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Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress

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Summary

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was launched on March 20, 2003. The immediate goal, as stated by the Bush Administration, was to remove the regime, including destroying its ability to use weapons of mass destruction or to make them available to terrorists. The broad, longer-term objective included helping Iraqis build "a new Iraq that is prosperous and free."[1] In October 2002, Congress had authorized the President to use force against Iraq, to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq," and to "enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."[2]

Over time, the focus of OIF has shifted from regime removal to the more open-ended mission of helping an emerging new Iraqi leadership improve security, establish a system of governance, and foster economic development. With that shift in focus, the character of the war has evolved from major combat operations to a multifaceted counter-insurgency and reconstruction effort.

The next major marker in the development of U.S. Iraq strategy and practice is likely to be the update reports to the Congress from U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker and Commanding General of the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) General David Petraeus, scheduled for April 8 and 9, 2008. A second major marker is a security agreement between the governments of the United States and Iraq, expected to be achieved by July 31, 2008, and to include the parameters for the presence of U.S. personnel in Iraq after December 31, 2008.

The most important short-term OIF issue for the Congress concerns the next steps after the surge — the military strategies and approaches to be adopted in Iraq after U.S. forces draw down to the pre-surge level. How OIF experiences to date are evaluated — including policy decision-making, planning, and execution of both the major combat and post-major combat efforts — are likely to have a significant bearing not only on further U.S. government decisions about Iraq policy, but also on broader, longer-term U.S. strategic concerns. Some of these include the future U.S. military footprint in Iraq, Iraq as a U.S. national security concern, the future of the U.S. military force, and the distribution of roles and responsibilities among U.S. government agencies in complex contingencies.

This report is designed to provide background and analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom to support consideration of these short-term and long-term issues.

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[1] See "President Bush Address to the Nation, March 17, 2003," the televised speech that included a 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html].

[2] See "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002," H.J.Res. 114, Section 3(a), signed into law on October 16, 2002, (P.L.107-243). The Senate vote was 77-23, and the House vote 296-133.

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Introduction

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was launched on March 20, 2003. The immediate goal, as stated by the Bush Administration, was to remove the regime, including destroying its ability to use weapons of mass destruction or to make them available to terrorists. The broad, longer-term objective included helping Iraqis build "a new Iraq that is prosperous and free."[3] In October 2002, Congress had authorized the President to use force against Iraq, to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq," and to "enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."[4]

Over time, the focus of OIF has shifted from regime removal to the more open-ended mission of helping an emerging new Iraqi leadership improve security, establish a system of governance, and foster economic development. With that shift in focus, the character of the war has evolved from major combat operations to a multifaceted counter-insurgency and reconstruction effort.

Operation Iraqi Freedom is ongoing. While conventional, force-on-force wars tend to end with the unequivocal defeat of one party, the parameters for "mission success" in counter-insurgency efforts like OIF tend to be less definitive and more subject to qualitative interpretation. Therefore, OIF is more likely to end with a policy decision by the U.S. or Iraqi Government, or both, rather than a decisive military decision on the battlefield.

Upcoming Events

The next major marker in the development of U.S. Iraq strategy and practice is likely to be the update reports to the Congress from U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker and Commanding General of the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) General David Petraeus, scheduled for April 8 and 9, 2008. General Petraeus is expected to make a recommendation concerning further troop withdrawals after troop

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[3] See "President Bush Address to the Nation, March 17, 2003," the televised speech that included a 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html].

[4] See "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002," H.J.Res. 114, Section 3(a), signed into law on October 16, 2002, (P.L.107-243). The Senate vote was 77-23, and the House vote 296-133.

levels in Iraq return to their pre-"surge" levels in summer 2008.[5] MNF-I'srecommendations to the President may be balanced by input from U.S. Central Command, responsible for the entire region including ongoing operations in Afghanistan; from the three Military Departments whose U.S. Code Title X responsibilities to "organize, man, train and equip" the force encourage a concern with sustainability over time, including recruiting and retaining the force; and from the Department of Defense as a whole, with responsibility to balance OIF with preparations to meet all current and likely future security threats to the United States.

A second major marker is a security agreement between the governments of the United States and Iraq, expected to be achieved by July 31, 2008, and to include the parameters for the presence of U.S. personnel in Iraq after December 31, 2008. Based on public statements by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Congressional testimony from both Departments, the agreement is not expected to contain a commitment to protect and defend Iraq. This agreement could shape options available for post-surge OIF strategies and approaches, as well as for a potential longer-term U.S. force presence.

Issues for Congress

How OIF experiences and lessons to date are evaluated — including policy decision-making, planning, and execution of both the major combat and post-major combat efforts — are likely to have a significant bearing not only on further U.S. government decisions about Iraq policy, but also on broader, longer-term U.S. strategic concerns.

Short-term Issues: Post-Surge Options. The most important short-term OIF policy issue concerns the next steps after the surge — the military strategies and approaches to be adopted in Iraq after U.S. forces draw down to the pre-surge level. Several major options have been advanced.

Conditions-Based Further Decision-Making. The first option is a "conditions-based" approach, generally favored by military commanders in Iraq. It envisages using the post-surge forces in Iraq to continue the same full spectrum of efforts — combat operations, training and mentoring Iraqi security forces, and supporting efforts to strengthen governance and foster economic reconstruction. The goal of U.S. forces in each geographical area would continue to be transitioning their relationship with Iraqi counterparts from leadership, to partnership, to overwatch.[6] Further decisions about U.S. force levels and missions in Iraq would be based on periodic future assessments of progress.

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[5] The "surge" refers to a new set of military and civilian approaches, announced by President Bush in a January 10, 2007, Address to the Nation, see [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-7.html]. It included a U.S. troop level increase from about 135,000 in January 2007, to about 168,000 at its peak in October. See "U.S. Forces in Iraq", and "New Way Forward," below.

[6] See General David Petraeus, Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq, House Foreign Affairs Committee website, [http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/pet091007.pdf].

During a February 2008 visit to Iraq, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates appeared to support this approach, at least for the near term. Affirming the idea of a "pause" once the pre-surge troop level is reached, he noted: "I think that the notion of a brief period of consolidation and evaluation probably does make sense."[7] And speaking at the Pentagon on the fifth anniversary of the launch of OIF, President Bush stated: "Any further drawdown will be based on conditions on the ground and the recommendations of our commanders."[8]

Withdrawal According to a Timeline. A second major option is to draw down all remaining U.S. forces in Iraq by a set deadline, or in accordance with a set schedule — for example, as some have proposed, by one Brigade Combat Team per month. This option is typically less focused on achieving some particular endstate in Iraq, than on bringing the U.S. military commitment in Iraq to a close, or on relieving stress on the U.S. military as a whole.

Adjustments to the Mission. A third family of options would adjust the U.S. mission in Iraq by enhancing certain efforts while drawing down most conventional forces. Such proposals aim simultaneously at achieving "mission success" in Iraq and accelerating the return home of U.S. forces. Proposals voiced to date in this family of options include emphasizing the counter-terrorism effort with a strong Special Operations Forces presence, backed by intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets; expanding efforts to train and mentor Iraqi Security Forces; and increasing civilian-led efforts to help strengthen governance and economic reconstruction.

Each of the three major options would have different implications in terms of the timeframe of the remaining U.S. force presence in Iraq; the costs of both the draw down and the remaining commitment in Iraq; the impact on the health of the U.S. force as a whole; and the likely impact on the situation in Iraq itself.

