkuk.

The Crisis Group described the general Kurdish approach to normalization:⁴¹⁸

The Kurds, while expressing anger over past sufferings at the hands of Wafidin who served in the security apparatus, have acted with restraint since returning in April 2003 to the city and other areas to which they lay claim. Expulsions occurred in some of these areas (for example,

Khanaqin),¹⁰ but they have been the exception and may well be attributed, as Kurdish leaders maintain, to overzealous local commanders who were subsequently reined in (albeit not punished). Instead, the Kurdish approach has been to nudge out the Wafidin by making them feel unwelcome and depriving them of jobs, while plying them with offer of money and gifts of land elsewhere in Iraq. (The money and land are supposed to be provided by the Iraqi government.) As one Kirkuki politician said: “Those who came here for money are likely to leave for money as well”...

Some have accused the Kurds of inducing Wafidin to leave through a campaign of intimidation and detention. The reality seems closer to a Kurdish effort to create an environment in which the Wafidin no longer feel welcome in Kirkuk. Whatever their methods, Kurdish leaders have made clear that while they may not be able to push out all the Wafidin, they intend to deprive those who remain of the right to vote in Kirkuk.

In August 2006, Prime Minister Maliki created a committee to implement Article 140, but it failed to agree on any major issues, with the exception of providing monetary compensation to those Wafidin who agreed to leave Kirkuk and annulling land given to the Wafidin during “Arabization” (the Committee notably lacked a representative from the Wafidin community). These proposals encountered problems, however, when the Parliament in Baghdad called the measures “unconstitutional.” The Shi’ite United Iraqi Alliance was deeply divided on the issue: SCIRI largely normalization – in return for Kurdish support of a Shi’ite southern region – but the other Shi’ite parties largely opposed the measures.

Another element of normalization was the debate over whether or not to include districts in the proposed Kirkuk province than had been severed during “Arabization”. These districts were ethnically Kurdish and the Kurds favored their inclusion, but the minorities were strictly opposed. The Committee had made no progress on the issue as of April 2007.

In April al-Maliki’s government agreed to pay \$15,000 to each Arab family relocated from Kirkuk. According to the U.S. military, thousands of families applied for the package but none of them have received compensation.⁴¹⁹

Despite the lack of progress on normalization, the Kurds continued to push the referendum. The two largest minorities, the Arabs and Turkomans, opposed it and some factions threatened violence if the Kurds proceeded as planned. The main complaints of these minorities were that the Kurds were manipulating them and did not plan on giving them much say or protection in the proposed Kurdish constitution.

If the Kurds do not back down from the November 2007 referendum, it is unclear who will have the right to vote or what exactly the question on the ballot would be. Further, the US has largely remained uninvolved, to the dismay of Turkey. The timeline for addressing the problem at a logistical level was very tight, and the security situation in Kirkuk was likely to exacerbate the challenges.

The Crisis Group report explained that the stakes of failure were very high. Sectarian violence had the potential to draw fighters from the Kurdish Peshmerga, Shi’ite militias, the Sunni insurgency, and potentially Turkey. Moreover, the Kurdish leadership would most likely blame dissent and inaction in Baghdad for the crisis, and could withdraw from the coalition government.

The Turkish Question

Tensions between Turkey and the Kurdish north of Iraq escalated in the first week of April, peaking in the first week of June, when 15,000 to 20,000 Turkish troops were stationed at the

border. The State Department classifies the PKK as a “foreign terrorist organization” and says that it killed over 500 people in Turkey in 2006. In April and May of 2007, 30 Turkish soldiers were killed in attacks by Kurdish rebels.⁴²⁰ Turkey had previously threatened to take direct action against Kurdistan if the lives of the ethnic Turks in Kirkuk were threatened. Turkey also accused the KRG of allowing the Kurdish guerilla group, the PKK, to carry out operations in southeastern Turkey. The Turkish army estimates close to 4,000 Peshmerga troops in Iraq with more than 2,000 in the mountains on the Turkish side of the boarder.⁴²¹ Other estimates claim approximately 3,400 Kurdish rebels live in the mountainous region of northern Iraq.

