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Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security

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Summary

Operation Iraqi Freedom succeeded in overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime, but Iraq remains unstable because of Sunni Arab resentment and a related insurgency, compounded by Sunni-Shiite violence that some believe is a civil war. According to its November 30, 2005, "Strategy for Victory," the Bush Administration indicates that U.S. forces will remain in Iraq until the country is able to provide for its own security. President Bush has said he believes that, over the longer term, Iraq will become a model for reform throughout the Middle East and a partner in the global war on terrorism. However, mounting U.S. casualties and financial costs — without clear signs of security progress — have intensified a debate within the United States over the wisdom of the invasion and whether to wind down U.S. involvement without completely accomplishing U.S. goals.

President Bush, in several series of speeches since 2005, asserts that U.S. policy is showing important success, demonstrated by two elections (January and December 2005) that chose an interim and then a full-term parliament and government, a referendum that adopted a permanent constitution (October 15, 2005), progress in building Iraq's security forces, and economic growth. While continuing to build, equip, and train Iraqi security units, the Administration has been working to include more Sunni Arabs in the power structure, particularly the security institutions; Sunnis were dominant during the regime of Saddam Hussein but now feel marginalized by the newly dominant Shiite Arabs and Kurds.

However, other Administration officials, including senior military leaders, have begun to express less optimism about the situation in Iraq. Administration critics, including some in Congress, believe the U.S. mission in Iraq is failing and that major new initiatives are required. Some believe that U.S. counter-insurgent operations are hampered by an insufficient U.S. troop levels. Others maintain that sectarian violence is placing U.S. forces in the middle of an all out civil war in Iraq and that setting a timetable for withdrawal might force compromise among Iraqi factions. Others believe that a U.S. move to withdraw might undercut popular support for the insurgency. Still others maintain that the U.S. approach should focus not on counter-insurgent combat but on reconstruction and policing of towns and cities cleared of insurgents, including neighborhoods of Baghdad, an approach the Administration has adopted.

This report will be updated as warranted by major developments. See also CRS Report RS21968, *Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution*, by Kenneth Katzman; CRS Report RL31833, *Iraq: Recent Developments in Reconstruction Assistance*, by Curt Tarnoff; CRS Report RL31701, *Iraq: U.S. Military Operations*, by Steve Bowman; and CRS Report RL32105, *Post-War Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Training, Peacekeeping, and Reconstruction*, by Jeremy Sharp and Christopher Blanchard.

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Iraq has not previously had experience with a democratic form of government, although parliamentary elections were held during the period of British rule under a League of Nations mandate (from 1920 until Iraq's independence in 1932), and the monarchy of the Sunni Muslim Hashemite dynasty (1921-1958).[1] Iraq had been a province of the Ottoman empire until British forces defeated the Ottomans in World War I and took control of what is now Iraq in 1918. Britain had tried to take Iraq from the Ottomans in Iraq earlier in World War I but were defeated at Al Kut in 1916. Britain's presence in Iraq, which relied on Sunni Muslim Iraqis (as did the Ottoman administration), ran into repeated resistance, facing a major Shiite-led revolt in 1920 and a major anti-British uprising in 1941, during World War II. Iraq's first Hashemite king was Faysal bin Hussein, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca who, advised by British officer T.E Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"), led the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Faysal ruled Iraq as King Faysal I and was succeeded by his son, Ghazi, who was killed in a car accident in 1939. Ghazi was succeeded by his son, Faysal II, who was only four years old.

A major figure under the British mandate and the monarchy was Nuri As-Said, a pro-British, pro-Hashemite Sunni Muslim who served as prime minister 14 times during 1930-1958. Faysal II ruled until the military coup of Abd al-Karim al-Qasim on July 14, 1958. Qasim was ousted in February 1963 by a Baath Party-military alliance. Since that same year, the Baath Party has ruled in Syria, although there was rivalry between the Syrian and Iraqi Baath regimes during Saddam's rule. The Baath Party was founded in the 1940s by Lebanese Christian philosopher Michel Aflaq as a socialist, pan-Arab movement, the aim of which was to reduce religious and sectarian schisms among Arabs.

One of the Baath Party's allies in the February 1963 coup was Abd al-Salam al-Arif. In November 1963, Arif purged the Baath, including Baathist Prime Minister (and military officer) Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, and instituted direct military rule. Arif was killed in a helicopter crash in 1966 and was replaced by his elder brother, Abd al-Rahim al-Arif, who ruled until the Baath Party coup of July 1968. Following the Baath seizure, Bakr returned to government as President of Iraq and Saddam Hussein, a civilian, became the second most powerful leader as Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. In that position, Saddam developed overlapping security services to monitor loyalty among the population and within Iraq's institutions, including the military. On July 17, 1979, the aging al-Bakr resigned at

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[1] See Eisenstadt, Michael, and Eric Mathewson, eds, *U.S. Policy in Post-Saddam Iraq: Lessons from the British Experience*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003. Members of the Hashemite family rule neighboring Jordan.

Saddam's urging, and Saddam became President of Iraq. Under Saddam Hussein, secular Shiites held high party positions, but Sunnis, mostly from Saddam's home town of Tikrit, dominated the highest party and security positions. Saddam's regime repressed Iraq's Shiites after the February 1979 Islamic revolution in neighboring Iran partly because Iraq feared that Iraqi Shiite Islamist movements, emboldened by Iran, would try to establish an Iranian-style Islamic republic of Iraq.

Policy in the 1990s Emphasized Containment

Prior to the January 16, 1991, launch of Operation Desert Storm to reverse Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, President George H.W. Bush called on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam. That Administration decided not to militarily overthrow Saddam Hussein in the 1991 war because the United Nations had approved only the liberation of Kuwait, because the Arab states in the coalition opposed an advance to Baghdad, and because the Administration feared becoming bogged down in a high-casualty occupation.[2] Within days of the war's end (February 28, 1991), Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq and Kurds in northern Iraq, emboldened by the regime's defeat and the hope of U.S. support, rebelled. The Shiite revolt nearly reached Baghdad, but the mostly Sunni Muslim Republican Guard forces were pulled back into Iraq before engaging U.S. forces and were intact to suppress the rebels. Many Iraqi Shiites blamed the United States for not intervening to prevent suppression of the uprisings. Iraq's Kurds, benefitting from a U.S.-led "no fly zone" set up in April 1991, drove Iraqi troops out of much of northern Iraq and remained autonomous thereafter.

About two months after the failure of these uprisings, President George H.W. Bush reportedly sent Congress an intelligence finding that the United States would try to promote a military coup against Saddam Hussein. The Administration apparently believed that a coup from within the regime could produce a favorable government without fragmenting Iraq. After a reported July 1992 coup failed, there was a U.S. decision to shift to supporting the Kurdish, Shiite, and other oppositionists that were coalescing into a broad movement.[3]

Support for Iraq's opposition was one facet of broader U.S. policy to pressure Saddam Hussein. The main elements of U.S. containment policy during the 1990s consisted of U.N. Security Council-authorized weapons inspections, an international economic embargo, and U.S.-led enforcement of "no fly zones" over northern and southern Iraq. The implementation of these policies is discussed in CRS Report RL32379, *Iraq: Former Regime Weapons Programs, Human Rights Violations, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

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[2] Bush, George H.W., and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1998.

[3] Congress more than doubled the budget for covert support to the opposition groups to about $40 million for FY1993, from previous reported levels of about $15 million to $20 million. Sciolino, Elaine. "Greater U.S. Effort Backed To Oust Iraqi." *New York Times*, June 2, 1992.

Major Anti-Saddam Factions

Although U.S. policy after the 1991 war emphasized containment, the United States built ties to and progressively increased support for several of the secular and religious opposition factions discussed below. Some of these factions have provided major figures in post-Saddam politics, while also fielding militias that are allegedly conducting acts of sectarian reprisals in post-Saddam Iraq.

Secular Groups: Iraqi National Congress (INC) and Iraq National Accord (INA). In 1992, the two main Kurdish parties and several Shiite Islamist groups coalesced into the "Iraqi National Congress (INC)," on a platform of human rights, democracy, pluralism, and "federalism" (Kurdish autonomy). However, many observers doubted its commitment to democracy, because most of its groups have authoritarian leaderships. The INC's Executive Committee selected Ahmad Chalabi, a secular Shiite Muslim from a prominent banking family, to run the INC on a daily basis. Chalabi, who is about 67 years old, was educated in the United States (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) as a mathematician. As an Iraqi governance structure was established, Chalabi was one of the rotating presidents of the Iraq Governing Council (IGC). Since 2004, Chalabi has allied with and then fallen out with Shiite Islamist factions; he was one of three deputy prime ministers in the 2005 transition government, with a focus on economic issues. Chalabi temporarily served as Oil Minister in December 2005, and he reportedly continues to play a role in oil decisions. (A table on U.S. appropriations for the Iraqi opposition, including the INC, is an appendix).[4]

Another secular group, the Iraq National Accord (INA), was founded after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, was supported initially by Saudi Arabia but reportedly later earned the patronage of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[5] It is led by Dr. Iyad al-Allawi, a Baathist who purportedly helped Saddam Hussein silence Iraqi dissidents in Europe in the mid-1970s.[6] Allawi, who is about 60 years old (born 1946 in Baghdad), fell out with Saddam in the mid-1970s, became a neurologist and presided over the Iraqi Student Union in Europe. He survived an alleged Saddam regime assassination attempt in London in 1978. He is a secular Shiite Muslim, but many INA members are Sunnis. The INA enjoyed Clinton Administration support in 1996

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[4] Chalabi's father was president of the Senate in the monarchy that was overthrown in the 1958 military coup, and the family fled to Jordan. He taught math at the American University of Beirut in 1977 and, in 1978, he founded the Petra Bank in Jordan. He later ran afoul of Jordanian authorities on charges of embezzlement and he left Jordan, possibly with some help from members of Jordan's royal family, in 1989. In April 1992, he was convicted in absentia of embezzling $70 million from the bank and sentenced to 22 years in prison. The Jordanian government subsequently repaid depositors a total of $400 million. In a fallout with his former U.S. backers, U.S.-backed Iraqi police raided INC headquarters in Baghdad on May 20, 2004, seizing documents as part of an investigation of various allegations, including provision of U.S. intelligence to Iran. The case was later dropped.

[5] Brinkley, Joel. "Ex-CIA Aides Say Iraq Leader Helped Agency in 90's Attacks," *New York Times*, June 9, 2004.

[6] Hersh, Seymour. "Annals of National Security: Plan B," *The New Yorker*, June 28, 2004.

after squabbling among other opposition groups reduced their viability.[7] However, the INA proved penetrated by Iraq's intelligence services, which arrested or executed over 100 INA activists in June 1996. In August 1996, Baghdad launched a military incursion into northern Iraq, at the invitation of the KDP, to help it capture Irbil from the PUK. The incursion enabled Baghdad to rout remaining INC and INA operatives in the north.

The Kurds.[8] The Kurds, who are mostly Sunni Muslims but are not Arabs, are probably the most pro-U.S. of all major groups. They have a historic fear of persecution by the Arab majority and want to, at the very least, preserve the autonomy of the post-1991 Gulf war period. Many younger Kurds want to go beyond autonomy to outright independence. The Kurds, both through legal procedures as well as population movements, are trying to secure the city of Kirkuk, which the Kurds covet as a source of oil, and they have adopted a new oil development law that some see as an attempt to secure oil resources located in the Kurdish region for the Kurds alone. The Kurds achieved insertion of language in the permanent constitution requiring a vote by December 2007 on whether Kirkuk might formally join the Kurdish administered region. For now, both major Kurdish factions — the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Masud Barzani — are participating in Iraqi politics, the PUK more so than the KDP. Both were on the IGC; Talabani went on to become Iraq's president, while Barzani, on June 12, 2005, was named "president of Kurdistan" by the 111-seat Kurdish regional assembly that was elected on January 30, 2005. In September 2006, the central government criticized the Kurdish regional government for its decree that the Iraqi national flag, a holdover from the Saddam era, not be flown in the Kurdish regions.

Shiite Islamists: Ayatollah Sistani, SCIRI, Da'wa Party, and Sadr. Shiite Islamist organizations have emerged as the strongest factions in post-Saddam politics; Shiites constitute about 60% of the population but were under-represented in all pre-2003 governments. Several Shiite factions cooperated with the U.S. regime change efforts of the 1990s, but others had no contact with the United States. Several of the Shiite factions openly supported Hezbollah and criticized Israel during the July-August 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

The undisputed Shiite religious leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, remained in Iraq, albeit with a low profile, during Saddam Hussein's regime, and he was not involved in U.S.-backed regime change efforts during the 1990s. As the "*marja-e-taqlid*" (source of emulation) and, since 1992, as the most senior of the four Shiite clerics that lead the Najaf-based "*Hawza al-Ilmiyah*" (a grouping of

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[7] An account of this shift in U.S. strategy is essayed in Hoagland, Jim. "How CIA's Secret War On Saddam Collapsed," *Washington Post*, June 26, 1997.

[8] For an extended discussion, see CRS Report RS22079, *The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq*, by Kenneth Katzman and Alfred B. Prados.

seminaries), he is a major political force in post-Saddam politics.[9] He has a network of agents (*wakils*) throughout Iraq and among Shiites outside Iraq.

About 84 years old, Sistani was born in Iran and studied in Qom, Iran, before relocating to Najaf at the age of 21. His mentor, the former head of the *Hawza*, was Ayatollah Abol Qasem Musavi-Khoi. Like Khoi, Sistani generally opposes a direct role for clerics in government, but he believes in clerical supervision of political leaders. He wants Iraq to maintain its Islamic culture and favors modest dress for women, and curbs on sales of alcohol and Western music and entertainment.[10] He was treated for heart trouble in the United Kingdom in August 2004.

Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Within the "United Iraqi Alliance" (UIA) of Shiite political groupings, SCIRI shares power with the Da'wa (Islamic Call) Party and other factions. However, SCIRI has a militia force ("Badr Brigades"), whereas Da'wa does not. SCIRI founders were in exile in Iran after a major crackdown in 1980 by Saddam, who accused pro-Khomeini Iraqi Shiite Islamists of trying to overthrow him. During Khomeini's exile in Najaf (1964-1978), he was hosted by Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, father of the Hakim brothers that founded SCIRI. The Ayatollah was then head of the *Hawza*. SCIRI leaders say they do not seek to establish an Iranian-style Islamic republic, but many SCIRI members follow Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamene'i, and SCIRI reportedly receives substantial amounts of financial and other aid from Iran. SCIRI also runs several media outlets. Although it was a member of the INC in the early 1990s, SCIRI refused to accept U.S. funds, although it did have contacts with the United States. Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, a lower ranking Shiite cleric, is SCIRI's leader; he is a member of parliament from the UIA slate but he has taken no government position. One of his top aides, Bayan Jabr, is now Finance Minister, and another, Adel Abd al-Mahdi, is a deputy president.

Da'wa Party/Ibrahim al-Jafari and Nuri al-Maliki. The Da'wa (Islamic Call) Party is both an ally and sometime rival of SCIRI. Da'wa did not directly join the U.S.-led effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein during the 1990s. Its leader is Ibrahim al-Jafari, a Da'wa activist since 1966 who fled to Iran in 1980 to escape Saddam's crackdown, later going to London. He was Prime Minister during April 2005-April 2006. Opposition from Sunnis and Kurds caused him to withdraw as nominee for the new unity government and be replaced by number two Da'wa leader, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (see text box below).

Although there is no public evidence that Jafari or Maliki were involved in any terrorist activity, the Kuwaiti branch of the Da'wa allegedly committed a May 1985 attempted assassination of the Amir of Kuwait and the December 1983 attacks on the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait. Lebanese Hezbollah was founded by Lebanese clerics loyal to Da'wa founder Ayatollah Mohammad Baqr Al Sadr and

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[9] The three other senior Hawza clerics are Ayatollah Mohammad Sa'id al-Hakim (uncle of the leader of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim); Ayatollah Mohammad Isaac Fayadh, who is of Afghan origin; and Ayatollah Bashir al-Najafi, of Pakistani origin.

[10] For information on Sistani's views, see his website at [http://www.sistani.org].

Khomeini, and there continue to be personal and ideological linkages between Lebanese Hezbollah and Da'wa (as well as with SCIRI). Hezbollah attempted to link release of the Americans they held hostage in Lebanon in the 1980s to the release of 17 Da'wa prisoners held by Kuwait for those attacks in the 1980s.

Moqtada al-Sadr Faction. Moqtada Al Sadr is emerging as a major figure in Iraq. He is the lone surviving son of the revered Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr (the Ayatollah was killed, along with his other two sons, by regime security forces in 1999 after he began agitating against Saddam). He has been viewed as a young firebrand who lacks religious and political weight. However, the established Shiite factions, as well as Iranian diplomats, are building ties to him because of his large following, particularly among poorer Shiites.

By participating fully in the December 15, 2005, elections, Sadr appeared to distance himself from his uprisings in 2003 and 2004, although tensions between Sadr's militia forces and international (particulary British) forces in Iraq — as well as against rival Shiite factions and Iraqi security forces — are flaring again in 2006. During 2003-2004, he used Friday prayer sermons in Kufa (near Najaf) to agitate for a U.S. withdrawal, and he did not join any Iraqi governments. Pro-Sadr candidates also won pluralities in several southern Iraqi provincial council elections and hold 6 seats on Basra's 41-seat provincial council.

Smaller Shiite Factions. One other Shiite grouping, called *Fadilah* (Virtue), holds about 15 seats in the 2006-2010 parliament as part of the UIA coalition. Loyal to Ayatollah Mohammad Yacoubi, it is a splinter group of Moqtada al-Sadr's faction and is perceived as somewhat anti-U.S. It also holds seats on several provincial councils in the Shiite provinces and controls the protection force (Facilities Protection Service) for the oil installations in Basra. The governor of Basra is a *Fadilah* member. This has made the party a major force in that city, helping it, with Sadr's help, to try to dominate the provincial government there.

Other Shiite parties operating in southern Iraq include fighters who challenged Saddam Hussein's forces in the southern marsh areas, around the town of Amara, north of Basra. One goes by the name Hezbollah-Iraq and is headed by guerrilla leader Abdul Karim Muhammadawi, who was on the IGC. Hezbollah-Iraq apparently plays a major role in policing the relatively peaceful Amara (Maysan province). Another pro-Iranian grouping that wields a militia is called Thar Allah (Vengeance of God). A smaller Shiite Islamist organization, the Islamic Amal (Action) Organization, is headed by Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi Modarassi, a moderate cleric. Its power base is in Karbala, and it conducted attacks there against regime organs in the 1980s. Modarassi's brother, Abd al-Hadi, headed the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, which stirred Shiite unrest against Bahrain's regime in the 1980s and 1990s. Islamic Amal won two seats in the January 30 election and has a member in the new cabinet (Minister of Civil Society Affairs).

Another Karbala-based faction is that of Ayatollah Mahmoud al-Hassani. His armed followers clashed with local Iraqi security forces in Karbala in mid-August 2006. Hassani, along with *Fadilah*, are considered opponents of Iran because of Iran's support for the larger Shiite factions SCIRI and the Da'wa Party.

Table 1. Dominant Anti-Saddam Factions/Leaders

Iraq National Accord (INA)/Iyad al-Allawi	Consists of many ex-Baathists and ex-military officers. Allawi was interim Prime Minister (June 2004-April 2005). Won 40 seats in January 2005 election but only 25 in December 2005.
Kurds/KDP and PUK	Two main Kurdish factions. Talabani became president of Iraq after January 2005 and remains so. Barzani has tried to secure his clan's base in the Kurdish north. Together, field up to 100,000 *peshmerga* militia. Their joint slate won 75 seats in January election but only 53 in December.
Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani	Undisputed leading Shiite theologian in Iraq. No formal position in government but has used his broad Shiite popularity to become instrumental in major questions facing it and in U.S. decisions on Iraq. Helped forge UIA and brokered compromise over the selection of a Prime Minister nominee in April 2006. Strongly criticized Israel's July 2006 offensive against Lebanese Hezbollah. However, acknowledges that his influence is waning and that calls for Shiite restraint are unheeded as Shiites look to armed parties and militias for defense in sectarian warfare.
Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)	Best-organized and most pro-Iranian Shiite Islamist party. It was established in 1982 by Tehran to centralize Shiite Islamist movements in Iraq. First leader, Mohammad Baqr Al Hakim, killed by bomb in Najaf in August 2003. Controls 5,000 fighter "Badr Brigades" militia. As part of United Iraqi Alliance (UIA- 128 total seats in December election), it has about 30 of its members in parliament. Supports formation of large Shiite "region" composed of nine southern provinces.
Da'wa (Islamic Call) Party	Oldest organized Shiite Islamist party (founded 1957), active against Saddam Hussein in early 1980s. Founder, Mohammad Baqr al-Sadr, was ally of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and was hung by Saddam regime in 1980. Da'wa supporters tend to follow senior Lebanese Shiite cleric Mohammad Hossein Fadlallah rather than Iranian clerics. Has no organized militia and a lower proportion of clerics than does SCIRI. Part of UIA, controls about 28 seats in parliament.
Moqtada Al-Sadr Faction	Young (about 31) relative of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqr Al Sadr and son of Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq Al Sadr, was in Iraq during Saddam's rule. Inherited father's political base in "Sadr City," a large (2 million population) Shiite district of Baghdad. Mercurial, has both challenged and worked with U.S. in Iraq. Still clouded by allegations of involvement in the April 10, 2003, killing in Iraq of Abd al-Majid Khoi, the son of the late Grand Ayatollah Khoi and head of his London-based Khoi Foundation. Formed "Mahdi Army" militia in 2003 which now has as many as 20,000 fighters. Now part of UIA, controls 32 seats in new parliament and ministries of health, transportation, and agriculture, and has several seats on provincial councils of the Shiite-majority provinces, but he opposes formation of a Shiite "region" in the south.

Clinton Administration Policy/Iraq Liberation Act

During 1997-1998, Iraq's obstructions of U.N. weapons of mass destruction (WMD) inspections led to growing congressional calls to overthrow Saddam, beginning with an FY1998 supplemental appropriations act (P.L. 105-174). The sentiment was reflected even more strongly in the "Iraq Liberation Act" (ILA, P.L. 105-338, October 31, 1998). This law, signed by President Clinton despite doubts about opposition capabilities, was viewed as an expression of congressional support for the concept of promoting an Iraqi insurgency with U.S. air power. The Bush Administration has cited the ILA as evidence of a bipartisan consensus that Saddam should be toppled.

The ILA stated that it should be the policy of the United States to "support efforts" to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein. In mid-November 1998, President Clinton publicly articulated that regime change was a component of U.S. policy toward Iraq. Section 8 states that the act should not be construed as authorizing the use of U.S. military force to achieve regime change. The ILA did not specifically terminate after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Section 7 provides for post-Saddam "transition assistance" to Iraqi groups with "democratic goals." The law also gave the President authority to provide up to $97 million worth of defense articles and services, as well as $2 million in broadcasting funds, to opposition groups designated by the Administration.

The signing of the ILA coincided with new crises over Iraq's obstructions of U.N. weapons inspections. On December 15, 1998, U.N. inspectors were withdrawn, and a three-day U.S. and British bombing campaign against suspected Iraqi WMD facilities followed (Operation Desert Fox, December 16-19, 1998). On February 5, 1999, President Clinton made seven opposition groups eligible to receive U.S. military assistance under the ILA (P.D. 99-13): INC; INA; SCIRI; KDP; PUK; the Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK);[11] and the small Movement for Constitutional Monarchy (MCM). In May 1999, the Clinton Administration provided $5 million worth of training and "non-lethal" defense articles under the ILA. During 1999-2000, about 150 oppositionists underwent civil administration training at Hurlburt air base in Florida, including Defense Department-run civil affairs training to administer a post-Saddam government. The Hurlburt trainees were not brought into Operation Iraqi Freedom or into the Free Iraqi Forces that deployed to Iraq. However, the Clinton Administration decided that the opposition was not sufficiently capable to merit weapons or combat training.

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[11] Because of its role in the eventual formation of the radical Ansar al-Islam group, the IMIK did not receive U.S. funds after 2001, although it was not formally de-listed.

Post-September 11, 2001: Regime Change and War

Several senior Bush Administration officials had long been advocates of a regime change policy toward Iraq, but the difficulty of that strategy led the Bush Administration initially to continue its predecessor's emphasis on containment.[12] Some accounts say that the Administration was planning, prior to September 11, to confront Iraq militarily, but President Bush has denied this. During its first year, Administration policy tried to strengthen containment of Iraq, which the Administration said was rapidly eroding, by achieving U.N. Security Council adoption (Resolution 1409, May 14, 2002) of a "smart sanctions" plan. The plan relaxed U.N.-imposed restrictions on exports to Iraq of purely civilian equipment[13] in exchange for renewed international commitment to enforce the U.N. ban on exports to Iraq of militarily-useful goods.

Bush Administration policy on Iraq changed to an active regime change effort after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. In President Bush's State of the Union message on January 29, 2002, given as major combat in the U.S.-led war on the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was winding down, he characterized Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" (with Iran and North Korea). Some U.S. officials, particularly deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, asserted that the United States needed to respond to the September 11, 2001 attacks by "ending states," such as Iraq, that support terrorist groups. Vice President Cheney visited the Middle East in March 2002 reportedly to consult regional countries about the possibility of confronting Iraq militarily, although the leaders visited reportedly urged greater U.S. attention to the Arab-Israeli dispute and opposed war with Iraq. Some accounts, including the book *Plan of Attack* by Bob Woodward (published in April 2004), say that then Secretary of State Powell and others were concerned about the potential consequences of an invasion of Iraq, particularly the difficulties of building a democracy after major hostilities ended. Other accounts include reported memoranda (the "Downing Street Memo") by British intelligence officials, based on conversations with U.S. officials. That memo reportedly said that by mid-2002 the Administration had already decided to go to war against Iraq and that it sought to develop information about Iraq to support that judgment. President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair deny this. (On December 20, 2001, the House passed H.J.Res. 75, by a vote of 392-12, calling Iraq's refusal to readmit U.N. weapons inspectors a "mounting threat" to the United States.)

The primary theme in the Bush Administration's public case for the need to confront Iraq was that Iraq posted a "grave and gathering" threat that should be blunted before the threat became urgent. The basis of that assertion in U.S. intelligence remains under debate.

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[12] One account of Bush Administration internal debates on the strategy is found in Hersh, Seymour. "The Debate Within," *The New Yorker*, Mar. 11, 2002.

[13] For more information on this program, see CRS Report RL30472, *Iraq: Oil For Food Program, Illicit Trade, and Investigations*, by Kenneth Katzman and Christopher Blanchard.