A number of tools are available to Congress to weigh in on these options.[9] For example, Congress could pass legislation cutting off funding for all but some specified military activities, such as Iraqi security forces training, or for all but some specified types of military personnel, such as Special Operations Forces. Congress could also pass legislation making funding contingent on the achievement of certain milestones or benchmarks, or urging the President to take specified steps, such as

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[7] Media Availability with Secretary Gates at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Baghdad, February 11, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4144].

[8] "President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror," March 19, 2008, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/03/print/20080319-2.html].

[9] On options available to the Congress, their constitutionality, and their possible impact, see CRS Report RL33837, *Congressional Authority to Limit U.S. Military Operations in Iraq*, by Jennifer Elsea, Michael Garcia, and Thomas Nicola. For examples of tools available to Congress in general for shaping U.S. military operations, see CRS Report RL33803, *Congressional Restrictions on U.S. Military Operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Somalia, and Kosovo: Funding and Non-Funding Approaches*, by Amy Belasco, Lynn Cunningham, Hannah Fischer, and Larry Niksch.

withdrawing forces according to a specified timetable, or repealing the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002.

Longer-term Issues. Operation Iraqi Freedom decision-making, planning, execution, and results to date also raise a series of longer-term issues concerning both Iraq and broader U.S. government strategic approaches.

Future U.S. Military Footprint in Iraq. One issue is a potential longer-term U.S. military footprint in Iraq, beyond Operation Iraq Freedom. The 2008 security framework agreement may include provisions that serve to constrain some future options. OIF experiences to date may suggest both potential benefits and drawbacks to a longer-term presence.

In theory, one option would be establishing permanent U.S. military bases in Iraqi, to support broader U.S. policy in the region, possibly on the model of those in Japan, South Korea, Germany and Italy. This option does not appear to enjoy support from the Administration or from the Government of Iraq. Another option would be a particularly robust Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), responsible for training and mentoring Iraqi security forces and building the capacity of Iraqi security ministries. Following the usual pattern, the OSC would be responsible to both the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and to the Commander of U.S. Central Command. Issues for the Congress regarding a future U.S. military presence in Iraq could include costs, and policy oversight of integrated efforts by Department of State and the Department of Defense personnel.

Iraq as a U.S. National Security Concern. A second longer-term issue is the future of Iraq itself as a potential U.S. national security concern — an issue for Congress in its oversight capacities for U.S. government intelligence capabilities and preparations to meet global security challenges. For example, it is within the realm of possibility that Iraq could serve as a haven for terrorists, or that it could fall under stronger Iranian influence. Iraq could conceivably become a source of instability in the broader region, should potential internal conflict spill over into neighboring states. Future threat analysis is likely to take as a starting point the close observations made during OIF. It is not yet completely clear by what means the U.S. government will maintain visibility on security-related developments in Iraq as the U.S. military presence — including its human and technological intelligence assets — decreases.

Future of the Force. A third issue is the impact of OIF experiences on the future of the force — germane to congressional oversight of the Department of Defense. How Military Departments fulfill their Title 10 responsibilities to organize, man, train, and equip — how they make decisions about endstrength and capabilities required — may depend on lessons drawn from OIF, and on how applicable those lessons are deemed to be to potential future engagements. For example, lessons might be drawn from OIF concerning: how to most effectively train foreign security forces and to prepare U.S. forces for that mission; how increasing the intelligence assets available to commanders on the ground affects their ability to identify and pursue targets; how "dwell time" policies for the Active and Reserve Components can best be implemented; how closer operational integration between Special Operations Forces and conventional forces might affect their requirements.

For the Department of Defense as a whole, in turn, OIF experiences may be used to help frame future discussions about the Department's force planning construct — a shorthand description of the major contingencies the Department must be prepared to execute simultaneously — which is used to shape the total force. Analytical challenges include deciding what kind of contingency OIF represents, how likely it is to be representative of future contingencies, and which chronological "slice" of OIF requirements (personnel, equipment) to use to represent the effort.

U.S. Government Coordination in Complex Contingencies. A fourth long-term issue is U.S. government coordination in complex contingencies, including both decision-making and execution. Just as the executive branch's responsibilities in this area are divided among different agencies, Congressional oversight responsibilities are divided among different committees of jurisdiction, such that achieving full integration can be a challenge for both branches of government.

One set of questions prompted by OIF experience concerns the decision-making process about whether to go to war and if so, how to do so. Key aspects include the rigor of the inter-agency debates, the effectiveness of the provision of "best military advice" to key decision-makers, and the thoroughness of the exercise of Congressional oversight.

Another set of questions raised by OIF concerns the balance of roles, responsibilities, resources, and authorities among U.S. government agencies to support implementation of activities such as security forces training, local governance work, and economic reconstruction.[10] In security forces training, OIF experiences from the formal occupation to the present have included several different patterns for the distribution of responsibilities between the Departments of Defense and State. In governance and economic reconstruction work, OIF also provides at least two potentially instructive organizational models — Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and cooperation between PRTs and partner military units.[11]

Structure and Aim of the Report

This report is designed to provide background and analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom to support consideration of these short-term and long-term issues. It describes and evaluates the key developments and debates at each stage — planning,

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[10] Civil-military cooperation in OIF is reportedly a key case study in the Project on National Security Reform, a multi-faceted, non-partisan initiative, based at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and spearheaded by James Locher, aimed at formulating and proposing substantial revisions to the National Security Act of 1947. See the website for the Project on National Security Reform, [http://www.pnsr.org/].

[11] The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Armed Services Committee has hosted a series of hearings about PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the potential implications for future U.S. inter-agency coordination and organization. The Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has conducted interviews with PRT participants and published initial observations. See "PRT Playbook: Tactics, Techniques and Procedures," Center for Army Lessons Learned, September 2007.

major combat operations, and post-major combat operations. It will be updated as events warrant. Major topics addressed include:

- War planning, including stated objectives, key debates in the major combat and post-major combat planning efforts, and the impact of apparent short-comings in the planning efforts on post-war developments.

- Major combat operations, including both successes and challenges encountered.

- Post-major combat military activities — combat operations, Iraqi security forces training, and an array of "reconciliation", governance, and economic reconstruction efforts — including analysis of evolutions in strategy and approaches.

- Assessments of the results of strategy and operations to date.

- Detailed analysis of near-term "post-surge" options in Iraq.

Decision to Go to War in Iraq

The Administration's decision to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom had antecedents stretching back to the 1991 Gulf War and its aftermath.

Antecedents in the 1990s

In the 1990's, the United States shared with other countries a concern with the Iraqi government's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. Iraq had demonstrated a willingness to use WMD against its neighbors during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and against its own citizens, as it did, for example, against Iraqi Kurds in Halabja in 1988. U.S. policy after the Gulf War supported the United Nations-led weapons inspection regime and the economic sanctions imposed to encourage Iraq's compliance with that regime. Before they were withdrawn in 1998, U.N. weapons inspectors located and destroyed sizable quantities of WMD in Iraq.

U.S. post-Gulf War policy also included containment initiatives — "no fly" zones — imposed by the United States together with the United Kingdom and, initially, France. The northern "no fly" zone, Operation Northern Watch was designed to protect the Iraqi Kurdish population in northern Iraq and international humanitarian relief efforts there. Operation Southern Watch was designed to protect the Shi'a Arab population in southern Iraq.