In early April, the leader of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Massoud Barzani, angered Turkey when he said, “Turkey is not allowed to interfere in the Kirkuk issue, and if it does, we will interfere in Diyarbakir’s affairs and other cities in Turkey.” Kirkuk is a majority ethnic Turkoman city in northern Iraq, while Diyarbakir is a majority Kurdish city in southeastern Turkey. Barzani added, “There are 30 million Kurds in Turkey, and we don’t interfere there. If the Turks interfere in Kirkuk over just thousands of Turkmen, then we will take action for the 30 million Kurds in Turkey.” Turkish Prime Minister responded to Barzani by saying that he had “exceeded the limits” and would be “crushed by his own words.” The US also stated that Barzani’s comments were not particularly “helpful” in amending relations between northern Iraq and Turkey. The statements by Barzani also contributed to a decision to move the second meeting of an international conference on Iraq from Istanbul to Egypt.⁴²²

On April 9, Turkish officials demanded that the Iraqi government capture and hand over members of the PKK and other groups linked to attacks against Turkish targets, and put the PKK on its list of terror organizations.⁴²³ Turkish Chief of General Staff, Yasar Buyukanit said on April 12, 2007 that “from the military point of view, an operation in northern Iraq must be made.” Prime Minister Erdogan did not comment on the General’s statement, but it did provoke criticism and calls for calm from the European Commission and the US.⁴²⁴ According to the Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Levent Billman, on May 12 Iraqi government officials affirmed “its intention to cooperate on the issue of PKK terrorism.”⁴²⁵

In late May two attacks on Turkish targets were attributed to the PKK. On May 22, a suicide bomb in Ankara killed six people and injured 60. On May 24, a remote-controlled landmine in the Sirnak province in southeast Turkey killed Turkish soldiers. Following these attacks Prime Minister Erdogan announced that he would support any Turkish military incursion in Iraq against the PKK and secure parliamentary authorization if the Turkish army sought to carry out such a border operation.⁴²⁶ On May 28, Mahmoud Qadir Qassab, a prominent newspaper editor and Turkmen advocate, was killed in the town of Mossalah.⁴²⁷

In late May, the Turkish government authorized the army to draft a plan for a major incursion into Iraq to destroy Kurdish rebel bases there “once and for all,” to take place either before or after Turkey’s July 22 parliamentary elections.⁴²⁸ The Turkish government accused the United States of having a “double standard” in the war on terror for refusing to address the PKK bases in Iraq.⁴²⁹ Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan took issue with the seemingly exclusive U.S. policy toward Arab insurgents, saying, “If the terrorist organization is based in northern Iraq, then the United States must fulfill its responsibility [to eradicate terrorism].”⁴³⁰ However, Prime Minister al-Maliki argued that the issue was Iraq’s, and discouraged Turkey against military incursions into northern Iraq to eradicate the PKK, saying, ‘If there are some problems, we should not rely on weapons and threats, or use violence and power because this will increase tension and deepen

problems.” Abdullah Gul, Turkish foreign minister, said that Turkey had “every right to take measures against terrorist activities directed at us from northern Iraq.”⁴³¹

In Kirkuk on June 2, Murat Karayilan, commander of the PKK, said the group would resist any Turkish military incursion. “No one should expect us to extend our necks as sheep to be slaughtered in the face of an attack aimed at destroying us,” he said. However, analysts said that the PKK would most likely hide in cave complexes in northern Iraq, or run deeper into Iraq.⁴³²

On June 4, Kurdish militants attacked a Turkish army post, killing seven Turkish troops and wounding seven others. Other reports say eight soldiers were killed. That same day, militants detonated a remote-controlled roadside bomb near Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, injuring six soldiers.⁴³³

Despite a warning given on June 4 by Defense Secretary Robert Gates against Turkish invasion, on June 5, thousands of Turkish soldiers crossed the Turkey-Iraq border in pursuit of members of the PKK. Iraq’s foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, denied allegations that Turkish soldiers crossed over, though they continued to amass on the border.⁴³⁴ Despite this denial, two news agencies cited sources within the Turkish military that a cross-border attack had occurred.⁴³⁵

On June 7, a roadside bomb killed three Turkish soldiers and wounded six in one of the several “temporary security zones” erected by the Turkish military along the Iraqi border.⁴³⁶ Turkey shelled suspected Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq on June 7, according to Iraqi Kurdish officials.⁴³⁷