- *WMD Threat Perception.* Senior U.S. officials, including President Bush, particularly in an October 2002 speech in Cincinnati, asserted the following about Iraq's WMD: (1) that Iraq had worked to rebuild its WMD programs in the nearly four years since U.N. weapons inspectors left Iraq and had failed to comply with 16 U.N. previous resolutions that demanded complete elimination of all of Iraq's WMD programs; (2) that Iraq had used chemical weapons against its own people (the Kurds) and against Iraq's neighbors (Iran), implying that Iraq would not necessarily be deterred from using WMD against the United States; and (3) that Iraq could transfer its WMD to terrorists, particularly Al Qaeda, for use in potentially catastrophic attacks in the United States. Critics noted that, under the U.S. threat of retaliation, Iraq did not use WMD against U.S. troops in the 1991 Gulf war. A "comprehensive" September 2004 report of the Iraq Survey Group, known as the "Duelfer report,"[14] found no WMD stockpiles or production but said that there was evidence that the regime retained the intention to reconstitute WMD programs in the future. The formal U.S.-led WMD search ended December 2004,[15] although U.S. forces have found some chemical weapons caches left over from the Iran-Iraq war.[16] The UNMOVIC search remains technically active.[17]

- *Links to Al Qaeda.* Iraq was designated a state sponsor of terrorism during 1979-1982 and was again so designated after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Although they did not assert that Saddam Hussein's regime had a direct connection to the September 11 attacks, senior U.S. officials asserted that Saddam's regime was linked to Al Qaeda, in part because of the presence of pro-Al Qaeda militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in northern Iraq. Although this issue is still debated, the report of the 9/11 Commission found no evidence of a "collaborative operational linkage" between Iraq and Al Qaeda.[18]

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Although it is not certain when the Administration decided on an invasion, in mid-2002 the Administration began ordering a force to the region that, by early 2003, gave the President that option. In concert, the Administration tried to build up and broaden the Iraqi opposition and, according to the *Washington Post* (June 16, 2002),

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[14] The full text of the Duelfer report is available at [http://news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/iraq/cia93004wmdrpt.html].

[15] For analysis of the former regime's WMD and other abuses, see CRS Report RL32379, *Iraq: Former Regime Weapons Programs, Human Rights Violations, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

[16] Pincus, Walter. Munitions Found in Iraq Renew Debate. *Washington Post*, July 1, 2006.

[17] For information on UNMOVIC's ongoing activities, see [http://www.unmovic.org/].

[18] *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 66.

authorizing stepped up covert activities by the CIA and special operations forces to destabilize Saddam Hussein. In August 2002, the State and Defense Departments jointly invited six major opposition groups to Washington, D.C. At the same time, the Administration expanded its ties to several groups, particularly those composed of ex-military officers. The Administration also began training about 5,000 oppositionists to assist U.S. forces,[19] although only about 70 completed training at an air base (Taszar) in Hungary.[20] They served mostly as translators during the war. At the same time, the Administration blocked a move by the major factions to declare a provisional government, believing that doing so would prevent the flowering of secular, pro-democracy groups after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

In an effort to obtain U.N. backing for confronting Iraq — support that then Secretary of State Powell reportedly argued was needed — President Bush urged the United Nations General Assembly (September 12, 2002) that the U.N. Security Council should enforce its 16 existing WMD-related resolutions on Iraq. The Administration subsequently agreed to give Iraq a "final opportunity" to comply with all applicable Council resolutions by supporting Security Council Resolution 1441 (November 8, 2002), which gave the U.N. inspection body UNMOVIC (U.N. Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission) new powers of inspection. Iraq reluctantly accepted it. In January and February 2003, UNMOVIC Director Hans Blix and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Mohammad al-Baradei briefed the Security Council on WMD inspections that resumed November 27, 2002. Although they were not denied access to suspect sites, they criticized Iraq for failing to actively cooperate to clear up outstanding questions, but also noted progress and said that Iraq might not have retained any WMD. The Bush Administration asserted that Iraq was not complying with Resolution 1441 because it was not pro-actively revealing information.

During this period, Congress debated the costs and risks of an invasion. It adopted H.J.Res. 114, authorizing the President to use military force against Iraq if he determines that doing so is in the national interest and would enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions. It passed the House October 11, 2002 (296-133), and the Senate the following day (77-23). It was signed October 16, 2002 (P.L. 107-243).

In Security Council debate, opponents of war, including France, Russia, China, and Germany, said the pre-war WMD inspections showed that Iraq could be disarmed peacefully or contained indefinitely. The United States, along with Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria, maintained that Iraq had not fundamentally decided to disarm. At a March 16, 2003, summit meeting with the leaders of Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria at the Azores, President Bush asserted that diplomatic options to disarm Iraq had failed. The following evening, President Bush gave Saddam Hussein and his sons, Uday and Qusay, an ultimatum to leave Iraq within 48 hours to avoid war. They refused and OIF began on March 19, 2003.

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[19] Deyoung, Karen, and Daniel Williams, "Training of Iraqi Exiles Authorized," *Washington Post*, Oct. 19, 2002.

[20] Williams, Daniel. "U.S. Army to Train 1,000 Iraqi Exiles," *Washington Post*, Dec. 18, 2002.

In the war, Iraq's conventional military forces were overwhelmed by the approximately 380,000-person U.S. and British-led 30-country[21] "coalition of the willing" force assembled, a substantial proportion of which remained afloat or in supporting roles. Of the invasion force, Britain contributed 45,000, and U.S. troops constituted the bulk of the remaining 335,000 forces. Some Iraqi units and irregulars ("Saddam's Fedayeen") put up stiff resistance and used unconventional tactics. Some post-major combat evaluation ("Cobra Two," by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, published in 2006) suggest the U.S. military should have focused more on combating the irregulars rather than bypassing them to take on armored forces. No WMD was used by Iraq, although it did fire some ballistic missiles into Kuwait; it is not clear whether those missiles were of prohibited ranges (greater than 150 km). The regime vacated Baghdad on April 9, 2003, although Saddam Hussein appeared with supporters that day in Baghdad's largely Sunni Adhamiya district.

Post-Saddam Governance and Transition

According to the Bush Administration's November 30, 2005, "Strategy for Victory," the U.S. long-term goal is to enable Iraq to be stable, unified, and democratic, able to provide for its own security, a partner in the global war on terrorism, and a model for reform in Middle East. The political transition in post-Saddam Iraq has advanced, but insurgent violence is still widespread, and sectarian violence has increased to the point that senior U.S. officials say that it is now the pre-eminent security threat in Iraq, with "potential" for full fledged civil war.

Occupation Period, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and Ambassador Paul Bremer. After the fall of the regime, the United States set up an occupation structure, reportedly grounded in concerns that immediate sovereignty would favor major factions and not produce democracy. The Administration initially tasked Lt. Gen. Jay Garner (ret.) to direct reconstruction with a staff of U.S. government personnel to administer Iraq's ministries; they deployed in April 2003. He headed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), within the Department of Defense, created by a January 20, 2003 executive order. The Administration's immediate post-war policy did not make use of an extensive State Department initiative, called the "Future of Iraq Project," that spent at least a year before the war drawing up plans for administering Iraq after the fall of Saddam. The State Department project, which cost $5 million, had 15 working groups on major issues.[22]

Garner tried to quickly establish a representative successor Iraqi regime. He and White House envoy Zalmay Khalilzad (now Ambassador to Iraq) organized a meeting in Nassiriyah (April 15, 2003) of about 100 Iraqis of varying views and

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[21] Many of the thirty countries listed in the coalition did not contribute forces to the combat. A subsequent State Department list released on March 27, 2003 listed 49 countries in the coalition of the willing. The 49 country list can be found in the *Washington Post*, Mar. 27, 2003, p. A19.

[22] Information on the project, including summaries of the findings of its 17 working groups, can be found at [http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/archive/dutyiraq/].

ethnicities. A subsequent meeting of over 250 notables was held in Baghdad (April 26, 2003), ending in agreement to hold a broader meeting one month later to name an interim administration. However, senior U.S. officials reportedly disliked Garner's toleration of Iraqis naming themselves as local leaders, among other measures. In May 2003, the Administration named ambassador L. Paul Bremer to replace Garner by heading a "Coalition Provisional Authority" (CPA), which subsumed ORHA. The CPA was an occupying authority recognized by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483 (May 22, 2003).

Bremer suspended Garner's political transition process and decided instead to appoint an Iraqi advisory body that would not have sovereignty. On July 13, 2003, he named the 25-member "Iraq Governing Council" (IGC), and in September 2003, the IGC selected a 25-member "cabinet" to run the ministries, with roughly the same factional and ethnic balance of the IGC itself (a slight majority of Shiite Muslims). Major IGC figures included the leaders of the major anti-Saddam factions, but it was perceived in Iraq as an arm of U.S. decision-making. Although there were some Sunni figures in the CPA-led political structure, such as pro-Western Sunni elder (Shammar tribe) Ghazi al-Yawar, many Sunnis resented the U.S. invasion and opposed the Iraqi bodies. Adding to Sunni resentment were some of the CPA's most controversial decisions, including the decision not to recall members of the armed forces to serve in a new Iraqi security force, and to pursue "de-Baathification" — a purge from government of about 30,000 persons who held any of the four top ranks of the Baath Party. The IGC also authorized a war crimes tribunal for Saddam and his associates, still ongoing.

Handover of Sovereignty and Transition Roadmap

The Bush Administration initially made the end of U.S. occupation contingent on the completion of a new constitution and the holding of national elections for a new government, tasks expected to be completed by late 2005. However, Ayatollah Sistani and others agitated for early Iraqi sovereignty and direct elections. In November 2003, the United States announced it would return sovereignty to Iraq by June 30, 2004, and that national elections would be held by the end of 2005.

Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). The CPA decisions were incorporated into an interim constitution, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which was drafted mostly by the major anti-Saddam factions (signed on March 8, 2004).[23] It provided a roadmap for political transition, as follows.

- Elections by January 31, 2005, for a 275-seat transitional National Assembly. A permanent constitution would be drafted by August 15, 2005, and put to a national referendum by October 15, 2005. National elections for a permanent government, under the new constitution (if it passed), would be held by December 15, 2005. The new government would take office by December 31, 2005.

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[23] The text of the TAL can be obtained from the CPA website at [http://cpa-iraq.org/government/TAL.html].

- Any three provinces could veto the constitution by a two-thirds majority. If that happened, a new draft was to be developed and voted on by October 15, 2006. In that case, the December 15, 2005, elections would have been for another interim National Assembly.

- The Kurds maintained their autonomous "Kurdistan Regional Government." They were given powers to contradict or alter the application of Iraqi law in their provinces, and their *peshmerga* militia were allowed to operate.

- Islam was designated "a source," but not the primary source, of law, and no law could be passed that contradicts such rights as peaceful assembly; free expression; and the right to strike and demonstrate.

Interim (Allawi) Government/Sovereignty Handover. The TAL did not directly address the formation of the interim government that would assume sovereignty. Sistani's opposition torpedoed an initial U.S. plan to select a national assembly through nationwide "caucuses." After considering other options, such as the holding of a traditional assembly, the United States tapped U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to select that government.[24] This government, dominated by senior faction leaders, was named on June 1, 2004 and began work immediately. The formal handover ceremony occurred on June 28, 2004, two days before the advertised June 30 date, partly to confuse insurgents. There was a ceremonial president (Ghazi al-Yawar), and Allawi was Prime Minister, with executive power, heading a cabinet of 26 ministers. Six ministers were women, and the ethnicity mix was roughly the same as in the IGC. The defense and interior ministries were headed by Sunni Arabs.

U.N. Backing of New Government/Coalition Military Mandate. The Administration asserts that it has consistently sought U.N. and partner country involvement in Iraq efforts. Resolution 1483 (cited above) provided for a U.N. special representative to Iraq, and "called on" governments to contribute forces for stabilization. Resolution 1500 (August 14, 2003) established U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).[25] The size of UNAMI in Iraq has increased to a few hundred, headed by former Pakistani diplomat Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, primarily focused on promoting political reconciliation, election assistance, and monitoring human rights practices and humanitarian affairs. In an attempt to satisfy the requirements of several nations for greater U.N. backing of the coalition force presence, the United States achieved adoption of Resolution 1511 (October 16, 2003), authorizing a "multinational force under *unified* [meaning U.S.] command."

Resolution 1546 (June 8, 2004) took U.N. involvement a step further by endorsing the handover of sovereignty, reaffirming the responsibilities of the interim government, and spelling out the duration and legal status of U.S.-led forces in Iraq,

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[24] Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. "Envoy Urges U.N.-Chosen Iraqi Government," *Washington Post*, Apr. 15, 2004.

[25] Its mandate has been renewed each year since, most recently by Resolution 1700 (Aug. 10, 2006).

as well as authorizing a coalition component force to protect U.N. personnel and facilities. The Resolution contained the following provisions.

- It "authorize[d]" the U.S.-led coalition to secure Iraq, a provision interpreted as giving the coalition responsibility for security. Iraqi forces are "a principal partner" in the U.S.-led coalition, and the relationship between U.S. and Iraqi forces is spelled out in an annexed exchange of letters between the United States and Iraq. The U.S.-led coalition retained the ability to take prisoners.

- It stipulated that the coalition's mandate would be reviewed "at the request of the government of Iraq or twelve months from the date of this resolution" (or June 8, 2005); that the mandate would expire when a permanent government is sworn in at the end of 2005; and that the mandate would be terminated "if the Iraqi government so requests." The Security Council reviewed the mandate in advance of the June 8, 2005, deadline, and no alterations to it were made. However, on November 11, 2005, in advance of the termination of the mandate, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1637 extending the coalition military mandate to December 31, 2006, unless earlier requested by the Iraqi government. The Resolution also required review of the mandate on June 15, 2006; no changes were made to the mandate at that time.

- It deferred the issue of the status of foreign forces (Status of Forces Agreement, SOFA) to an elected Iraqi government. No SOFA has been signed to date, and U.S. forces operate in Iraq and use its facilities under temporary memoranda of understanding. Major facilities include Balad, Tallil, and Al Asad air bases, as well as the arms depot at Taji; all are being built up with U.S. military construction funds in various appropriations. However, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told journalists in July 2005 that U.S. military lawyers are working with the Iraqis on a SOFA or other arrangements that would cover U.S. operations in Iraq for the duration of U.S. involvement there. (The conference report on P.L. 109-234, an FY2006 supplemental appropriation, deleted Senate provisions prohibiting the use of appropriated funds to construct permanent basing facilities in Iraq.)