These containment measures were periodically marked by Iraqi provocations, including troop build-ups and attempts to shoot down allied aircraft, and by allied

responses including attacks on targets inside Iraq.[12] In December 1998, the United States and the United Kingdom launched Operation Desert Fox, whose stated purpose was to degrade Iraq's ability to manufacture or use WMD.

Also during the late 1990s, a policy climate more conducive to aggressive action against the Iraqi regime began to take shape in Washington, D.C., as some policy experts began to advocate actively fostering Iraqi resistance, in order to encourage regime change.[13] In 1998, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, authorizing support to designated organizations among the Iraqi opposition. Some supporters of this policy approach gained greater access, and in some cases office, under the Bush Administration after the 2000 presidential elections.

Bush Administration Strategy and Role of the United Nations

For many U.S. policy-makers, the September 11, 2001, attacks catalyzed or heightened general concerns that WMD might fall into the hands of terrorists. Reflecting those concerns, the first National Security Strategy issued by the Bush Administration, in September 2002, highlighted the policy of preemptive, or anticipatory, action, to forestall hostile acts by adversaries, "even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack."[14]

Throughout 2002, the stated position of the Administration was to aggressively seek Iraqi compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions concerning the inspections regime, while holding out the possibility of U.N Chapter VII action if Iraq did not comply.[15] In September 2002, addressing the U.N. General Assembly, President Bush stated: "The Security Council Resolutions will be enforced … or action will be unavoidable." On that occasion, President Bush also articulated a list of conditions that Iraq must meet if it wanted to avoid retaliatory action: give up or destroy all WMD and long-range missiles; end all support to terrorism; cease

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[12] Overall, some 300,000 sorties were flown. In 2002 for example, Iraqi forces fired on coalition aircraft 500 times, prompting 90 coalition air strikes against Iraqi targets. See Suzann Chapman, "The War Before the War," *Air Force Magazine*, February 2004. Chapman cites Air Force General John Jumper as noting in March 2003 that between June 2002 and March 2003, the U.S. Air Force flew about 4,000 sorties against Iraq's air defense system, surface-to-air missiles, and command and control.

[13] See the December 1, 1997, issue of the *Weekly Standard*, with a series of articles, under the heading "Saddam Must Go", including "Overthrow Him," by Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz.

[14] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p.15, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/pdf].

[15] Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations authorizes the U.N. Security Council to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" (Article 39), and should the Council consider other specified measures inadequate, to "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security" (Article 42), see Charter of the United Nations, available at [http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/].

persecution of its civilian population; account for all missing Gulf War personnel and accept liability for losses; and end all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food program.[16]

On November 8, 2002, following intensive negotiations among its "Permanent 5" members,[17] the U.N. Security Council issued Resolution 1441. In it, the Council decided that Iraq remained in "material breach" of its obligations; that the Council would afford Iraq "a final opportunity to comply"; that failure to comply would "constitute a further material breach"; and that in that case, Iraq would "face serious consequences."[18]

This language, though strong by U.N. standards, was not considered by most observers to imply "automaticity" — that is, that Iraqi non-compliance would automatically trigger a U.N.-authorized response under Chapter VII.

While the Iraqi government eventually provided a large quantity of written materials, the Administration deemed Iraqi compliance to be insufficient. The Administration chose not to seek an additional U.N. Resolution, explicitly authorizing military action under Chapter VII, reportedly due to concerns that some Permanent Members of the Council were prepared to veto it.

Ultimatum to Saddam Hussein

The Administration's intent to take military action against Iraq was formally made public on March 17, 2003, when President Bush issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq within 48 hours. "Their refusal to do so," he said, would "result in military conflict."[19]

War Planning

As the Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz wrote, war planning includes articulation of both intended goals and how they will be achieved.[20] In the

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[16] President Bush's Address to the United Nations General Assembly, September 12, 2002, New York, NY, available at the White House website [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html].

[17] China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States. Each of the 15 Council members has one vote. Procedural matters are made by an affirmative vote of at least 9 of the 15. Substantive matters require nine votes, including concurring votes from the 5 permanent members. See [http://www.un.org/sc/members.asp].

[18] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441, 8 November 2002, paragraphs 1, 2, 4, and 13.

[19] President Bush Address to the Nation, March 17, 2003, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html].

[20] Clausewitz made the point more forcefully: "No one starts a war, or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so, without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and

(continued...)

case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Administration goals included both short-term military objectives and longer-term strategic goals. To meet that intent, the Administration planned — though apparently in unequal measure — for both combat operations and the broader range of operations that would be required on "the day after" regime removal.

Strategic Objectives

The Administration's short-term goal for OIF was regime removal. As President Bush stated in his March 17, 2003, Address to the Nation, "It is too late for Saddam Hussein to remain in power." In that speech, he promised Iraqis, "We will tear down the apparatus of terror…the tyrant will soon be gone."[21]

In his March 2003 speech, President Bush declared that in the longer term, the United States would help Iraqis build "a new Iraq that is prosperous and free." It would be an Iraq, as he described it, that would not be at war with its neighbors, and that would not abuse its own citizens.[22] Those were the basic "endstate" elements typically used by war planners. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) OIF campaign plan, for example, described the strategic objective this way: "A stable Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact and a broad-based government that renounces WMD development and use and no longer supports terrorism or threatens its neighbors."[23]

Over time, since the days of war planning to the present, the Administration's longer-term strategic objectives have been fine-tuned. In the November 2005 *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq,* the Administration stated the long-term goal for Iraq this way: "Iraq is peaceful, united, stable, and secure, well-integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism."[24]

In January 2007, at the time the "surge" was announced, the White House released an unclassified version of the results of its late 2006 internal review of Iraq policy. That document states: "Our strategic goal in Iraq remains the same: a

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[20] (...continued)
Peter Paret, eds., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

[21] President Bush Address to the Nation, March 17, 2003, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html].

[22] Ibid.

[23] Information from CENTCOM, CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2002 and 2003. From July 2002 to July 2004, the author served as the Political Advisor (POLAD) to the Commanding General (CG) of U.S. Army V Corps. That service included deploying with V Corps in early 2003 to Kuwait and then Iraq. In Iraq, the author served as POLAD to the CG of the Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7), and then the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I).

[24] *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, November 30, 2005, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf].

unified democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself and sustain itself, and is an ally in the war on terror."[25]

And in March 2008, in its regular quarterly update to the Congress, the Department of Defense used the same language almost verbatim: "The strategic goal of the United States in Iraq remains a unified, democratic and federal Iraq that can govern, defend and sustain itself and is an ally in the war on terror."[26]

Military Objectives

To support the stated U.S. strategic objectives, CENTCOM defined the OIF military objectives this way: "destabilize, isolate, and overthrow the Iraqi regime and provide support to a new, broad-based government; destroy Iraqi WMD capability and infrastructure; protect allies and supporters from Iraqi threats and attacks; destroy terrorist networks in Iraq, gather intelligence on global terrorism, detain terrorists and war criminals, and free individuals unjustly detained under the Iraqi regime; and support international efforts to set conditions for long-term stability in Iraq and the region."[27]

Planning for Major Combat

From a military perspective, there are theoretically many different possible ways to remove a regime — using different capabilities, in different combinations, over different timelines. The 1991 Gulf War, for example, had highlighted the initial use of air power in targeting key regime infrastructure. The more recent war in Afghanistan had showcased a joint effort, as Special Operations Forces on the ground called in air strikes on key targets. Key debates in OIF major combat planning concerned the size of the force, the timelines for action, and the synchronization of ground and air power.