On June 9 the Iraqi Foreign Ministry formally demanded that Turkey stop firing artillery shells into Kurdish territory in northern Iraq. Muhammad al-Haj Mahmoud of the Foreign Ministry wrote in protest against the shelling, saying it was starting “huge fires” and frightening people in the provinces of Dahuk and Erbil.⁴³⁸ The Turkish Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan took a public stance against military incursions into northern Iraq on June 12. Mr. Erdogan emphasized that Turkey should fight the PKK on its own soil.⁴³⁹

Analysts speculate that if the PKK are allowed to continue attacking Turkish targets, the Turkish military could use it as a pretext to stage a larger invasion aimed at preventing the Iraqi Kurds’ claim to full independence.⁴⁴⁰

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.

Several outside states convened at a conference on Iraq in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt on May 4, 2007. The conference, the International Compact with Iraq and the Iraq Neighbors Ministerial, was the second in a series of international discussions aimed at creating a more stable Iraq. Iraq's neighbors - Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syrian, Iran, and Kuwait – the US, and several other countries attended.⁴⁴¹ The participating countries agreed to make commitments to undertake more than \$30 billion dollars in Iraqi debt relief.

The fact remained, however, that outside states played only a limited positive role, and one where good intentions (or statements thereof) were far more common than good actions.

Continued Tensions with Syria

Syria continued to be accused of allowing safe haven to Sunni insurgents and allowing foreign fighters to cross the border throughout the war. The country remains an important center for the former Iraqi regime. In an interview with US News and World Report, General Petraeus reiterated Syria's "unhelpful" role in fighting the insurgency; "It is a fact that foreign fighters come in through Syria... and that various insurgent groups have their political headquarters, if you will, inside Syria."⁴⁴² In an interview on June 20, Gen. Petraeus estimated about 80 al-Qa'ida fighters enter Iraq from Syria every month.⁴⁴³ However, recent improvement on border control on the part of the Syrian government was noted in the June 2007 Department of Defense Quarterly Report.⁴⁴⁴

Senior Syrian officials also began to express their private concerns over the fact Syria now had some 1.4 million Iraqi refugees, most Sunni. They saw a growing strain on the Syrian economy and a growing risk that Sunni Islamist extremism, terrorism, and support for the Muslim Brotherhood could damage Syria's security. There was also a growing understanding that backing Sunni insurgents of any kind was unlikely to bring Syria any kind of lasting victory, and that Syria did not face a serious threat of any form of US military action. Some senior Syrian officials saw Iran as a growing potential rival, and others that it would help ensure an unstable Iraqi state on Syria's borders. The lack of political dialog on the part of the US and Syria, however, made it difficult to determine what levels of cooperation might be achieved.

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

There were few ambiguities or uncertainties regarding growing Iranian ties to Shi'ite militias and hostile elements in Iraq. 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.

In his interview with US News, General Petraeus said of Iranian involvement in Iraq, "It's a fact that Iran has been fueling some of the very, very lethal activities on the Shi'a side through the provision of money, advanced weapons, and training." Petraeus also said that US and Iraqi forces had captured to rogue Mahdi Army militiamen, Laith and Qais Khazali, who led a group of 3,000 fighters that had received training in Iran. Petraeus said, "We learned an enormous amount about [Iranian activities] during the interrogation of the Khazali brothers and the materials that were captured with them..."⁴⁴⁵

Iranian Arms Transfers to Iraqi Militias and Extremists

U.S. intelligence found that Iran shipped 107mm mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, C-4 explosives and small arms to Iraqi insurgent groups in March, and that the country increased arms shipments to Iraq's Shiite insurgent groups at the end of May. According to intelligence reports, Iranian paramilitaries began to assist Sunni insurgent groups in order to step up confrontations with U.S. troops as well.⁴⁴⁶

Iranian 240mm rockets were used at the end of May by Shiite extremists against U.S. and British troops in Basra and Baghdad. Three of the rockets were used against U.S. facilities in the Green Zone. Tehran's efforts to supply the Shiite insurgency are organized under an Iranian government group, Department 9000, part of the elite Quds Force of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.⁴⁴⁷ The Department is a liaison between insurgents in Iraq and the IRGC.⁴⁴⁸