- It established a 100-seat "Interim National Council" to serve as an interim parliament. The body, selected in August,[26] did not have legislative power but was able to veto government decisions with a two-thirds majority. The council held some televised "hearings;" it disbanded after the January 2005 elections for a parliament.

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[26] Tavernise, Sabrina. "In Climax To a Tumultuous 4-Day Debate, Iraq Chooses An Assembly," *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 2004.

Post-Handover U.S. Structure in Iraq. The following were additional consequences of the sovereignty handover, designed in part to lower the profile of U.S. influence over post-handover Iraq.

- As of the June 28, 2004, handover, the state of occupation ceased. Subsequently, a U.S. Ambassador (John Negroponte) established U.S.-Iraq diplomatic relations for the first time since January 1991. A U.S. embassy formally opened on June 30, 2004; it is staffed with about 1,100 U.S. personnel.[27] Negroponte was succeeded in July 2005 by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who was previously Ambassador to Afghanistan and who takes an activist approach. An FY2005 supplemental appropriations, P.L. 109-13, provided $592 million of $658 million requested to construct a new embassy in Baghdad and to fund embassy operations. The large new embassy complex, with 21 buildings on 104 acres, is under construction. The FY2006 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-234) provides $1.327 billion for U.S. embassy operations and security.

- Iraq gained control over its oil revenues and the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), subject to monitoring for at least one year (until June 2005) by the U.N.-mandated International Advisory and Monitoring Board (IAMB). Iraq also was given responsibility for close-out of the "oil-for-food program."[28] Resolution 1483 ended that program as of November 21, 2003.

- Reconstruction management and advising of Iraq's ministries were taken over by the State Department through the U.S. Embassy and a unit called the "Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office (IRMO)." IRMO, headed since June 2006 by Ambassador Joseph Saloom, has about 150 U.S. civilian personnel working out of four major centers around Iraq (satellites of the U.S. Embassy) — Hilla, Basra, Kirkuk, and Mosul, and 15-20 of them report to IRMO. (These centers, except for Basra, have now been converted to Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs, discussed further below.) A separate "Project Contracting Office (PCO)," headed by Brig. Gen. William McCoy (now under the Persian Gulf division of the Army Corps of Engineers), funds infrastructure projects such as roads, power plants, and school renovations.

Governmental and Constitution Votes in 2005

After the handover of sovereignty, the United States and Iraq began focusing on the three national votes that would be held in 2005. These votes and resulting governments are discussed in CRS Report RS21968, *Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution*, by Kenneth Katzman.

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[27] See CRS Report RS21867, *U.S. Embassy in Iraq*, by Susan B. Epstein.

[28] For information on that program, see CRS Report RL30472, *Iraq: Oil-for-Food Program, Illicit Trade, and Investigations*, by Kenneth Katzman and Christopher Blanchard.

January 30, 2005, Elections/New Government. On January 30, 2005, elections were held for a transitional National Assembly, 18 provincial councils, and the Kurdish regional assembly. Sunnis, still resentful of the U.S. invasion, mostly boycotted, and no major Sunni slates were offered. This enabled the UIA to win a slim majority (140 of the 275 seats) and to ally with the Kurds (75 seats) to dominate the government formed subsequently. PUK leader Jalal Talabani was named president; Ibrahim al-Jafari became Prime Minister. U.S. officials said publicly this government was not sufficiently inclusive of the Sunni minority, even though it had a Sunni Arab as Assembly speaker; deputy president; deputy prime minister; Defense Minister; and five other ministers.

Permanent Constitution. Despite Sunni opposition, the constitution was approved on October 15, 2005. Sunni opponents achieved a two-thirds "no" vote in two provinces but not the three needed to defeat the constitution. The crux of Sunni opposition to it was its provision for a weak central government ("federalism"): it allows groups of provinces to band together to form autonomous "regions" with their own regional governments, internal security forces, and a large role in controlling revenues from any new energy discoveries. The Sunnis oppose this concept because their region, unlike those dominated by the Kurds and the Shiites, lacks oil and they depend on the central government for revenues.

December 15, 2005, Election. In this election, some anti-U.S. Sunnis moved further into the political arena, including those who offered a broad slate ("The Concord Front"), and another Sunni slate, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, headed by constitution negotiator Saleh al-Mutlak. The results were court-certified on February 10, formally beginning the formation of a government, but the convening of the "Council of Representatives" was delayed until March 16 by wrangling over the post of Prime Minister. The UIA, by a narrow internal vote on February 12, named Jafari to continue as Prime Minister. With the UIA alone well short of the two-thirds majority needed to unilaterally form a government, Jafari came under stiff opposition from Sunnis, the secular groupings, and the Kurds. In mid-April, he stepped aside, and his top Da'wa aide, Nuri al-Maliki, was nominated Prime Minister by the Council on April 22. Talabani was selected to continue as president, with two deputies Adel Abd al-Mahdi of SCIRI and Tariq al-Hashimi of the Concord Front. A Council leadership team was selected as well, with hardline U.S. critic Mahmoud Mashadani as speaker, although the broader sectarian disputes caused Mashadani to openly talk in August 2006 of resigning.

Maliki had until May 21 to name a cabinet and achieve its confirmation. Amid U.S. and other congratulations, Maliki named and won approval of a 39-member cabinet (including deputy prime ministers) on May 20, 2006. Among his permanent selections were Kurdish official Barham Salih and Sunni Arab Salam al-Zubaie as deputy prime ministers. Four ministers (environment, human rights, housing, and women's affairs) are women. Of the 34 permanent ministerial posts named, a total of seven are Sunnis; seven are Kurds; nineteen are Shiites; and one is Christian (minister of human rights, Ms. Wijdan Mikha'il). Ayatollah Sistani loyalist Hussein Shahristani was named Oil Minister, even though he has no evident oil background; controversial SCIRI official Bayan Jabr moved to Finance Minister (from Interior); and KDP activist Hoshyar Zebari remained Foreign Minister. Sadr loyalists were named to the ministries of agriculture, health, and transportation.

Maliki did not immediately name permanent figures for the major posts of Interior, Defense, and Ministry of State for National Security because major factions could not agree on nominees. After several weeks of negotiation, on June 8, 2006 he achieved Council of Representatives confirmation of three compromise candidates. The Defense Minister is Gen. Abdul Qadir Mohammad Jasim al-Mifarji, a Sunni who had been expelled from the Iraqi military and the Baath Party for criticizing Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait in 1990. More recently, he commanded operations of the post-Saddam Iraqi Army in western Iraq. The new Interior Minister is Jawad al-Bulani. He is a Shiite from the UIA bloc but is an engineer by training and not closely affiliated with any of the major UIA component factions. The choice for Minister for National Security was Sherwan al-Waili, a Shiite who is from a faction of the Da'wa Party. He has served in post-Saddam Iraq as head of the provincial council in the city of Nassiriyah, as well as an adviser in the national security ministry.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki
Born in 1950 in Karbala, has belonged to Da'wa Party since 1968. Fled Iraq in 1980 after Saddam banned the party, initially to Iran. Fled to Syria when he refused Iran's orders that he join pro-Iranian Shiite militia groups fighting Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. Headed Da'wa offices in Syria and Lebanon and edited Da'wa Party newspaper. Elected to National Assembly in January 2005 and chaired its "security committee." Believed to support Kurds' efforts to incorporate Kirkuk into the Kurdish region.

The actions and performance to date of the Maliki government are mixed, and some reports say the Bush Administration might be losing confidence in his ability to stabilize Iraq. In June 2006, Maliki launched a National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project designed to broker a resolution of sectarian differences. That program was plagued by debate over who would be eligible to receive any amnesty (whether one had killed Iraqi or American soldiers, for example), and it has failed to date to persuade major insurgent groups to end their activities, but Maliki moved to inject momentum into the process in August 2006 by re-hiring 10,000 Ba'th Party members fired from government jobs after Saddam fell. Later in the month, about 100 tribal leaders agreed to a "Pact of Honor," a pledge to try to halt sectarian violence.

On the other hand, there has been no movement on amending the constitution, which was supposed to be begun immediately upon the inauguration of the new government. The amendments, which were to be completed within four months of the beginning of the process, require approval by an Assembly majority and then would be put to a national referendum, to be held two months later. However, observers say that the continued schisms in Iraqi politics have delayed the constitutional commission from even beginning work to date; Sunnis, perhaps realizing that they might not win concessions, are said not to be pushing to begin the amendment process. At the same time, in September 2006 SCIRI leader Hakim seemed to confirm Sunni fears about the potential break-up of Iraq by attempting to achieve quick adoption of legislation to allow the early formation of new regions.

The Sunnis, in concert with the pro-central government Sadr faction of Shiites, have for now succeeded in stalling movement on the new law.

At the same time, there is infighting even within the Shiite camp. Maliki is said to be considering removing at least two Sadr faction ministers to reduce Sadr's influence in government. Other reports say he might fire Interior Minister Bulani at the behest of Shiite factions, including SCIRI, that oppose Bulani's efforts to weed out militia fighters from the security forces.

Regional and International Relations. The elected Iraqi governments have received some diplomatic support, even though most of its neighbors, except Iran, resent the Shiite and Kurdish domination of the regime. As of August 2006, there are 46 foreign missions in Iraq, including most European and Arab countries. Jordan has appointed an ambassador and Kuwait has pledged to do so, but these and other diplomatic upgrades have been largely on hold since attacks on diplomats from Bahrain, Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco in 2005. Iran upgraded its representation to Ambassador in May 2006. At an Arab League meeting in late March 2006, Arab states pledged to increase their diplomatic representation in Iraq, and to consider other help (aid, debt relief) to bolster the Iraqi government. In June 2006, in the latest attack on diplomats, five Russian diplomats were killed by gunmen and abductors.

Although too bogged down with domestic issues to play a major role in the region, Iraqi leaders, including Maliki, generally criticized Israel for "aggression" against Lebanon during the July 2006 Israel-Hezbollah crisis. Maliki's expression of support for Hezbollah (which, as noted above, shares a background with his Da'wa Party) caused congressional criticism of him during his July 2006 visit to Washington DC. His outlook was shared by other major Iraqi Shiite figures including Sadr, who threatened to send Mahdi forces to help Hezbollah, and Ayatollah Sistani, who issued a pronouncement strongly criticizing Israel for attacks that have killed Lebanese civilians.

At the same time, Turkey is complaining that Iraq's Kurds are harboring the anti-Turkey PKK guerrilla group in northern Iraq, and Turkey has been threatening to send in forces if the U.S.-led coalition and the Iraqi Kurdish factions do not arrest members of that group who are in Iraq. The threat prompted the U.S. naming of an envoy to Turkey on this issue in August 2006 (Gen. Joseph Ralston, ret, former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

Table 2. Major Sunni Factions in Post-Saddam Iraq

Ghazi al-Yawar (Iraqis Party)	Yawar has cooperated with the U.S. since the invasion. Served as President in the Allawi government and deputy president in the post-January 2005 government, but he is not in the post-2005 permanent government.
Iraqi Concord Front (Tariq al-Hashimi and Adnan al-Dulaymi)	The Front is led by Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), headed by Tariq al-Hashimi. IIP withdrew from the in January 2005 election but led this Sunni coalition to compete in December 2005 elections. Critical of but accepts U.S. presence. Includes Iraqi General People's Council of Adnan al-Dulaymi, and the Sunni Endowment. The Front holds 44 seats in new parliament. Hashimi a deputy president.
Iraqi Front for National Dialogue (Saleh al-Mutlak)	Mutlak, an ex-Baathist, was chief negotiator for Sunnis on the new constitution, but was dissatisfied with the outcome and now advocates major revisions to the new constitution. Holds 11 seats in the new parliament. Parliament Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani, a hardliner, is a senior member; in July 2006, he called the U.S. invasion "the work of butchers."
Muslim Scholars Association (MSA, Harith al-Dhari and Abd al-Salam al-Qubaysi)	Hardline Sunni Islamist group, has boycotted all post-Saddam elections. Believed to have ties to and influence over insurgent factions. Wants timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.
Iraqi Insurgents	Numerous factions and no unified leadership, although an eight group "Mujahedin Shura" was formed in early 2006, led by an Iraqi (Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi). Some groups led by ex-Saddam regime leaders, others by Islamic extremists. Major factions include Islamic Army of Iraq, Muhammad's Army, and the 1920 Revolution Brigades.
Foreign Fighters/ Zarqawi Faction	Estimated 3,000 in Iraq. Have been led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian national, killed in a U.S. airstrike on June 7, 2006. Succeeded by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. His faction is part of Mujahedin Shura. Advocates attacks on Iraqi Shiite civilians to spark civil war. Related foreign fighter faction, which includes some Iraqis, is Ansar al-Sunna, but this group is not in the Mujahedin Shura.

Democracy-Building and Local Governance/FY2006 Supplemental. The United States and its coalition partners have tried to build civil society and democracy at the local level. U.S. officials say Iraqis are freer than at any time in the past 30 years, with a free press and the ability to organize politically. A State Department report to Congress in July 2006 detailed how the FY2004 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 108-106) "Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund" (IRRF) is being spent ("2207 Report"):

- About $1.014 billion is allocated for "Democracy Building."
- About $71 million is allocated for related "Rule of Law" programs.
- About $159 million is allocated to build and secure courts and train legal personnel.
- About $128 million is allocated for "Investigations of Crimes Against Humanity," primarily former regime abuses.
- $10 million is for U.S. Institute of Peace democracy/civil society/ conflict resolution activities.
- $10 million is for the Iraqi Property Claims Commission (which is evaluating Kurdish claims to property taken from Kurds, mainly in Kirkuk, during Saddam's regime).
- $15 million is to promote human rights and human rights education centers.