According to participants, throughout the planning process, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld played an active role, consistently urging the use of a streamlined force and a quick timeline.[28] Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly came into office with a vision of defense transformation, both operational and institutional.[29] A basic premise of that vision, captured in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, was that "…the threats and enemies we must confront have changed, and so must our

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[25] "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review" slides, National Security Council, January 2007, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/iraq-strategy011007.pdf].

[26] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008, submitted in accordance with Section 9010, Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2007, P.L. 109-289, as amended by Section 1308 of P.L. 110-28.

[27] Information from CENTCOM, CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2002, 2003, and 2008.

[28] Interviews with planners who participated in the process, 2002 and 2003. Bob Woodward cites Secretary Rumsfeld as saying, at a December 4, 2001, planning session, "I'm not sure that that much force is needed, given what we've learned coming out of Afghanistan." Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

[29] Conversations with Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2005 and 2006.

force."[30] In general, that meant transitioning from a military "structured to deter massive Cold War-era armies," to a leaner and more agile force. At issue in the OIF planning debates was not only how to fight the war in Iraq, but also — implicitly — how to organize, man, train and equip the force for the future.

For military planners, the guidance to use a streamlined force reflected a fundamental shift away from the Powell Doctrine, named after the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which stressed that force, if used, should be overwhelming.[31]

The planning effort started early. Just before Thanksgiving, 2001, President Bush asked Secretary Rumsfeld to develop a plan for regime removal in Iraq, and Secretary Rumsfeld immediately gave that assignment to the commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), General Tommy Franks.[32]

The planning effort for combat operations was initially very "close hold", involving only a few key leaders and small groups of trusted planners at each level. As the effort progressed, the number of people involved grew, but key elements of the plans remained compartmentalized, such that few people had visibility on all elements of the plans.[33]

The starting point for the planning effort was the existing, "on the shelf" Iraq war plan, known as 1003-98, which had been developed and then refined during the 1990's. That plan called for a force of between 400,000 and 500,000 U.S. troops, including three Corps (or Corps equivalents), with a long timeline for the deployment and build-up of forces beforehand. When General Franks briefed Secretary Rumsfeld on these plans in late November, Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly asked for a completely new version — with fewer troops and a faster deployment timeline.[34]

In early 2002, General Franks briefed Secretary Rumsfeld on the "Generated Start" plan. That plan called for very early infiltration by CIA teams, to build

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[30] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p.29, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/pdf].

[31] The 'Powell Doctrine,' generally acknowledged as the basis for the first Gulf War, was a collection of ideas, not a written document. Other key elements included force should only be used as a last resort, when there is a clear threat; there must be strong public support for the use of force; there must be a clear exit strategy. The Powell Doctrine derived in part from the Weinberger Doctrine, named after former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, Powell's one-time boss, which had been based on some Vietnam "lessons learned."

[32] Interviews with planners, 2002 and 2003. See also Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

[33] Information from CENTCOM and CFLCC planners, and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2002 and 2003.

[34] Interviews with planners, 2002 and 2003. See also Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006; and Bob Woodward, Plan of Attack, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

relationships and gain intelligence, and then the introduction of Special Operations Forces, particularly in northern Iraq and in Al Anbar province in the west. The main conventional forces effort would begin with near-simultaneous air and ground attacks. The force would continue to grow up to about 275,000 troops.[35]

CENTCOM's air component — the Combined Force Air Component Command (CFACC) — reportedly urged modifying the plan to include a 10- to 14-day air campaign at the start, to target and hit Iraq's missile, radar, command and control, and other leadership sites, on the model of the Gulf War.[36] But the early introduction of ground forces — rather than an extended exclusively-air campaign — was apparently intended to take Iraqi forces by surprise.[37]

Later in the spring of 2002, CENTCOM and subordinate planners developed an alternative plan called "Running Start," which addressed the possibility that the Iraqi regime might choose the war's start time through some provocation, such as the use of WMD. "Running start" called for a smaller overall force and a shorter timeline. It would still begin with infiltration by CIA teams, followed by the introduction of SOF. Air attacks would go first, and as ground forces flowed into theater, the ground attacks could begin any time after the first 25 days of air attacks. The ground war might begin with as few as 18,000 ground forces entering Iraq.[38]

In the summer of 2002, planners developed a so-called "hybrid" version of these two plans,[39] which echoed key elements of the "Running Start" plan — beginning with an air campaign, and launching the ground war while other ground forces still flowed into theater. Specifically, the plan called for: Presidential notification 5 days in advance; 11 days to flow forces; 16 days for the air campaign; the start of the ground campaign as ground forces continued to flow into theater; and a total

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[35] Interviews with planners and slide review, 2002 and 2003. See "Top Secret Polo Step" collection, "Compartmented Planning Effort, 15 August 2002" CENTCOM brief, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and posted by the National Security Archive, The George Washington University, available at [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm].

[36] Gordon and Trainor note that this issue was debated at the March 2002 CENTCOM Component Commanders Conference. Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

[37] Information from planners, 2002, 2003, and 2008.

[38] Interviews with planners and slide review, 2002 and 2003. See "Top Secret Polo Step" collection, "Compartmented Planning Effort, 15 August 2002" CENTCOM brief, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and posted by the National Security Archive, The George Washington University, available at [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm]. See also Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

[39] "Hybrid" simply referred descriptively to the plan — it was not the formal name of a plan — although some senior leaders later seemed to use "Hybrid" as a proper noun.

campaign that would last up to 125 days. This plan, approved for action, continued to be known as the "5-11-16-125" plan even after the numbers of days had changed.[40]

By January 2003, at the CENTCOM Component Commanders Conference hosted by General Franks in Tampa, the plans had coalesced around a modified version of "Generated Start." They featured a very short initial air campaign, including bombs and missiles — a couple days, rather than a couple weeks. The ground campaign would begin with two three-star-led headquarters — U.S. Army V Corps, and the I Marine Expeditionary Force — and some of their forces crossing the line of departure from Kuwait into Iraq, while additional forces continued to flow into theater. Meanwhile, the 4th Infantry Division would open a northern front by entering Iraq from Turkey.

The number of forces that would start the ground campaign continued to be adjusted, generally downward, in succeeding days. On January 29, 2003, Army commanders learned that they would enter Iraq with just two Divisions — less than their plans to that point had reflected. At that time, V Corps and its subordinate commands were at a training site in Grafenwoehr, Germany, rehearsing the opening of the tactical-level ground campaign at an exercise called "Victory Scrimmage." During that exercise, commanders and staff concluded that should they be required to "secure" cities in southern Iraq, they would have insufficient forces to do so.[41]

The V Corps Commander at the time, then-Lieutenant General William Scott Wallace, reflected after the end of major combat in Iraq: "I guess that as summer [arrived] I wasn't real comfortable with the troop levels."[42]

Post-War Planning

Most observers agree that the Administration's planning for "post-war" Iraq — for all the activities and resources that would be required on "the day after," to help bring about the strategic objective, a "free and prosperous Iraq" — was not nearly as thorough as the planning for combat operations.