In late 2006, Bush authorized U.S. forces to root out IRGC-Quds forces and suspected Department 9000 secret operatives in Iraq. The crackdown reduced the number of IED attacks attributable to suspected weapons of Iranian origin or design.⁴⁴⁹ Two U.S. military raids in December and January secured seven Quds Force operatives, including two top commanders. The five mid-level operatives were captured in Irbil in January and remained in U.S. custody, while the Iraqi government continued to pressure U.S. officials to release the two senior commanders captured in Baghdad.⁴⁵⁰

US accusations against Iranian weapon smuggling increased as the security plan escalated. US military spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said on April 11, 2007 that the military had intelligence that Iran was training Iraqi militias in both Iran and Iraq. Those militias that traveled to Iraq for training had received instruction on how to make explosively formed penetrators (EFPs). Caldwell stated, "There has been training on specialized weapons that are used here in Iraq. And then we do know they receive also training on general tactics of how to take and employ and work what we call a more complex kind of attack where we see multiple types of engagements being used from an explosive to small arms fire to being done in multiple places." Caldwell did not specify who in Iran was doing the training, but said they were "surrogates" of the Iranian intelligence agency.⁴⁵¹

On May 13 the White House confirmed that the Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker will meet in the next several weeks with Iranian officials regarding the stability of Iraq. Spokesman for the National Security Council, Gordon D. Johndroe, said that, "The president authorized this channel because we must take every step possible to stabilize Iraq and reduce the risk to our troops, even as our military continue to act against hostile Iranian-backed activity in Iraq."⁴⁵²

On May 18 U.S. troops captured six men suspected of smuggling materials to form EFP's (Explosively Formed Penetrators). The military said in a statement that the group was known for

“facilitating the transport of weapons and explosively formed penetrators, or EFP’s, from Iran to Iraq, as well as bringing militants from Iraq to Iran for terrorist training.”⁴⁵³

On May 19, U.S. Special Operations forces killed Sheikh Azhar al-Dulaymi in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Dulaymi was a Shiite insurgent leader responsible for the Jan. 20 attack that killed five American troops. According to internal military documents Dulaymi was trained by Hezbollah and linked to Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Bush administration said that it cannot yet prove that Iran’s mullahs or President Ahmedinejad have directed the Guard Corps to send special forces or powerful roadside bombs into Iraq, but Dulaymi’s direct connection with Tehran and Hezbollah indicates a degree Iranian involvement that was previously unknown. Robert Maginnis, a retired Army officer and military analyst said, “Clearly, Dulaymi was doing Iran’s bidding.”⁴⁵⁴

President Bush approved an order in late May, authorizing the CIA to use covert methods to aggravate the Iranian regime.⁴⁵⁵ The target of the covert action is Iran’s nuclear weapons program and to stem Iranian support for insurgent groups in Iraq.⁴⁵⁶

In an interview with the London Times on June 20, Gen. Petraeus said that since the summer of 2004, Iran has played a “very, very important role in training in Iran, funding and arming” militias and insurgents in Iraq. He said, “This is lethal stuff, like EFPs, mortars, and rockets that are being used against the Basra Palace. There is also a degree of direction, not in a strategic way but in tactical operations. We captured a wealth of documentation which showed how they account for what they have done, we assume so they can get paid for it, and get additional funding.”⁴⁵⁷

General Petraeus also said that he believed that the kidnapping of British citizens from the Green Zone was carried out by a “secret cell of Jaish al-Mahdi, not all of which are under control of Muqtada al-Sadr.” Petraeus said, “They are trained in Iran, equipped with Iranian (weapons), and advised by Iran.”⁴⁵⁸

On May 26, in Sadr City, U.S. and Iraqi forces arrested a suspected leader of a terror cell with ties to Iran, who allegedly smuggled weapons from Iran to Iraq and took Iraqis to Iran for training.⁴⁵⁹ Military raids in Sadr city rounded up 16 people on June 7, suspected of smuggling weapons from Iran and sending militants to Iran for training.⁴⁶⁰ Sadr said on June 7, that Tehran and the Mahdi Armi had “friendship and good relations with Iran, but nothing else.”⁴⁶¹