Run by the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL), USAID, and State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), some of the democracy and rule of law building activities conducted with these funds, aside from assistance for the various elections in Iraq in 2005, include the following:

- Several projects that attempt to increase the transparency of the justice system, computerize Iraqi legal documents, train judges and lawyers, develop various aspects of law, such as commercial laws, promote legal reform, and support the drafting of the permanent constitution.

- Activities to empower local governments, policies that are receiving increasing U.S. attention and additional funding allocations from the IRRF. These programs include (1) the "Community Action Program" (CAP) through which local reconstruction projects are voted on by village and town representatives. About 1,800 community associations have been established thus far; (2) Provincial Reconstruction Development Committees (PRDCs) to empower local governments to decide on reconstruction priorities; and (3) Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are local enclaves to provide secure conditions for reconstruction, as discussed further below. The conference report on an FY2006 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-234) designates $50 million in ESF for Iraq to be used to keep the CAP operating. The House-passed and the Senate version of an FY2007 foreign aid appropriation, H.R. 5522, earmarks another $50 million in ESF for the CAP.

- Programs to empower women and promote their involvement in Iraqi politics, as well as programs to promote independent media.

- Some funds have been used for easing tensions in cities that have seen substantial U.S.-led anti-insurgency combat, including Fallujah, Ramadi, Sadr City district of Baghdad, and Mosul. In August 2006, another $130 million in U.S. funds (and $500 million in Iraqi funds) were allocated to assist Baghdad neighborhoods swept by U.S. and Iraqi forces in "Operation Together Forward."

In addition to what is already allocated, the FY2006 regular foreign aid appropriations (conference report on P.L. 109-102) provides $56 million in FY2006 funds for democracy promotion. It incorporated a Senate amendment (S.Amdt. 1299, Kennedy) to that legislation providing $28 million each to the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute for democracy promotion in Iraq. The FY2006 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-234) provides $50 million in ESF for Iraq democracy promotion, allocated to various organizations performing democracy work there (U.S. Institute of Peace, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, National Endowment for Democracy, and others).

Economic Reconstruction and U.S. Assistance

The Administration asserts that economic reconstruction will contribute to stability, although some aspects of that effort appear to be faltering. As discussed in recent reports (most recently the one issued in July 2006) by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), the difficult security environment has slowed reconstruction. For more detailed information on U.S. spending and economic reconstruction, see CRS Report RL31833, *Iraq: Recent Developments in Reconstruction Assistance*, by Curt Tarnoff.

A total of about $34 billion has been appropriated for reconstruction funding, of which $20.917 billion has been appropriated for the "Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund" (IRRF) in two supplemental appropriations: FY2003 supplemental, P.L. 108-11, which appropriated about $2.5 billion; and the FY2004 supplemental appropriations, P.L. 108-106, which provided about $18.42 billion. Of the IRRF funds, about $20.156 billion has been obligated, and, of that, about $15.764 billion has been disbursed, as of September 20, 2006. Much of the non-IRRF funds has been for Iraqi security forces, as discussed below. According to State Department weekly reports, the sector allocations for the IRRF are as follows:

- $5.036 billion for Security and Law Enforcement;
- $1.315 billion for Justice, Public Safety, Infrastructure, and Civil Society;
- $1.013 billion for Democracy;
- $4.22 billion for Electricity Sector;
- $1.724 billion for Oil Infrastructure;
- $2.131 billion for Water Resources and Sanitation;
- $469 million for Transportation and Communications;
- $333.7 million for Roads, Bridges, and Construction;

- $746 million for Health Care;
- $805 million for Private Sector Development (includes $352 million for debt relief for Iraq);
- $410 million for Education, Refugees, Human Rights, Democracy, and Governance (includes $99 million for education); and
- $213 million for USAID administrative expenses.

FY2006 Supplemental/FY2007. To continue reconstruction, the Administration requested FY2006 supplemental funds of $1.6 billion and $479 million for FY2007, mainly to help sustain infrastructure already built with U.S. funds. The FY2006 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-234) provides $1.485 billion. The House passed FY2007 foreign aid appropriation (H.R. 5522) provides $305.8 million in ESF for Iraq reconstruction, about $175 million less than requested. It also provides requested funds for counter-narcotics ($254 million) and anti-terrorism ($18 million). The Senate version of that bill provides the total requested ($752.785 million), but it allocates the funds as $453.77 million in ESF; $108 million in democracy funds (DF); $171.6 in INCLE (international narcotics and law enforcement funds); and $18.23 million in anti-terrorism funds (NADR, non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, demining, and related programs).

Oil Industry. The oil industry is the driver of Iraq's economy, and rebuilding this industry has received substantial U.S. attention. Before the war, it was widely asserted by Administration officials that Iraq's vast oil reserves, believed second only to those of Saudi Arabia, would fund much, if not all, reconstruction costs. The oil industry infrastructure suffered little damage during the U.S.-led invasion (only about nine oil wells were set on fire), but it has become a target of insurgents and smugglers. Insurgents have focused their attacks on pipelines in northern Iraq that feed the Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline that is loaded at Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. (Iraq's total pipeline system is over 4,300 miles long.) The attacks, coupled with corruption, smuggling, and other deterioration, has kept production and exports below expected levels, although high world oil prices have more than compensating for the output shortfall. The northern export route was shut in early 2006 but is now back in operation. The United States imports about 660,000 barrels per day of crude oil from Iraq. The Iraqi government needs to import refined gasoline because it lacks sufficient refining capacity. The alleged smuggling of oil, particularly by the Fadila party that has many members in the oil industry, has been a source of intra-Shiite rivalry and clashes in Basra, as well as depriving the central government of some revenue. Lines for gasoline often last many hours.

A related issue is long-term development of Iraq's oil industry and which foreign energy firms, if any, might receive preference for contracts to explore Iraq's vast reserves. Russia, China, and others are said to fear that the United States will seek to develop Iraq's oil industry with minimal participation of firms from other countries. Iraq's interim government has contracted for a study of the extent of Iraq's oil reserves, and it has contracted with Royal Dutch/Shell to formulate a blueprint to develop the gas sector. Poland reportedly is negotiating with Iraq for possible investments in Iraq's energy sector. In December 2005, it was reported that a Norwegian company, DNO, has contracted with the Kurdish administrative region to explore for oil near the northern city of Zakho, raising the concerns of Iraq's Arabs

who view this as a move by the Kurds to control some Iraqi oil revenues. The company says the field might eventually produce about 100,000 barrels per day.

Table 3. Selected Key Indicators

Oil						
Oil Production (weekly avg.)	**Oil Production (pre-war)**	**Oil Exports**	**Oil Exports (pre-war)**	**Oil Revenue (2004)**	**Oil Revenue (2005)**	**Oil Revenue (2006 (to date)**
2.31 million barrels per day (mbd)	2.5 mbd	1.53 mbd	2.2 mbd	$17 billion	$23.5 billion	$23.4 billion
Electricity						
Pre-War Load Served (MWh)	**Current Load Served**	**Baghdad (hrs. per day)**	**National Average (hrs. per day)**			
102,000	110,000	6.3	11.1			
Other Economic Indicators						
GDP Growth Rate (2006 anticipated by IMF)			10.6%			
GDP	$18.9 billion (2002)		$33.1 billion (2005)			
New Businesses Begun Since 2003			30,000			

Note: Figures in the table are provided by the State Department "Iraq Weekly Status Report" dated September 20, 2006. Oil export revenue is net of a 5% deduction for reparations to the victims of the 1990 Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait, as provided for in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483 (May 22, 2003). That 5% deduction is paid into a U.N. escrow account controlled by the U.N. Compensation Commission to pay judgments awarded.

Lifting U.S. Sanctions. In an effort to encourage private U.S. investment in Iraq, the Bush Administration has lifted most U.S. sanctions on Iraq, beginning with Presidential Determinations issued under authorities provided by P.L. 108-7 (appropriations for FY2003) and P.L. 108-11 (FY2003 supplemental):

- On July 30, 2004, President Bush issued an executive order ending a trade and investment ban imposed on Iraq by Executive Order 12722 (August 2, 1990) and 12724 (August 9, 1990), and reinforced by the Iraq Sanctions Act of 1990 (Section 586 of P.L. 101-513, November 5, 1990 (following the August 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait.) The order did not unblock Iraqi assets frozen at that time.

- On September 8, 2004, the President designated Iraq a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), enabling Iraqi products to be imported to the United States duty-free.

- On September 24, 2004, Iraq was removed from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism under Section 6(j) of the Export

Administration Act (P.L. 96-72). Iraq is thus no longer barred from receiving U.S. foreign assistance, U.S. votes in favor of international loans, and sales of arms and related equipment and services. Exports of dual use items (items that can have military applications) are no longer subject to strict licensing procedures.[29]

- The FY2005 supplemental (P.L. 109-13) removed Iraq from a named list of countries for which the United States is required to withhold a proportionate share of its voluntary contributions to international organizations for programs in those countries.

Debt Relief/WTO Membership. The Administration is attempting to persuade other countries to forgive Iraq's debt, built up during Saddam's regime, and estimated of Saddam Hussein. The debt is estimated to total about $116 billion, not including reparations dating to the first Persian Gulf war. In 2004, the "Paris Club" of 19 industrialized nations agreed to cancel about 80% of the $39 billion Iraq owes them. However, with the exception of Kuwait, the Persian Gulf states that supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war have not to date firmly agreed to write-off Iraq's approximately $50 billion in debt to those countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar). On December 17, 2004, the United States signed an agreement with Iraq writing off 100% of Iraq's $4.1 billion debt to the United States; that debt consisted of principal and interest from about $2 billion in defaults on Iraqi agricultural credits from the 1980s.[30] On December 13, 2004, the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreed to begin accession talks with Iraq.

Security Challenges, Responses, and Options

In several series of speeches since late 2005, President Bush has cited successful elections and the growth of the Iraqi security forces to assert that U.S. policy will produce a stable Iraq, although he has increasingly discussed unexpected security difficulties that complicate the U.S. effort. During a press conference on August 21, 2006, he emphasized that Iraq's security would deteriorate dramatically and U.S. security would be threatened if the United States were to withdraw. On the other hand, some Iraqi leaders, reportedly including Ayatollah Sistani in a message delivered in August 2006 to the Bush Administration by visiting deputy president Adel Abdul Mahdi, are concerned that the U.S. commitment to securing Iraq might be waning in light of the current difficulties.

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[29] A May 7, 2003, executive order left in place the provisions of the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act (P.L. 102-484); that act imposes sanctions on persons or governments that export technology that would contribute to any Iraqi advanced conventional arms capability or weapons of mass destruction programs.

[30] For more information, see CRS Report RL33376, *Iraq's Debt Relief: Procedure and Potential Implications for International Debt Relief*, by Martin A. Weiss.

Congress has mandated two major periodic Administration reports on progress in stabilizing Iraq. A Defense Department quarterly report, which DOD has titled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," was required by an FY2005 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-13). The latest version was issued in August 2006 and provides some of the information below. Another report, first issued April 6, 2006 ("1227 Report"), was required by Section 1227 of the Defense Authorization Act for FY2006 (P.L. 109-163).

Insurgency

The Sunni Arab-led insurgency against U.S. and Iraqi forces has defied most U.S. expectations in intensity and duration. Although hesitant to assess the size of the insurgency, U.S. commanders say that insurgents probably number approximately 12,000-20,000. Some Iraqi officials have publicly advanced higher estimates of about 40,000 active insurgents, helped by another 150,000 supporters. Insurgent attacks — characterized mostly by roadside bombs, mortar and other indirect fire, and direct weapons fire as well as larger suicide bombings — numbered about 100 per day during most of 2005, and DOD officials in August 2006 put that number at about 120 attacks per day.

The Administration's "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" (November 30, 2005) says that many of the insurgents are motivated by opposition to perceived U.S. rule in Iraq, to democracy, and to Shiite political dominance. Others want to return the Baath Party to power, although, according to many experts, some would accept a larger Sunni political role without the Baath. Still others are pro-Al Qaeda fighters, either foreign or Iraqi, that want to defeat the United States and spread radical Islam throughout the region. The insurgent groups are believed to be loosely coordinated within cities and wider provinces. However, in early 2006, a group of insurgent factions announced the formation of a national "Mujahedin Shura (Council)" purportedly consisting mostly of Iraqi factions but including foreign fighters.

Despite their growing coordination, the insurgents have failed to derail the political transition,[31] although they have succeeded, to some extent, in painting the Iraqi government as ineffective and stimulating a debate in the United States over the continuing U.S. commitment in Iraq. Since March 2006, insurgent groups have conducted several large-scale (50 insurgents fighters or more) attacks on police stations and other fixed positions, in at least one case overrunning a station and freeing prisoners from it. Other targets include not only U.S. forces and Iraqi officials and security forces but also Iraqi civilians working for U.S. authorities, foreign contractors and aid workers, oil export and gasoline distribution facilities, and water, power, and other infrastructure facilities. Whole neighborhoods of Baghdad, including Amiriya, Jihad, Amal, and Doura, not to mention the Anbar Province city of Ramadi, have increasingly served as insurgent bases. Iraqis say that

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[31] For further information, see Baram, Amatzia. "*Who Are the Insurgents?*" U.S. Institute of Peace, Special Report 134, April 2005; and Eisenstadt, Michael and Jeffrey White. "*Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency*." Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus No. 50, December 2005.

the upscale and previously quiet Baghdad district of Mansour is now penetrated by insurgents.