For the U.S. military, the stakes of the post-war planning efforts were very high. In theory, civilian agencies would have the responsibility for using political, diplomatic, and economic tools to help achieve the desired political endstate for Iraq, while the Department of Defense and its military forces would play only a supporting role after the end of major combat operations. But by far the greatest number of coalition personnel on the ground in Iraq at the end of major combat would be U.S.

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[40] Interviews with planners and slide review, 2002, 2003 and 2008; "Compartmented Planning Effort"; and Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II.*

[41] Information from V Corps leaders and staff, 2003.

[42] William S. Wallace, Interview, Frontline, Public Broadcasting System, February 26, 2004, available at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/interviews/Wallace.html]. He quickly added, "But I was comfortable with the degree of training of those forces that were available to us."

military forces, and the U.S. military was very likely to become the default option for any unfilled roles and any unanticipated responsibilities.

A number of participants and observers have argued that the Administration should have sent a larger number of U.S. troops to Iraq, to provide security in the post-major combat period. Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, who served as the Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) throughout the formal occupation of Iraq, leveled this criticism after departing Iraq. Asked what he would have changed about the occupation, he replied: "The single most important change — the one thing that would have improved the situation — would have been having more troops in Iraq at the beginning and throughout."[43]

A logical fallacy in the number-of-troops critique is that "How many troops do you need?" is not an especially meaningful question, unless what those troops will be expected to do is clarified. By many accounts, the OIF post-war planning process did not provide commanders, before the start of combat operations, with a clear picture of the extent of their assigned post-war responsibilities.[44]

Inter-Agency Post-War Planning. A primary focus of the interagency post-war-planning debates was who would be in charge in Iraq, on "the day after." For the military, decisions by the Administration about who would do what would help clarify the military's own roles and responsibilities. Before making such decisions — in particular, what responsibilities would be carried out by Iraqis — the Administration cultivated Iraqi contacts.

Based on months of negotiations, in conjunction with the government of the United Kingdom, the Administration sponsored a series of conferences of Iraqi oppositionists, including expatriates and some Iraqis — notably Iraqi Kurds — who could come and go from their homes. The events included a major conference in London in December 2002, and a follow-on event in Salahuddin, Iraq, in February 2003.[45] These events apparently helped build stronger ties among key opposition leaders and groups, but did not directly produce U.S. policy decisions about post-war roles and responsibilities.[46]

During the same time frame, the Departments of State and Defense were locked in debate about post-war political plans for Iraq. The State Department supported a

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[43] See Robin Wright and Tom Ricks, "Bremer Criticizes Troop Levels," *Washington Post*, October 5, 2004. Ambassador Bremer's remarks were quoted from a nominally off-the-record talk he gave at DePauw University on September 17, 2004.

[44] Information from CENTCOM, CFLCC, V Corps, and Division Commanders, 2003, 2004 and 2008, and from Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2003 and 2004.

[45] Interviews with event organizers, 2002 and 2003. See Michael Howard, "Conference Delegates Vie for Political Role in New Iraq," *The Guardian*, December 16, 2002; and Judith Miller, "Ending Conference, Iraqi Dissidents Insist on Self-Government," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2003.

[46] Information from Department of State and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2002 and 2003.

deliberate political process, including slowly building new political institutions, based on the rule of law, while, in the meantime, Iraqis would serve only in advisory capacities. Through the second half of 2002, the State Department's "Future of Iraq" project brought together Iraqi oppositionists and experts, in a series of working groups, to consider an array of potential post-war challenges. While a tacit goal of the project was to identify some Iraqis who might serve in future leadership positions, it was not designed to produce a slate of leaders-in-waiting.[47] The project was also not designed to produce formal plans. However, some of the ideas it generated did reportedly help operational-level military planners refine their efforts, and the project might have had a greater impact had more of its output reached the planners.[48]

The Department of Defense — more specifically and accurately the Office of the Secretary of Defense — favored putting Iraqis in charge of Iraq, in some form, as soon as possible, perhaps on the model of Afghanistan. A "real" Iraqi leadership with real power, some officials believed, might find favor with the Iraqi people and with neighboring states, and might shorten the length of the U.S. commitment in Iraq.[49] As Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly told President Bush in August 2002, "We will want to get Iraqis in charge of Iraq as soon as possible."[50]

In the fall of 2002, no clear decision emerged about the role of Iraqis in immediate post-war Iraq. Most U.S. agencies apparently agreed that a U.S.-led "transitional civil administration" would govern, or help govern, Iraq. However, during the second half of 2002, there was no agreement about what authority such a body would have, what its responsibilities would be, how long it would last, or which Iraqis would be involved.[51]

In January 2003, Administration thinking coalesced around a broad post-war political process for Iraq, captured in what was universally known at the time as the "Mega-Brief." The approach favored the State Department's preference for a deliberate process, rather than an immediate "crowning" of a new Iraqi leadership. The process would include dismissing top Iraqi leaders but welcoming most lower-ranking officials to continue to serve; creating a senior-level Iraqi Consultative Council to serve in an advisory capacity; creating an Iraqi judicial council; holding a national census; conducting municipal elections; holding elections to a constitutional convention that would draft a constitution; carrying out a constitutional

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[47] Interviews with State officials responsible for the project, 2002 and 2003, and participation in some project sessions.

[48] Information from CFLCC planners, 2003 and 2008.

[49] OSD's leading candidate was Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi opposition umbrella group, the Iraqi National Congress. Information from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and Department of State officials, 2002 and 2003.

[50] Tommy Franks, *American Soldier*, New York: Regan Books, 2004, p.393. Franks reports that the remarks were made at a 5 August 2002 session of the National Security Council.

[51] Interviews with officials from the NSC, State Department, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Staff, 2002 and 2003.

referendum; and then holding national elections. It was envisaged that the process would take years to complete.[52]

The "Mega-Brief" approach — adopted just as troops were conducting final rehearsals for the war — implied that many governance tasks would need to be performed by coalition (non-Iraqi) personnel, whether civilian or military, for some time to come.

Military Post-War Planning. Military commanders and planners typically base operational plans on policy assumptions and clearly specify those assumptions at the beginning of any plans briefing. For OIF planners, the critical policy assumptions concerned who would have which post-war roles and responsibilities. OIF preparations reversed the usual sequence, in that military planning began long before the key policy debates, let alone policy conclusions.

During their planning process, military commanders apparently sought to elicit the policy guidance they needed by briefing their policy assumptions and hoping for a response.[53] In December 2001, in his first OIF brief to President Bush, General Franks included as one element of the mission: "establish a provisional Iraqi government," but this measure was neither confirmed nor rejected. General Franks wrote later that as he briefed this to the President, he had in mind the Bonn Conference for Afghanistan.[54] In August 2002, still without a policy decision about post-war responsibilities, CENTCOM included in its war plans briefing the assumption: "DoS [Department of State] will promote creation of a broad-based, credible provisional government prior to D-Day."[55]

Unable to determine what Iraqi civilian structure they would be asked to support, the military sought to elicit guidance about the coalition's own post-war architecture and responsibilities. According to General Franks, the CENTCOM war plans slides briefed to President Bush and the National Security Council on August

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[52] Information from NSC staff, and Department of State and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2003 and 2008. Some former Defense officials have argued that in March 2003, the President expressed support for a shorter formal occupation and an earlier naming of an official Iraqi body. Ambassador Bremer has argued that, even if that March shift took place, at the time of his own appointment to head CPA in early May, the President's direction to him was not to hurry, but to "take the time necessary to create a stable political environment". See Tom Ricks and Karen DeYoung, "Ex-Defense Official Assails Colleagues Over Run-Up to War," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2008, which previews the book *War and Decision*, scheduled for release in April 2008, by former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith; and L. Paul Bremer III, "Facts for Feith: CPA History," *National Review Online*, March 19, 2008.