In early July, Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner said that Tehran was using Hezbollah in Iraq as a proxy to carry out attacks, and train and arm Shi’ite militants. Bergner asserted that Hezbollah was receiving aid from Iran’s elite Quds Force. Bergner said that Hezbollah did not seem to have a strong presence in Iraq, but that it was “being used specifically as a proxy by the Quds Force.”⁴⁶² On March 20, Ali Mussa Dakdouk, a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative was captured in Iraq along with Qais al-Khazaali, the leader of an offshoot of the Mahdi Army, and Ali al-Khazaali, his brother. Bergner asserted that al-Khazaali’s group, with the help of the Quds Forces, was responsible for carrying out the Karbala attack that took place in January, killing one American immediately and abducted and killed four others.⁴⁶³

Bergner also claimed that Iraqis were taken to Iran in groups of 20 to 60 for training in three camps near Iran, and that senior leadership in Iran was aware of this. Bergner said that since February, 18 “higher-level operatives” from al-Khazaali’s group had been arrested and three others killed.⁴⁶⁴

International Support and the Spread of the Insurgency

Officials said that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia received an increasing amount of contributions from Muslims throughout the world who are mobilized by the fight against the United States in Iraq. A senior counter-terrorism official said that al-Qa'ida's "success in Iraq and Afghanistan is the reason people are contributing money again, with money and private contributions coming back in from the Gulf."⁴⁶⁵ U.S. officials said that al-Qa'ida's command base in Pakistan is increasingly being funded by donations to the anti-American insurgency in Iraq, as well as cash obtained through criminal activity such as the kidnapping of wealthy Iraqis.⁴⁶⁶

The insurgency is not only being funded by groups abroad, but those networks are formally and informally supporting the dissemination of tactics, information, and manpower outside of Iraq's borders. In April 2007, Saudi government officials arrested 172 men, some of them who appeared to have been trained in Iraq, and who planned to attack oil installations, public officials and military posts. European officials reported trying to monitor small numbers of Muslim men who have returned from traveling in Iraq, where they were suspected of fighting alongside insurgents.⁴⁶⁷

On May 20, the leader of Fatah al Islam, Shakir al-Abassi, led attacks on Lebanese forces in a refugee camp near Tripoli. Al-Abassi has connections to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Fatah al-Islam includes as many as 50 militants who previously fought in the Iraq insurgency. Dr. Mohammad al-Massari, a Saudi dissident in Britain who runs the Internet forum, Tajdeed.net, said, "You have 50 fighters from Iraq in Lebanon now, but with good caution I can say there are a hundred times that many, 5,000 or higher, who are just waiting for the right moment to act... The flow of fighters is already going back and forth, and the fight will be everywhere until the United States is willing to cease and desist."⁴⁶⁸

On May 28, Spanish police arrested 16 men, most of them Moroccans, who were suspected of spreading propaganda calling for Islamic jihad and recruiting volunteers to fight in Iraq and other countries. Spanish officials say that the videos made by groups linked to or inspired by al-Qa'ida indicated that Spain is a target of Islamic extremists. Terrorism experts see Spain's fast-growing Moroccan population of more than half a million, to be a potential pool for militant groups and a financing hub for such groups.⁴⁶⁹

Instructional videos and electronic newsletters put out by Iraqi insurgents were discovered on the internet, describing techniques for building weapons such as booby-trapped bombs and surface-to-air missiles. Also, tactics common in Iraq are appearing in areas such as Somalia and Algeria.

XII. Drawdown vs. Long Stay: The Future of US Forces in Iraq

In late May, the White House began searching for a “post-surge” strategy that would involve a smaller number of U.S. troops in Iraq, performing missions aimed at fighting al-Qa’ida and training Iraqi forces. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates explained that the Department of Defense was developing a transition strategy that would “train, equip, continue to go after al-Qaeda and provide support... That kind of a role clearly would involve fewer forces than we have now, and forces with a different mission.”⁴⁷¹