The U.N. Security Council has adopted the U.S. interpretation of the insurgency in Resolution 1618 (August 4, 2005), condemning the "terrorist attacks that have taken place in Iraq," including attacks on Iraqi election workers, constitution drafters, and foreign diplomats in Iraq. The FY2006 supplemental (P.L. 109-234) provides $1.3 million in Treasury Department funds to disrupt insurgent financing.

Foreign Insurgents/Zarqawi Faction.[32] A numerically small but politically significant component of the insurgency is non-Iraqi, constituted as an organization called Al Qaeda-Iraq. A study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies released in September 2005 said that about 3,500 foreign fighters are in Iraq. According to the study, the foreign fighters come mostly from Algeria, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, with Saudis constituting only about 350 of the 3,000 estimated foreign fighters.

A major portion of the foreign fighters were commanded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a 40-year-old Jordanian Arab who reputedly fought in Afghanistan during the 1980s alongside other Arab volunteers against the Soviet Union.[33] He was killed in a June 7, 2006, U.S. airstrike and has been succeeded by the little known Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (also known as Abu Ayyub al-Masri), an Egyptian national. The organization remains active, and some U.S. commanders say it is increasingly gaining political influence among Iraqi Sunnis in Fallujah and other parts of Sunni-inhabited Anbar Province. Al Muhajir appeared in a video in September 2006 inciting insurgents to attack American soldiers.

The foreign fighters have been a U.S. focus because of their alleged perpetration of large scale suicide and other bombings against both combatant and civilian targets. This trend began with major suicide bombings in 2003, beginning with one against U.N. headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad (August 19, 2003),[34] followed by the August 29, 2003 bombing in Najaf that killed SCIRI leader Mohammad Baqr Al Hakim. The foreign fighters, and related factions, have also kidnapped a total of over 250 foreigner workers, and killed about 40 of those. Zarqawi's strategy was to

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[32] See CRS Report RL32217, *Iraq and Al Qaeda: Allies or Not?*, by Kenneth Katzman.

[33] Zarqawi himself came to Iraq in late 2001, along with several hundred associates, after escaping the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan. He made his way to northern Iraq, after transiting Iran and Saddam-controlled Iraq, eventually taking refuge with a Kurdish Islamist faction called Ansar al-Islam near the town of Khurmal. After the Ansar enclave was destroyed in OIF, Zarqawi went to the Sunni Arab areas of Iraq, naming his faction the Association of Unity and Jihad. He then formally affiliated with Al Qaeda (through a reputed exchange of letters) and changed his faction's name to "Al Qaeda Jihad in Mesopotamia (Iraq)." It is named as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), assuming that designation from the earlier Unity and Jihad title, which was designated as an FTO in October 2004.

[34] Among the dead in the latter bombing was the U.N. representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and it prompted an evacuation of U.N. personnel from Iraq.

spark Sunni-Shiite civil war, an outcome that appears to be developing. In actions intended to spread their activities outside Iraq, Zarqawi's faction reputedly committed the August 19, 2005, failed rocket attack in the Jordanian port of Aqaba against two U.S. warships docked there, as well as the November 10, 2005, bombing of Western-owned hotels in Amman, Jordan.

Outside Support for Sunni Insurgents. Numerous accounts have said that Sunni insurgents are receiving help from neighboring states (money and weapons),[35] although others believe that outside support for the insurgency is not decisive. In September 2005, U.S. ambassador Khalilzad publicly accused Syria of allowing training camps in Syria for Iraqi insurgents to gather and train before going into Iraq. These reports led to U.S. warnings to and imposition of additional U.S. sanctions against Syria and to the U.S. Treasury Department's blocking of assets of some suspected financiers of the insurgency. Syria tried to deflect the criticism by moves such as the February 2005 turnover of Saddam Hussein's half-brother Sabawi to Iraqi authorities. Since January 2006, senior U.S. commanders in Iraq have said they have been receiving increased cooperation from Syria to prevent insurgent flows across those borders.

Other assessments say the Sunni insurgents, both Iraqi and non-Iraqi, receive funding from wealthy donors in neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia,[36] where a number of clerics have publicly called on Saudis to support the Iraqi insurgency. Some reports say that some influential Saudis want the Saudi government to provide direct support to Sunni insurgents in Iraq as a means of protecting the Sunni minority, although the government apparently is resisting doing so on the grounds that militants might return to Saudi Arabia to commit violence.

Sectarian Violence and Militias/Civil War?

The security environment in Iraq has become more complex over the past year as Sunni-Shiite sectarian violence has increased. Top U.S. officials now say that sectarian-motivated violence — manifestations of an all-out struggle for political and economic power in Iraq — has now displaced the Sunni-led insurgency as the primary security challenge in Iraq. Senior U.S. officials, most notably the leaders of the Iraq war effort (Gen. John Abizaid and George Casey) at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on August 3, 2006, have said the sectarian violence risks becoming all-out civil war, but that they do not consider Iraq in a civil war now. Some experts, on the other hand, say that Iraq is now clearly in at least a low-level civil war. This violence worsened after the February 22, 2006, Al Qaeda-Iraq bombing of the Askariya Shiite mosque in Samarra. The destruction of its dome set off a wave of purported Shiite militia attacks on about 60 Sunni mosques and the killing of about 400 persons in the first days after the sectarian attacks. Since then, the violence has taken the form of weapons fire, abductions, and attacks on mosques,

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[35] Blanford, Nicholas. "Sealing Syria's Desolate Border," *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 21, 2004.

[36] Krane, Jim. "U.S. Officials: Iraq Insurgency Bigger." Associated Press report published in the Philadelphia Inquirer. July 9, 2004; Schmitt, Eric, and Thom Shanker. "Estimates By U.S. See More Rebels With More Funds," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2004.

markets, and apartment buildings frequented or inhabited by members of the rival sect. Many of those abducted turn up bound and gagged, dumped in rivers, facilities, vehicles, or fields. UNAMI, as well as Iraqi morgue and other officials, say that this type of violence is now claiming more than 100 Iraqi lives per day: approximately 6,600 were killed in sectarian and other violence in July and August 2006.

The sectarian violence is difficult to curb because the Sunnis are blaming the Shiites for using their preponderant presence in the emerging security forces — as well as their party-based militias — to commit atrocities against Sunnis. Sunnis report that Shiite militiamen who have joined the security forces are raiding Sunni homes or using their arrest powers to abduct Sunnis, some of whom later show up killed. Many Shiites, for their part, are blaming Sunni insurgents for attacking Shiite civilians. Officials from the International Organization of Migration (IOM) said in July 2006 that there are now as many as 180,000 internally displaced persons in Iraq (Iraqis who are fleeing their homes in mixed Baghdad neighborhoods) or provinces because of threats from one sect or the other.[37]

The sectarian violence has caused U.S. officials to assert that the new government must not only better vet their new security forces but also control or dismantle eleven independent militias identified by Iraqi officials. Although U.S. commanders have, to date, mostly tolerated the presence of militias, there are indications that U.S. forces are now moving to curb them, particularly the Mahdi Army of Moqtada al-Sadr. During July 17-24, 2006, for example, U.S. and Iraqi forces conducted 19 operations against purported sectarian "death squads." In late 2005, U.S. forces uncovered militia-run detention facilities and arrested those running them. U.S. officials — as well as the new Interior Minister Jawad Bolani — are also moving to prevent militiamen from joining the security forces.

In an effort to curb sectarian and insurgent violence, the Administration announced on July 25, 2006, during the visit of Prime Minister Maliki, that about 4,000 additional U.S. troops would deploy in Baghdad (supplementing the 9,000 U.S. forces there already) as part of "Operation Together Forward" to patrol neighborhoods and prevent insurgent and militia activities. The operation, still ongoing, has focused on such violent districts as Doura, Amiriyah, Rashid, Ghaziliyah, and Mansour. U.S. commanders say that violence in these districts has dropped substantially, over 50% in some cases, as a result of the operation, and that shops have reopened because of increased sense of security. Others say the U.S. figures are not accurate and that the operation has yielded few results because major violence continues in Baghdad as of late September 2006.

The three major militias in Iraq are discussed below, although it is primarily the Shiite militias that are believed responsible for sectarian violence.

- *Kurdish Peshmerga.* Together, the KDP and PUK may have as many as 100,000 *peshmergas* (fighters), most of which are providing security in the Kurdish regional area (Dahuk,

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[37] Knickermeyer, Ellen. "Thousands of Iraqis Flee to Avoid Spread of Violence." *Washington Post*, Mar. 29, 2006.

Sulaymaniyah, and Irbil Provinces). Some are in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and deployed in such cities as Mosul, Tal Affar, and Baghdad. Peshmerga units have sometimes fought each other; in May 1994, the KDP and the PUK clashed with each other over territory, customs revenues, and control over the Kurdish regional government in Irbil.

- *Badr Brigades.* The militia of SCIRI numbers about 5,000 and is led by Hadi al-Amiri (a member of parliament). The Badr Brigades were recruited, trained, and equipped by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, aligned with Iran's hardliners, during the Iran-Iraq war, during which Badr guerrillas conducted forays from Iran into southern Iraq to attack Baath Party officials. Most Badr fighters were recruited from the ranks of Iraqi prisoners of war held in Iran. However, many Iraqi Shiites viewed SCIRI as an Iranian puppet and Badr operations in southern Iraq during the 1980s and 1990s did not shake Saddam's grip on power. The Badr "Organization" registered as a separate political entity, in addition to its SCIRI parent, during elections in 2005.

- Badr militiamen play unofficial policing roles in Basra, Najaf, and elsewhere in southern Iraq. Many Badr members also reputedly are in the ISF, particularly the police, which is led by the SCIRI-dominated Interior Ministry, and Badr forces reputedly operated unofficial detention facilities discovered by U.S. forces in late 2005. A related militia, called the "Wolf Brigade" (now renamed the Freedom Brigade) is a Badr offshoot that is formally part of the police. It is also led by a SCIRI activist.

- *Mahdi Army.* U.S. officials say Sadr's Mahdi Army militia has now grown to about 20,000 fighters, representing a gaining of strength since U.S. military operations suppressed Mahdi uprisings in April and August of 2004. That fighting was ended with compromises under which Mahdi forces stopped fighting (and in some cases traded in some of their weapons for money) in exchange for lenient treatment or releases of prisoners, amnesty for Sadr himself, and reconstruction aid. The Mahdi Army subsequently, with tacit U.S. and coalition approval, patrolled Sadr City and parts of other Shiite cities, particularly Basra. However, Mahdi assertiveness since 2005 has accounted for a sharp deterioration of relations between the Mahdi Army and British and U.S. forces, and between Sadr and other Iraqi leaders more generally. At least 30 British soldiers have died in suspected Mahdi attacks in southern Iraq since late 2005, including a British helicopter shot down in May 2006. Since mid-2006, U.S. casualties have been occurring in areas where Sadr is strong, including Sadr City, Diwaniyah, and Kut. In addition, a major clash occurred between the Mahdi Army and Iraqi forces in Diwaniyah in August 2006, resulting in more than 20 Iraqi troops killed. Mahdi forces also shelled a British base near Amarah in August 2006, contributing to a British decision to leave the base.

Iranian Support. U.S. officials have repeatedly accused Iran of aiding Shiite militias. On June 22, 2006, General Casey reiterated past assertions by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Peter Pace that the Qods (Jerusalem) Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard is providing armed Iraqi Shiite factions (most likely Sadr's Mahdi forces) with explosives and weapons. The most likely recipient is the Shiite faction of Moqtada al-Sadr. Because of Iran's support for Shiite militias, the United States and Iran announced in March 2006 that they would conduct direct talks on the issue of stabilizing Iraq, but Iran subsequently said the talks were not needed because Iraq had a new government, and no talks have been held. For more information, see CRS Report RS22323, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, by Kenneth Katzman.

U.S. Efforts to Restore Security

At times, such as after the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003 and after all three elections in 2005, U.S. officials have expressed optimism that the violence would subside. As outlined in the "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," the Administration continues to try to refine its stabilization strategy, with increasing focus on preventing sectarian violence from escalating into all-out civil war.

"Clear, Hold, and Build" Strategy/Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Since November 2005, the Administration has publicly articulated a strategy called "clear, hold, and build," intended to create and expand stable enclaves by positioning Iraqi forces and U.S. civilian reconstruction experts in areas cleared of insurgents. The strategy, based partly on an idea advanced by Andrew Krepinevich in the September/October 2005 issue of *Foreign Affairs*,[38] says that the United States should devote substantial resources to preventing insurgent re-infiltration and promoting reconstruction in selected areas, cultivating these areas as a model that could eventually expand throughout Iraq. The strategy has formed the basis of "Operation Together Forward" designed to pacify restive areas of Baghdad.

In conjunction with the new U.S. strategy, the Administration has formed Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), a concept used extensively in Afghanistan. Each PRT is civilian led, composed of about 100 U.S. State Department officials and contract personnel, to assist local Iraqi governing institutions, such as the provincial councils (elected in the January 2005 elections), representatives of the Iraqi provincial governors, and local ministry representatives. The concept ran into some U.S. military objections to taking on expanded missions, but the debate was resolved with an agreement by DOD to provide security to the U.S.-run PRTs.

Thus far, five PRTs have been inaugurated: in Mosul, Kirkuk, Hilla, Baghdad, and Anbar Province. According to the July 2006 "2207 Report," U.S. officials plan to form up to eight additional U.S.-led PRTs, with an unspecified number of others to be run by coalition partner forces or the Iraqis. To date, Britain has formed a PRT in Basra, and Italy has formed one in Dhi Qar province.

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[38] Krepinevich, Andrew. "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2005.