[53] Information from CENTCOM planners, 2003 and 2006.

[54] Tommy Franks, *American Soldier*, New York: Regan Books, 2004.

[55] "Compartmented Planning Effort, 15 August 2002" brief, part of "Top Secret Polo Step" collection, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and posted by the National Security Archive, The George Washington University, available at [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/Tab%20I.pdf].

5, 2002, included the intentionally provocative phrase, "military administration," but no decision was made at that time.[56]

Two months later, the OIF plans slides included, for the first time, a full wiring diagram of the coalition's post-war structure, describing post-war responsibilities in a "military administration." A "Joint Task Force" would be responsible for security, a civilian "High Commissioner" would be responsible for all other functions; and both would report to CENTCOM. This chart still failed to prompt a decision, although Office of the Secretary of Defense staff reportedly spent the ensuing weeks considering "High Commissioner" candidates, just in case.[57]

By late 2002, in the absence of detailed policy guidance, military commanders at several levels had launched "Phase IV" planning efforts, to identify and begin to prepare for potential post-war requirements. In January 2003, based on a recommendation that came out of the "Internal Look" exercise conducted in Kuwait in December 2002, Brigadier General Steve Hawkins was named to lead a new "Task Force IV." TFIV, an *ad hoc* organization, was tasked to conduct post-war planning, and to prepare to deploy to Baghdad as the nucleus of a post-war headquarters. TFIV was dispatched immediately to Kuwait, to work under the operational control of the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) — the ground forces component of CENTCOM — and its commanding general, Lieutenant General David McKiernan.[58] TFIV thus provided skilled labor, but no connectivity to the still on-going Washington policy debates about the post-war division of responsibilities.

In March 2003, CFLCC launched a dedicated post-war planning effort of its own, led by Major General Albert Whitley (UK), who was part of the CFLCC leadership. His more comprehensive effort — known as Eclipse II — benefitted from close connectivity with its sister-effort, CFLCC's combat operations planning, but lacked direct access to the broader Washington policy debates.

In addition to lacking policy guidance about post-war roles and responsibilities, these operational-level planning efforts lacked insight into key aspects of the current state of affairs in Iraq. For example, planning assumed that Iraqis, in particular law enforcement personnel, would be available and willing to resume some civic duties on the "day after." Also, plans did not recognize the deeply degraded status of Iraqi infrastructure, such as electricity grids.

Organizational Decisions. On January 20, 2003, by National Security Presidential Directive 24, the President created the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), to serve first as the post-war planning office in the Pentagon, and then to deploy to Iraq. Throughout, ORHA would report to the Department of Defense. Retired Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner, who had led

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[56] Tommy Franks, *American Soldier,* New York: Regan Books, 2004.

[57] Interviews with officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Department of State, and the NSC staff, 2002 and 2003.

[58] Interviews with TFIV leaders and members, and with CFLCC staff, 2003. See also Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,* New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq after the Gulf War, was appointed to lead ORHA. He quickly brought on board a team of other retired Army general officers to serve in key leadership positions.[59]

ORHA held its founding conference on February 20 and 21, 2003, at the National Defense University. Participants included the fledgling ORHA staff, representatives of civilian agencies that would contribute to the effort, and representatives of the military commands — long since deployed to Kuwait — that would become ORHA's partners.

As briefed at NDU, ORHA would be responsible for three pillars in postwar Iraq — Civil Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs, and Reconstruction — while the military would be responsible for security. Those ORHA efforts would commence in each area as soon as major combat operations ended. The most important constraint was time — the civilian agencies were not organized to be able to provide substantial resources or personnel by the start of major combat operations.

ORHA's command relationships with other Department of Defense bodies were initially a topic of dispute. During ORHA's "post-war planning office" days inside the Pentagon, General Garner reported directly to Secretary Rumsfeld. It was generally agreed that, once in the field, ORHA would fall under CENTCOM. CFLCC insisted that ORHA would also fall under CFLCC, but ORHA resisted that arrangement.[60]

Shortly after the founding conference at NDU, ORHA deployed to Kuwait with a skeleton staff and limited resources, and set up its headquarters at the Kuwait Hilton.

Major Combat Operations

Major combat operations in Iraq, launched in March 2003, roughly followed the course that had been outlined at the CENTCOM Component Commanders Conference in January that year. The coalition force was both joint — with representatives from all the U.S. military services — and combined — with participants from coalition partner countries.[61]

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[59] They included Lieutenant General Ron Adams, Lieutenant General Jerry Bates, Major General Bruce Moore, and Brigadier General Buck Walters. The initial leadership team also included one senior leader from the Department of State, Ambassador Barbara Bodine, a noted Arabist and regional expert.

[60] Information from ORHA senior leaders, and CENTCOM and CFLCC staff, 2003.

[61] The U.S. Coast Guard, the only military service that reports to the Department of Homeland Security rather than the Department of Defense, contributed personnel to conduct maritime-interception operations and to conduct coastal patrols.

Early Infiltration

As long planned, the effort had actually begun before the full-scale launch, with early infiltration into Iraq by the CIA, including the so-called Northern and Southern Iraq Liaison Elements (NILE and SILE), whose task was to gather intelligence, form relationships, and lay the groundwork for the early entry of Special Operations Forces (SOF).[62]

SOF, in turn, had also entered Iraq before the formal launch. Among other missions, SOF secured bases in Al Anbar province in western Iraq, secured suspected WMD sites, pursued some of the designated "high-value targets," and worked closely with Iraqi Kurdish forces in northern Iraq — the *pesh merga* — to attack a key stronghold of the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, Ansar al-Islam.[63] Special operations forces in OIF, like the conventional forces, were both joint and combined — including contingents from the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland. Defense expert Andrew Krepinevich estimated that "nearly 10,000" SOF took part in OIF major combat.[64]

The Launch

The visible public launch of OIF took place on March 20, 2003, shortly after the expiration of President Bush's 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons (see above, "Ultimatum to Saddam Hussein").[65] After months of debate about the sequencing of the air and ground campaigns, the planned sequence shifted in two major ways at the last minute.

By early 2003, the plans called for beginning with a short air-only campaign, followed by the ground invasion. However, late-breaking evidence gave rise to stronger concerns that the Iraqi regime would deliberately destroy its southern oil wells, so the timing of the ground forces launch was moved up, ahead of the scheduled air campaign launch.

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[62] See Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004, pp.208-212; Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, pp.156-157, 188-189, 388; and "Top Secret Polo Step" collection, "Compartmented Planning Effort, 15 August 2002" CENTCOM brief, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and posted by the National Security Archive, The George Washington University, available at [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm].

[63] Information from CENTCOM, CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2003. See also Andrew Krepinevich, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: A First-Blush Assessment," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2003.

[64] Andrew Krepinevich, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: A First-Blush Assessment," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2003.

[65] Some discrepancies in contemporary press coverage and later accounts are due to the eight-hour time difference between Washington D.C., where President Bush issued the 48-hour ultimatum on the evening of March 17; and Baghdad, where that ultimatum expired in the early morning of March 20. The timeline of operations, described here, is based on the time in Baghdad.