Bush Administration officials said the scenarios that they were considering calling for a reduction in troop levels by about 100,000 between the spring and winter of 2008. One idea would be to cut the current 20 U.S. combat brigades to about 10.⁴⁷² President Bush reported that he was considering the strategies suggested by the Iraq Study Group. The Baker-Hamilton plan called for the gradual withdrawal of more than 50,000 troops of the 150,000 currently deployed. It also called for refocusing the mission to train the Iraqi army, fight al-Qa’ida, and defend the Iraqi border from incursions by its neighbors.⁴⁷³ The Iraq Study Group’s prescriptions “appeal to me,” the president said, referring to the suggested military shift from combating insurgents to training Iraqi security forces while hunting down high-value al-Qa’ida terrorists.⁴⁷⁴

In late May, Pentagon officials studied ways in which U.S. forces would be able to shift from a combat-oriented mission to one focused on support roles and requiring fewer troops. Gen Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that such a transition was among changes that could occur after Gen. Petraeus releases his report in September.⁴⁷⁵ U.S. military leaders discussed a future plan including three or four major U.S. bases in Iraq, outside of crowded urban areas, including Al Asad in Anbar, Balad Air Base north of Baghdad, and Tallil Air Base in the south.⁴⁷⁶ One senior official said, “They are all places we could fly in and out of without putting Americans on every street corner. And our mission would be very different – making sure that Al Qaeda doesn’t turn Iraq into a base the way it turned Afghanistan into one.”⁴⁷⁷

On May 30, White House spokesman Tony Snow announced that President George W. Bush was considering a model for long-term U.S. troop presence in Iraq, similar to that in South Korea. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Ordierno both said on May 31 that they favor a prolonged U.S. Military presence in Iraq, similar to the stabilization force placed in South Korea. Gates said he envisions a “mutual agreement” with the Iraqi government that allows for “some force of Americans... present for a protracted period of time, but in ways that are protective of the sovereignty of” Iraq. Tony Snow, White House spokesman for President George W. Bush, said that in such an arrangement, Iraqi forces would provide the majority of security, but U.S. Troops would be deployed in support roles deemed “over-the-horizon,” allowing them to “react quickly to major challenges or crises.” Snow said that President Bush was not suggesting a 50-year deployment of U.S. Troops, identical to that of South Korea’s U.S. Military presence, but that a specified duration of stay is “unanswerable.”⁴⁷⁸

U.S commanders envisioned a reinforced mechanized infantry division of approximately 20,000 soldiers at the center of a post-surge operation in Iraq, who would enforce security of the Iraqi government, and assist Iraqi troops and their U.S. advisors. The mechanized infantry division would be complemented by a training and advisory force of 10,000 who would work with Iraqi security forces. In addition, a limited but important Special Operations unit would focus on fighting al-Qa’ida insurgents. The commanding and logistical elements to maneuver and supply such a force would require over 10,000 troops and additional civilian contractors.⁴⁷⁹

Many people were critical of the idea of a long stay in Iraq. Larry Diamond, a former official with the American provisional authority that governed Iraq from March 2003-2005, said, "This is a really bad idea, one that will only feed the image of the US as the occupier, the colonial power... There's now way long-term military bases are going to be acceptable to a majority of the Iraqi population." Diamond said that if the U.S. relinquished any plans for a prolonged military stay in Iraq, this move would ease tension in Iraq.⁴⁸⁰ Michael O'Hanlon, a military expert at the Brookings Institute, said, "This is the Bush administration wanting to send a message of resolve... If Iraqi leaders believe we are getting ready to leave, they are more likely to focus on preparing for a full-blown civil war and less on the steps needed for national reconciliation."⁴⁸¹

Despite pressure from Washington and other senior commanders for a drawdown of troops, Gen. Petraeus and Lt. Gen. Raymond Ordierno remained opposed to speeding a pull-back before January 2009. Ordierno said that a troop withdrawal would be dangerous before December, and at that time redeployments should only occur slowly. In late May, White House officials said that there is no concrete plan for troop redeployment, however that they foresaw a much-reduced but long-term U.S. presence in Iraq, centering on a few large bases.⁴⁸² Gen. Petraeus said on June 18, that the "many, many challenges" of securing Iraq could not be resolved in "a year or even two years," but that counterinsurgencies of this nature have historically taken "nine or 10 years" to resolve. Petraeus and Crocker assumed "some form of long-term security arrangement" with Iraq was to be expected.⁴⁸³

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