PRT Funding. The FY2006 supplemental request asked for $400 million for operational costs for the PRTs as well as $675 million for development grants to be distributed by them. The enacted version, P.L. 109-234, provides $229 million of that amount.

U.S. Counter-Insurgent Combat Operations. The Administration position is that continued combat operations against the insurgency — and increasingly against sectarian militias — are required. About 141,000 U.S. troops are in Iraq (down from 160,000 there during the December 2005 election period and consistent with 2005 baseline troop levels), with about another 50,000 troops in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf region supporting OIF. Centcom commander Gen. Abizaid said on September 19, 2006, that this force level is likely to persist into spring 2007 due to the high levels of violence. U.S. military headquarters in Baghdad (Combined Joint Task Force-7, CJTF-7) is now a multi-national headquarters "Multinational Force-Iraq, MNF-I," headed by four-star U.S. Gen. George Casey. Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli is operational commander of U.S. forces as head of the "Multinational Corps-Iraq."

A major focus of U.S. counter-insurgent combat has been Anbar Province, which includes the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, the latter of which is the most restive of all Iraqi cities and which is assessed to have virtually no functioning governance. However, a reported assessment by a U.S. intelligence officer in August 2006 said that U.S. efforts in Anbar were failing and that the province is "lost" politically. Other reports say that U.S. forces are essentially conceding some areas of Anbar (the cities of Hit and Haditha, for example) because intense combat in these areas might cost significant U.S. lives without yielding permanent results. Still, there are about 40,000 U.S. troops in Anbar conducting combat primarily in and around the provincial capital of Ramadi. In the run-up to the December 15 elections, U.S. (and Iraqi) forces conducted several major operations (for example Operations Matador, Dagger, Spear, Lightning, Sword, Hunter, Steel Curtain, and Ram) to clear contingents of foreign fighters and other insurgents from Sunni cities along the Euphrates River.

Casualties. As of September 22, 2006, 2,695 U.S. forces and about 240 coalition partner soldiers have died in OIF, as well as over 125 U.S. civilians working on contract to U.S. institutions in Iraq. Of U.S. deaths, 2,550 have occurred since President Bush declared an end to "major combat operations" in Iraq on May 1, 2003, and about 2,150 of the U.S. deaths were by hostile action. (See CRS Report RS22441, *Iraqi Civilian, Police, and Security Force Casualty Estimates*, by Hannah Fischer.)

Building Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)[39]

A major pillar of U.S. policy is to equip and train Iraqi security forces (ISF) that could secure Iraq by themselves. President Bush stated in a June 28, 2005 speech, "Our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will

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[39] For additional information, see CRS Report RS22093, *Iraq's New Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, by Jeremy Sharp.

stand down."[40] The most recent DOD "Measuring Stability" report, released August 2006, reiterates U.S. official statements of progress in building the ISF, while assessing that growing sectarian violence is hindering U.S. stabilization efforts.

The tables below detail the composition of the ISF and provide Administration assessments of force readiness. As of September 20, there are 302,200 total ISF: 130,100 "operational" military forces under the Ministry of Defense and 172,100 police and police commando forces "trained and equipped" under the Ministry of Interior. The commander of the ISF training mission, the Multinational Transition Security Command - Iraq (MNSTC-I), Gen. Martin Dempsey, said in late June 2006 that the total force goal of 325,000 ISF would be reached by the end of 2006. However, police figures include possibly tens of thousands (according to the GAO on March 15, 2005) who are absent-without-leave or might have deserted. The police live in their areas of operation, and attendance is hard to account for.

U.S. commanders say they are making progress preparing ISF units to assume greater responsibility. General Casey said on August 30, 2006, that by the end of 2007, the ISF should be capable of taking on security responsibilities for all of Iraq, with little U.S. support. Another U.S. general (Kurt Cichowski) said on July 7, 2006, that ISF forces might have security responsibility for half of Iraq's 18 provinces by the end of 2006. Indicators include the following:

- In September 2006, the Ministry of Defense began assuming operational control of Iraqi military forces from the U.S.-led coalition. By the end of October 2006, it is estimated that one-third of the ISF will be under Iraqi operational control.

- As of May 2006, U.S. and partner forces have now turned over to the ISF 40 out of 111 forward operation bases.

- As of September 20, 2006, 88 battalions of ISF (about 63,000 personnel) are "in the lead" on security in their areas of operations.

- Almost half the territory of Iraq is now under ISF security control, including the entire province of Muthanna (turned over to ISF control on July 13, 2006, in conjunction with the pullout of Japanese ground forces from the province) and the province of Dhi Qar (turned over to ISF control by Italy on September 21, 2006).

- Nearly the entire provinces of Wasit, Qadissiyah, Najaf, and Babil — 8th IAD (mostly Shiites) are under ISF control.

- Areas south and west of Mosul are under the control of the 2nd and 3rd IAD, respectively.

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[40] Speech by President Bush can be found at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news.releases/2005/06/print/20050628-7.html].

- Areas west of Baghdad, including Abu Ghraib and the area around Habbaniyah (the first part of Anbar Province turned over to the ISF) are under control of the 1st and 6th IAD.

- A large swath of northern Iraq, encompassing much of Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Tamim provinces, was turned over to 4th IAD control on August 9, 2006.

- Most of Diyala province was handed to the 5th IAD on July 3, 2006.

However, some U.S. commanders and outside observers say that the ISF continue to lack an effective command structure, independent initiative, or commitment to the mission, and that it could fragment if U.S. troops draw down.[41] U.S. commanders have told journalists recently that it is common for half of an entire ISF unit to desert or refuse to undertake a specified mission.[42] ISF were unable to secure Baghdad under Maliki's security plan for the city, necessitating the infusion of U.S. forces in July-August 2006. Iraqi forces also were unable to prevent looting of the British base, cited above, abandoned by British forces in August 2006 in Amarah. A report on the Iraqi police by the offices of the Inspector General of the State and Defense Departments, released July 15, 2005, said that many recruits are only marginally literate and that some recruits are insurgent infiltrators (p.3).[43]

A major issue is ethnic balance; U.S. commanders have acknowledged difficulty recruiting Sunni Arabs into the ISF and have said this is a deficiency they are trying to correct. Most of the ISF, particularly the police, are Shiites, with Kurdish units mainly deployed in the north. There are few units of mixed ethnicity, and, as discussed above, many Sunnis see the ISF as mostly Shiite and Kurdish instruments of repression and responsible for sectarian killings. As indicators of difficulty, in May 2006, new Sunni recruits deserted a graduation ceremony immediately after learning they would be deployed in Shiite-dominated areas of Iraq. In August 2006, some Shiite military forces based in the Shiite south refused to deploy to Baghdad as part of the U.S.-led security plan discussed above.

There are growing allegations that some of the 145,000 members of the Facilities Protection Force, which is not formally under any ministry, may be involved in sectarian violence. The U.S. and Iraq began trying to rein in the force in May 2006 by placing it under some Ministry of Interior guidance, including issuing badges and supervising what types of weapons it uses.

ISF Funding. The accelerated training and equipping of the Iraqis is a key part of U.S. policy. The Administration has been shifting much U.S. funding into this training and equipping mission. According to the State Department, a total of $5.036

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[41] Fallows, James. "Why Iraq Has No Army." *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 2005.

[42] Castaneda, Antonio. "Iraqi Desertions Complicate U.S. Mission." *Associated Press*, January 31, 2006.

[43] Inspectors General. U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense. *Interagency Assessment of Iraqi Police Training*. July 15, 2005.

billion in IRRF funds has been allocated to build (train, equip, provide facilities for, and in some cases provide pay for) the ISF. Of those funds, as of September 20, 2006, about $4.938 billion has been obligated and $4.621 billion of that has been disbursed. An FY2005 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 109-13) provided an additional $5.7 billion to equip and train the ISF, funds to be controlled by the Department of Defense and provided to MNSTC-I. Of that amount, about $4.7 billion has been obligated. *Therefore, the total obligated (spent) for the ISF to date is about $9.6 billion.* The FY2006 supplemental (P.L. 109-234) provides another $3 billion for the ISF but withholds the remaining ISF facilities construction funding.

Table 4. Ministry of Defense Forces

(As of August 23, 2006)

Force	Size/Strength	IRRF Funds Allocated
Iraqi Army	128,230 total; goal is 131,000. Forces in units are in 104 battalions (about 70,000 personnel), with 86 battalions (about 60,000) "in the lead" on operations. At least 57 battalions (about 40,000) control their own "battle space." Trained for eight weeks, paid $60/month. Has mostly East bloc equipment, including 77 T-72 tanks donated by Poland.	$1.097 billion for facilities; $707 million for equipment; $656 million for training, personnel, and operations
Iraqi Intervention Force	About 3,000 personnel, included in Army total above. Trained for 13 weeks.	
Special Operations Forces	About 1,600 divided between Iraqi Counter-Terrorist Force (ICTF) and a Commando Battalion. Trained for 12 weeks, mostly in Jordan.	
Strategic Infrastructure Battalions	About 2,900 personnel in seven battalions to protect oil pipelines, electricity infrastructure. The goal is 11 battalions.	
Mechanized Police Brigade	About 1,500. Recently transferred from Ministry of Interior control.	
Air Force	About 740, its target size. Has 9 helicopters, 3 C-130s; 14 observation aircraft. Trained for six months. UAE and Jordan to provide other aircraft and helos.	$28 million allocated for air fields (from funds for Iraqi Army, above)
Navy	About 1,130, about the target size. Has a Patrol Boat Squadron and a Coastal Defense Regiment. Fields about 35 patrol boats for anti-smuggling and anti-infiltration. Controls naval base at Umm Qasra, Basra port, and Khor al-Amaya oil terminals. Some training by Australian Navy.	
Totals	130,100	
U.S./Other Trainers	U.S. training, including embedding with Iraqi units, involves about 10,000 U.S. forces, run by Multinational Security Transition Command - Iraq (MNSTC-I). Training at Taji, north of Baghdad; Kirkush, near Iranian border; and Numaniya, south of Baghdad. All 26 NATO nations at NATO Training Mission - Iraq (NTM-I) at Rustamiyah (300 trainers). Others trained at NATO bases in Norway and Italy. Jordan, Germany, and Egypt also have done training.	

Table 5. Ministry of Interior Forces

(As of July 21, 2006)

Force	Size/Strength	IRRF Funds Allocated
Iraqi Police Service (IPS)	120,190, including 1,300 person Highway Patrol. (About the target size.) Gets eight weeks of training, paid $60 per month. Not organized as battalions.	$ 1.806 billion allocated for training and technical assistance.
Center for Dignitary Protection	About 500 personnel	
National Police	About 24,400. Comprises "Police Commandos," Public Order Police," and "Mechanized Police." Organized into 28 battalions, 2 of which (about 1,500) are "in the lead" in counter-insurgency operations. Six battalions (about 4,000) control security in their areas. Overwhelmingly Shiite, but U.S. is attempting to recruit more Sunnis. Gets four weeks of counter-insurgency training.	
Emergency Response Unit	About 300, able to lead operations. Hostage rescue.	
Border Enforcement Department	26,710. Controls 258 border forts built or under construction. Has Riverine Police component to secure water crossings.	$437 million, $3 million of which is allocated to pay stipends to 150 former regime WMD personnel.
Totals (all forces)	172,100. Goal is 195,000	
Training	Training by 2,000 U.S. personnel as embeds and partners. Pre-operational training mostly at Jordan International Police Training Center; Baghdad Police College and seven academies around Iraq; and in UAE. Countries doing training aside from U.S.: Canada, Britain, Australia, Sweden, Poland, UAE, Denmark, Austria, Finland, Czech Republic, Germany (now suspended), Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Singapore, Belgium, and Egypt.	
Facilities Protection Service	Technically outside MOI. About 145,000 security guards protecting economic infrastructure.	$53 million allocated for this service thus far.

Coalition-Building and Maintenance[44]

Some believe that the Bush Administration did not exert sufficient efforts to enlist greater international participation in peacekeeping originally and that the U.S. mission in Iraq is being complicated by diminishing foreign military personnel contributions. As of September 20, 2006, 27 other countries are contributing about 18,000 forces, but that total is expected to fall. Poland and Britain lead multinational divisions in central and southern Iraq, respectively. The UK-led force (UK forces alone number about 7,500) is based in Basra, but Britain said it will likely halve its force by mid-2007. The Poland-led force (Polish forces number 1,700, down 800 from 2005 levels) is based in Hilla and include forces from the following foreign countries: Armenia, Slovakia, Denmark, El Salvador, Ukraine, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan. However, Poland says it might withdraw its remaining forces by the end of 2006. Italy is expected to withdraw most of its 1,600 troops now that it has turned Dhi Qar Province over to ISF control.

The coalition force has shrunk since Spain's May 2004 withdrawal of its 1,300 troops. Spain made that decision following the March 11, 2004 Madrid bombings and subsequent defeat of the former Spanish government that had supported the war effort. Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua followed Spain's withdrawal (900 total personnel), and the Philippines withdrew in July 2004 after one of its citizens was taken hostage. On the other hand, many nations are replacing their contingents with trainers for the ISF or financial contributions or other assistance to Iraq. Among other changes are the following.

- Ukraine, which lost eight soldiers in a January 2005 insurgent attack, withdrew most of its 1,500 forces after the December 2005 elections.

- Bulgaria pulled out its 360-member unit after the December 15 Iraqi elections. However, in March 2006 it said it had sent in a 150-person force to take over guard duties of Camp Ashraf, a base in eastern Iraq where Iranian oppositionists are located.

- South Korea withdrew 270 of its almost 3,600 troops in June 2005, and, in line with a November 2005 decision, withdrew another 1,000 in May 2006, bringing its troop level to about 2,200 (based in Irbil in Kurdish-controlled Iraq). The remainder will stay through 2006.