Then, even closer to launch time, the CIA obtained what seemed to be compelling information about Saddam Hussein's location — at Dora Farms near Baghdad. In the early hours of March 20, just as the ultimatum expired, a pair of F-117 fighters targeted the site. That attack narrowly followed a barrage of Tomahawk missiles, launched from ships at key leadership sites in Baghdad.

That night, coalition ground forces crossed the line of departure from the Kuwaiti desert into southern Iraq. The following day, March 21, 2003, brought the larger-scale "shock and awe" attacks on Iraqi command and control and other sites, from both Air Force and Navy assets. Early Iraqi responses included setting a few oil wells on fire, and firing a few poorly-directed missiles into Kuwait, most of which were successfully intercepted by Patriot missiles.[66]

The Ground Campaign

The ground campaign was led by Army Lieutenant General David McKiernan, the Commanding General of the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), the ground component of CENTCOM. The strategy was a quick, two-pronged push from Kuwait up through southern Iraq to Baghdad.

Under CFLCC, the ground "main effort" was led by U.S. Army V Corps, under Lieutenant General William Scott Wallace. V Corps was assigned the western route up to Baghdad, west of the Euphrates River.[67] Meanwhile, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (IMEF), led by Lieutenant General James Conway, was assigned the eastern route, closer to the border with Iran. From a tactical perspective, for both the Army and the Marines this was a very long projection of force — over 600 kilometers from Kuwait up to Baghdad, and more for those units that pushed further north to Tikrit or to Mosul. Those long distances reportedly strained capabilities including logistics and communications.

The Marines were assigned the eastern route up to Baghdad — with more urban areas than the Army's western route. The basic strategy still called for a quick drive to Baghdad. Just across the border into Iraq, IMEF took the far southern port city of Umm Qasr.

The UK First Armored Division, which fell under IMEF, was tasked to take Basra, Iraq's second largest city. The UK Division faced resistance from members of the paramilitary force Saddam Fedayeen and others still loyal to the Ba'ath Party. To limit casualties in the large urban area, rather than enter the city immediately in

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[66] Information from V Corps leaders and staff, 2003. The basic facts of the case, during the initial days of OIF, were extremely well-documented by the international press. For one clear account, see Romesh Ratnesar, "Awestruck," *Time*, March 23, 2003. See also Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

[67] For an in-depth description from the tactical level of the Army's role in OIF through major combat operations, commissioned by the Army and written by participants, see Gregory Fontenot, E.J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005.

full force, the Division used a more methodical elimination of opponents, combined with outreach to the population to explain their intentions. IMEF supported the Division's use of a slow and deliberate tempo. After several weeks of gradual attrition, the Division pushed into Basra on April 6, 2003.

The main IMEF force encountered some resistance as they pushed north, in particular at the town of Nassiriyah, a geographical choke-point. At Nassiriyah, "there were a number of things that seemed to hit us all about the same time, that dented our momentum," LtGen Conway later noted. There, the Marines suffered casualties from a friendly fire incident with Apaches. As widely reported, the Army's 507th Maintenance Company lost its way and stumbled into an ambush, in which some personnel were killed and others, including PFC Jessica Lynch, were taken hostage. The area was blanketed by fierce desert sandstorms. And the Saddam Fedayeen put up a determined resistance — "not a shock, but a surprise," as LtGen Conway later reflected. Evidence suggested that additional Iraqi fighters, inspired by the ambush carried out by the Fedayeen, came from Baghdad to Nasariyah to join the fight.[68] After the defeating the resistance at Nasariyah, the Marines pushed up to Baghdad along their eastern route.

In the west, the Army faced a longer distance but a less-populated terrain. V Corps began combat operations with two divisions under its command, the Third Infantry Division (3ID), under Major General Buford Blount, and the 101st Airborne Division (101st), under Major General David Petraeus.

The 3ID rapidly led the western charge to Baghdad, moving speedily through the south and reaching Saddam International Airport on April 4. The division launched its first "thunder run" — a fast, armored strike — into Baghdad on April 5, and the second on April 7. The purpose of the first, according to the Brigade Commander in charge, Colonel David Perkins, was "to create as much confusion as I can inside the city." The purpose of the second was "to make sure, in no uncertain terms, that people knew the city had fallen and we were in charge of it."[69]

The 101st followed the 3ID up the western route through southern Iraq, clearing resistance in southern cities and allowing the 3ID to move as quickly as possible. Soldiers from the 101st faced fighting in key urban areas — Hillah, Najaf, Karbala. Just after mid-April, the division arrived and set up its headquarters in Mosul, in northern Iraq.[70]

Like the Marines, the Army was somewhat surprised by the resistance they encountered from the Saddam Fedayeen. LTG Wallace apparently caused some

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[68] Interviews with participants, 2003. See also PBS Frontline, "Interview: Lt.Gen. James Conway," February 26, 2004, at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/interviews/conway. html#marines].

[69] PBS Frontline, "Interview: COL David Perkins," February 26, 2004, at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/interviews/perkins.html#thunder].

[70] See Press Conference with Major General David Petraeus, May 13, 2003, at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2601].

consternation at higher headquarters levels with his candid remarks to the press in late March: "The enemy we're fighting is different from the one we'd war-gamed against." He explained, "The attacks we're seeing are bizarre — technical vehicles with .50 calibers and every kind of weapon charging tanks and Bradleys."[71] Coupled with major sand storms, these attacks posed challenges to the ground forces' long supply lines — "lines of communication" — running up from Kuwait over hundreds of miles through southern Iraq.[72]

In the north, on March 26, 2003, about 1,000 soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, part of the Army's Southern European Task Force based in Italy, parachuted into northern Iraq. They began their mission by securing an airfield so that cargo planes carrying tanks and Bradleys could land. Once on the ground, the 173rd, working closely with air and ground Special Operating Forces and with Kurdish *pesh merga* forces, expanded the northern front of OIF.

Initial coalition plans had called for the heavy 4th Infantry Division (4ID) to open the northern front by crossing into Iraq from Turkey. The intended primary mission was challenging Iraqi regular army forces based above Baghdad. A more subtle secondary mission was to place limits on possible Kurdish ambitions to control more territory in northern Iraq, thus providing some reassurance to the Government of Turkey and discouraging it from sending Turkish forces into Iraq to restrain the Kurds.

By early 2003, 4ID equipment was sitting on ships circling in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, waiting for an outcome of the ongoing negotiations with the Turkish government. But on March 1, 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected a proposal that would have allowed the 4ID to use Turkish territory.

Iraqi Contributions to Major Combat

Iraqi opposition fighters made a very limited contribution to coalition major combat efforts. Before the war, the Office of the Secretary of Defense had launched an ambitious program to recruit and train up to 3,000 Iraqi expats, to be known as the "Free Iraqi Forces." Training, by U.S. forces, took place in Taszar, Hungary. Ultimately, the number of recruits and graduates was much lower than originally projected. Most graduates did deploy to Iraq, where they served with U.S. forces primarily as interpreters or working with local communities on civil affairs projects.[73]

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[71] Rick Atkinson, "General: A Longer War Likely," *Washington Post*, March 28, 2003. Asked whether this suggested the likelihood of a much longer war than forecast, LTG Wallace replied, "It's beginning to look that way". Asked later that day for his reaction to these comments, Secretary Rumsfeld noted, "Well, I didn't read the article — I saw the headline." See DoD Press Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld, March 28, 2003, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2180]s].