- Japan completed its withdrawal of its 600-person military reconstruction contingent in Samawah on July 17, 2006. The Australian forces protecting the Japanese contingent (450 out of the total Australian deployment in Iraq of 1,350) moved to other areas.

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[44] For additional information on international contributions to Iraq peacekeeping and reconstruction, see CRS Report RL32105, *Post-War Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Training, Peacekeeping, and Reconstruction*, by Jeremy Sharp and Christopher Blanchard.

- Denmark said in May 2006 it will keep its forces in Iraq (Basra), although it withdrew 80 of its 530-person force in May 2006.

- In July 2006, Romanian leaders began debating whether to withdraw or reduce its 890 forces in Iraq.

NATO/EU/Other Offers of Civilian Training. As noted above, all NATO countries have now agreed to train the ISF through the NTM-I, as well as to contribute funds or equipment. Several NATO countries and others are offering to also train civilian personnel. In addition to the security training offers discussed above, European Union (EU) leaders have offered to help train Iraqi police, administrators, and judges outside Iraq. At the June 22, 2005 Brussels conference discussed above, the EU pledged a $130 million package to help Iraq write its permanent constitution and reform government ministries. The FY2005 supplemental appropriations (P.L. 109-13) provides $99 million to set up a regional counter-terrorism center in Jordan to train Iraqi security personnel and civil servants.

Options and Debate on an "Exit Strategy"

Although there are no public indications that the Administration might soon end or dramatically alter the U.S. effort in Iraq, some Members say that major new initiatives need to be considered to stabilize Iraq or to shift the burden of securing Iraq to Iraqi political leaders. As U.S. public support for the U.S. effort in Iraq has declined, debates have emerged over several congressional resolutions proposing an "exit strategy." On the other hand, there does not appear to be major public support for an immediate end to the Iraq effort. Some of the ideas widely circulated among Members and other policy experts are discussed below.

Troop Increase. Some have said that the United States should increase troops levels in Iraq significantly to tamp down sectarian violence and prevent Sunni insurgents from re-infiltrating areas cleared by U.S. operations. Some experts believe the extra troops needed for such an effort might number about 100,000.[45] The Administration asserts that U.S. commanders feel that current and planned force levels are sufficient to complete the mission, and that U.S. commanders are able to request additional forces, if needed. Some experts believe that troop level increases would aggravate Sunni Arabs already resentful of the U.S. intervention in Iraq and that even many more U.S. troops would not necessarily produce stability and would appear to deepen the U.S. commitment without a clear exit strategy. Others believe that increasing U.S. force levels would further the impression that the Iraqi government depends on the United States for its survival.

Immediate Withdrawal. Some Members argue that the United States should begin to withdraw immediately, maintaining that the decision to invade Iraq was a mistake in light of the failure thus far to locate WMD, that the large U.S. presence in Iraq is inflaming the insurgency, and that remaining in Iraq will result in additional U.S. casualties without securing U.S. national interests. Those who take this position

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[45] Bersia, John. "The Courage Needed to Win the War," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 9, 2005.

include the approximately 50 Members of the "Out of Iraq Congressional Caucus," formed in June 2005. In November 2005, Representative John Murtha, a ranking member and former chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, publicly called for an "immediate" pullout (over six months). His resolution (H.J.Res. 73) called for a U.S. withdrawal "at the earliest practicable date" and the maintenance of an "over the horizon" U.S. presence. A related resolution, H.Res. 571 (written by Representative Duncan Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee), expressed the sense "that the deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq be terminated immediately;" it failed 403-3 on November 18, 2005. Other bills, such as H.R. 3142 and H.Con.Res. 197, state that it [should be] U.S. policy not to maintain a permanent or long-term presence in Iraq. The FY2006 supplemental (P.L. 109-234) omitted a provision to this effect that was in the Senate version.

Withdrawal Timetable. Another alternative is the setting of a timetable for a U.S. withdrawal or the beginning of a withdrawal. This position is typified by H.J.Res. 55, introduced by Representative Neil Abercrombie, which calls on the Administration to begin a withdrawal by October 2006. H.Con.Res. 348, introduced by Representative Mike Thompson, calls for a redeployment of U.S. forces no later than September 30, 2006. In November 2005, Senator Levin, who takes the view that the United States needs to force internal compromise in Iraq by threatening to withdraw, introduced an amendment to S. 1042 (FY2006 defense authorization bill) to compel the Administration to work on a timetable for withdrawal during 2006. Reportedly, on November 10, 2005, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee John Warner reworked the Levin proposal into an amendment that stopped short of setting a timetable for withdrawal but requires an Administration report on a "schedule for meeting conditions" that could permit a U.S. withdrawal. That measure, which also states in its preamble that "2006 should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty," achieved bi-partisan support, passing 79-19. It was incorporated, with only slight modifications by House conferees, in the conference report on the bill (H.Rept. 109-360, P.L. 109-163).

The issue was raised again on June 22, 2006, when the Senate debated two Iraq-related amendments to an FY2007 defense authorization bill (S. 2766). One, offered by Senator Kerry, setting a July 1, 2007, deadline for U.S. redeployment from Iraq, was defeated 86-13. Another amendment, sponsored by Senator Levin, called on the Administration to begin redeployment out of Iraq by the end of 2006, but with no deadline for full withdrawal. It was defeated 60-39. On July 31, 2006, 12 Democrats, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, reportedly wrote to President Bush calling for the beginning of a U.S. withdrawal by the end of 2006, although without a suggested deadline for completing that pullback, along with a "transition to a more limited mission."[46]

Responding to the congressional action, President Bush has remained opposed to the setting of any timetable for troop pullouts, let alone an immediate pullout. During his June 13, 2006, visit to Baghdad and again in his August 12, 2006, press conference, President Bush again ruled out a pullout by stating that the United States

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[46] Babington, Charles and Jim VendeHei. Hill Democrats Unite to Urge Bush to Begin Iraq Pullout. Washington Post, August 1, 2006.

would uphold its "commitment" to the Iraqi government, although he has suggested that Iraqi officials need to plan their own future. Supporters of the President's position maintain that the Iraqi government would collapse upon an immediate pullout, representing a victory for terrorists, and that the loss of the Iraq effort could cause terrorists to attempt attacks in the United States itself. H.Res. 861, stating that "... it is not in the national security interest of the United States to set an arbitrary date for the withdrawal or redeployment" of U.S. forces from Iraq passed the House on June 16 by a vote of 256-153, with 5 voting "present."

Troop Reduction. The House and Senate debate above occurred a few days before press reports appeared that General Casey, during a visit to Washington in late June 2006, had presented to President Bush options for a substantial drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq, beginning as early as September 2006. According to reports of the Casey plan, which the Administration said was one option dependent on security progress, U.S. force levels would drop to about 120,000 by September 2006, with a more pronounced reduction to about 100,000 by the end of 2007. These reports are similar to some previous reports of plans for reduction. Previous such reported plans, such as those discussed in late 2005, have tended to fade as the security situation has not calmed significantly, as is the case currently, and Gen. Abizaid indicated in his September 19, 2006, press comments that a troop reduction is unlikely at least until spring 2007.

Re-Working the Power Structure. Both the Administration and its critics have identified the need to bring more Sunni Arabs into the political process. As noted, U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad has reached out to Sunni groups, with some success. An unknown is what package of incentives, if any, would persuade most Sunnis to end support for the insurgency and fully support the government. Many experts believe that the Sunnis will only settle for a share of power that is perhaps slightly less than that wielded by the majority Shiites, even though the Shiites greatly outnumber Sunni Arabs in Iraq.

Some commentators believe in a more substantial re-distribution of power. They maintain that Iraq cannot be stabilized as one country and should be broken up into three separate countries: one Kurdish, one Sunni Arab, and one Shiite Arab. However, many Middle East experts believe the idea is unworkable because none of the three would likely be self-sufficient and would likely fall firmly under the sway of Iraq's powerful neighbors.

Another version of this idea, propounded by Senator Biden and Council on Foreign Relations expert Leslie Gelb (May 1, 2006, *New York Times* op-ed) is to form three autonomous regions, dominated by each of the major communities. According to the authors, doing so would ensure that these communities do not enter all-out civil war with each other. Some believe that, to alleviate Iraqi concerns about equitable distribution of oil revenues, an international organization should be tapped to distribute Iraq's oil revenues.

Negotiating With the Insurgents. A related idea is to negotiate with some Sunni figures representing the insurgency (including members of the MSA) and even with some insurgent commanders. The Administration — and the Iraqi government — appears to have adopted this recommendation, as demonstrated by Maliki's

reconciliation effort. Even before that initiative, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld confirmed to journalists in June 2005 that such discussions had taken place, and Iraqi President Talabani said in May 2006 that he had had talks with insurgent factions as well. The U.S. talks reportedly have been intended to help U.S. forces defeat Zarqawi's foreign insurgent faction. However, no major insurgent faction has lain down arms in response to any talks with U.S. personnel or Iraqi officials, although Iraqi leaders say some insurgent groups have expressed tentative interest in the amnesty plan. The insurgents who have attended such talks reportedly want an increased role for Sunnis in government and a timetable for U.S. withdrawal. Some U.S. officials appear to believe that talking directly with insurgents increases insurgent leverage and emboldens them to continue attacks.

Accelerating Economic Reconstruction. Some believe that the key to calming Iraq is to accelerate economic reconstruction. According to this view, accelerated reconstruction will drain support for insurgents by creating employment, improving public services, and creating confidence in the government. This idea appears to have been incorporated into the President's "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" document and the formation of the PRTs, as discussed above. Others doubt that economic improvement alone will produce major political results because the differences among Iraq's major communities are fundamental and resistant to economic solutions. In addition, the U.S. plan to transfer most reconstruction management to Iraqis by the end of 2007 might indicate that the Administration has not found this idea persuasive.

Internationalization Options. Some observers believe that the United States needs to recruit international help in stabilizing Iraq. One idea is to identify a high-level international mediator to negotiate with Iraq's major factions. In a possible move toward this option, in March 2006 President Bush appointed former Secretary of State James Baker to head a congressionally recruited "Iraq Study Group" to formulate options for U.S. policy in Iraq. (The conference report on H.R. 4939 provides $1 million for operations of the group.) However, there is no public discussion, to date, that Baker himself or any other member of the Study Group might be such a mediator, and most experts believe that a mediator, if selected, would likely need to come from a country that is viewed by all Iraqis as neutral on internal political outcomes in Iraq.

Another idea is to form a "contact group" of major countries and Iraqi neighbors to prevail on Iraq's factions to compromise. These ideas are included in several resolutions introduced by Senator Kerry, including S.J.Res. 36, S.Res. 470, S.J.Res. 33, and S. 1993, although several of these bills also include provisions for timetables for a U.S. withdrawal. Other ideas involve recruitment of new force donors. In July 2004, then Secretary of State Powell said the United States would consider a Saudi proposal for a contingent of troops from Muslim countries to perform peacekeeping in Iraq, reportedly under separate command. However, the idea floundered because of opposition from potential contributing countries.

Table 6. U.S. Aid (ESF) to Iraq's Opposition

(Amounts in millions of U.S. $)

	INC	War crimes	Broadcasting	Unspecified opposition activities	Total
FY1998 (P.L. 105-174)	—	2.0	5.0 (RFE/RL for "Radio Free Iraq)	3.0	10.0
FY1999 (P.L. 105-277)	3.0	3.0	—	2.0	8.0
FY2000 (P.L. 106-113)	—	2.0	—	8.0	10.0
FY2001 (P.L. 106-429)	12.0 (aid in Iraq)	2.0	6.0 (INC radio)	5.0	25.0
FY2002 (P.L. 107-115)	—	—	—	25.0	25.0
FY2003 (no earmark)	3.1	—	—	6.9	10.0
Total, FY1998-FY2003	18.1	9.0	11.0	49.9 (about 14.5 million of this went to INC	88.0
FY2004 (request)	—	—	—	0	0

Notes: According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (Apr. 2004), the INC's Iraqi National Congress Support Foundation (INCSF) received $32.65 million in U.S. Economic Support Funds (ESF) in five agreements with the State Department during 2000-2003. Most of the funds — separate from drawdowns of U.S. military equipment and training under the "Iraq Liberation Act" — were for the INC to run its offices in Washington, London, Tehran, Damascus, Prague, and Cairo, and to operate its Al *Mutamar* (the "Conference") newspaper and its "Liberty TV," which began in August 2001, from London. The station was funded by FY2001 ESF, with start-up costs of $1 million and an estimated additional $2.7 million per year in operating costs. Liberty TV was sporadic due to funding disruptions resulting from the INC's refusal to accept some State Department decisions on how U.S. funds were to be used. In August 2002, the State Department and Defense Department agreed that the Defense Department would take over funding ($335,000 per month) for the INC's "Information Collection Program" to collect intelligence on Iraq; the State Department wanted to end its funding of that program because of questions about the INC's credibility and the propriety of its use of U.S. funds. The INC continued to receive these funds even after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, but was halted after the June 2004 return of sovereignty to Iraq. The figures above do not include covert aid provided — the amounts are not known from open sources. Much of the "war crimes" funding was used to translate and publicize documents retrieved from northern Iraq on Iraqi human rights; the translations were placed on 176 CD-Rom disks. During FY2001 and FY2002, the Administration donated $4 million to a "U.N. War Crimes Commission" fund, to be used if a war crimes tribunal is formed. Those funds were drawn from U.S. contributions to U.N. programs. See General Accounting Office Report GAO-04-559, *State Department: Issues Affecting Funding of Iraqi National Congress Support Foundation*, Apr. 2004.

Figure 1. Map of Iraq

Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (K.Yancey 7/21/04)