[72] Information from V Corps staff, 2003.

[73] Information from Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, and CFLCC and CJTF-7 officials, 2003.

Meanwhile, in late March 2003, Iraqi expatriate oppositionist Ahmed Chalabi contacted U.S. officials with a request to send a group of his own fighters from northern to southern Iraq to join the fight. After some discussion, agreement was reached and a U.S. military flight was arranged. In early April, Chalabi and 600 fighters stepped off the plane at Tallil air base in southern Iraq. The forces were neither equipped nor well-organized. Accounts from many observers, in succeeding months, suggested that some members of the group engaged in lawless behavior.[74]

End of Major Combat

On April 9, 2003, the statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos square in Baghdad was toppled. Two days after the second 3ID "thunder run," this event signaled for many observers, inside and outside Iraq, that the old Iraqi regime had ended.

Consistent with the war plans from "Generated Start" onward, U.S. forces continued to flow into Iraq. The 4th Infantry Division (4ID), diverted from its original northern front plans, had re-routed its troops and equipment to Kuwait. 4ID forces began entering Iraq on April 12, 2003. The 1st Armored Division (1AD) also began arriving in April 2003. According to the planning, the 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) was scheduled to be next in line. However, in April 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld, in coordination with General Franks, made the decision that 1CD was not needed in Iraq at that time — a decision that apparently caused consternation for some ground commanders.[75]

As soon as it became apparent that the old regime was no longer exercising control, widespread looting took place in Baghdad and elsewhere. Targets included government buildings, and the former houses of regime leaders, but also some private businesses and cultural institutions. Leaders of the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad reported, for example, that "looters had taken or destroyed 170,000 items of antiquity dating back thousands of years."[76] Looters and vandals also targeted unguarded weapons stockpiles largely abandoned by former Iraqi security forces.[77]

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[74] Information from CENTCOM and V Corps officials, 2003. Curiously, Chalabi and the fighters, apparently viewing themselves as a stronger incarnation of the Taszar training program, adopted the name "Free Iraqi Forces". To distinguish them from the Taszar-trained Iraqis, the Department of Defense called them the "Free Iraqi Fighting Force."

[75] See Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, "Dash to Baghdad left top U.S. Generals Divided," *The New York Times*, March 13, 2006.

[76] "Looters ransack Baghdad museum," *BBC News*, April 12, 2003. See also John Burns, "A Nation at War: The Iraqis, Looting and a Suicide Attack as Chaos Grows in Baghdad," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2003. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld described the dynamic as "untidiness", and a manifestation of "pent-up feelings that may result from decades of repression" directed against the old regime. See Department of Defense News Briefing, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, April 11, 2003, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2367]

[77] See an assessment by an OIF participant: Colonel Mark Klingelhoefer, "Captured Enemy Ammunition in Operation Iraqi Freedom and its Strategic Importance in Post-Conflict Operations," U.S. Army War College, March 18, 2005, available at

Some observers and coalition participants suggested that the coalition simply did not have enough troops to stop all the unlawful behavior.[78]

Meanwhile, U.S. senior leadership attention had turned to Iraq's political future. In April, the President's "Special Envoy for Free Iraqis," Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, chaired two "big tent" meetings of Iraqis. The first was held on April 15, 2003, at the ancient city of Ur, near Tallil air base, and the second was held on April 28, at the Baghdad Convention Center. Participants include expatriate opposition leaders and Iraqi Kurds, together with a number of in-country community leaders who had been identified by the CIA and other sources. The sessions focused on discussion of broad principles for the future, rather than specific decisions about Iraqi leadership roles.[79]

On May 1, 2003, President Bush, standing aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq. He stated, "In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."[80] At that point, the old Iraqi regime, though not completely dismantled, was no longer able to exercise control over Iraq's territory, resources, or population. Saddam Hussein was captured later, on December 13, 2003, by units of 4ID, outside his hometown Tikrit.

Post-Major Combat: Basis and Organization

This Report uses the term "post-major combat" to refer to the period from the President's announcement of the end of major combat, on May 1, 2003, to the present. This period has included evolutions in national and military strategy, and in the specific "ways and means" used to pursue those strategies on the ground, as described below. From a political perspective, the major marker after May 1, 2003, was the June 28, 2004 transition of executive authority from the occupying powers back to Iraqis. From a military perspective, the period after May 1, 2003 has included a continuation of combat operations as well as the introduction of many new missions.

Legal Basis for Coalition Presence

Formal Occupation. From the time of regime removal until June 28, 2004, the coalition was formally an occupying force. Shortly after the end of major combat, in May 2003, the United Nations Security Council recognized the United States and

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[77] (...continued)
[http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/ksil72.pdf].

[78] See John Burns, "A Nation at War: The Iraqis, Looting and a Suicide Attack as Chaos Grows in Baghdad," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2003, who quotes a Marine on guard in Baghdad as saying, "we just don't have enough troops."

[79] Information from Department of State, Office of the Secretary of Defense and CENTCOM officials, and participant observation, 2003.

[80] "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended," May 1, 2003, at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html].

the United Kingdom as "occupying powers," together with all the "authorities, responsibilities, and obligations under international law" that this designation entails.[81] Somewhat belatedly, in October 2003, the United Nations authorized a "multi-national force under unified command to take all necessary measures to contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq."[82] That language referred to the coalition military command in Iraq at the time — the Combined Joint Task Force-7 ("CJTF-7").

Iraqi Request for a Multinational Force. As the deadline for the "transfer of sovereignty" — June 30, 2004 — approached, U.S. and new interim Iraqi officials negotiated the terms for the presence and activities in Iraq, after that date, of the newly re-organized multi-national force, now called the Multi-National Force-Iraq ("MNF-I").

Agreement was reached to reflect the terms of that presence in the unusual form of parallel letters, one from U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, and one from Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, to the President of the UN Security Council. Those letters were appended to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546, issued on June 8, 2004.[83]

That U.N. Resolution reaffirmed the authorization for the multi-national force and extended it to the post-occupation period — on the grounds that it was "at the request of the incoming Interim Government of Iraq."[84] It repeated the authorization language used in the October 2003 Resolution, with an important qualifier: the force was now authorized to "take all necessary measures to contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq *in accordance with* the letters annexed to this resolution."[85]

The U.S. letter spelled out the tasks the multi-national force would undertake, including combat operations, internment, securing of weapons, training and equipping Iraqi security forces, and participating in providing humanitarian assistance, civil affairs support, and relief and reconstruction assistance.

Some of the early US/ Iraqi discussions had considered the possibility that Iraqi forces might, in some cases, fall under the command of the multinational force.[86] However, the U.N. Resolution and the appended letters made clear that the

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[81] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 (2003), 22 May 2003, Preambular Section.

[82] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1511 (2003), 16 October 2003.

[83] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 (2004), 8 June 2004 (letters). Subsequently, the U.N. mandate was extended annually.

[84] Ibid., para. 9.

[85] Ibid., para. 10.

[86] The ceremony marking the establishment (Full Operational Capability) of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, in May 2004, included a parade of representatives of each coalition partner country. An Iraqi General participated in the parade like all the other coalition members — and then brought the house down when, unscripted, he kissed the Iraqi flag.

command-and-control relationship between the Iraqi government and the multi-national force would be strictly one of coordination, not command. The Resolution called the relationship a "security partnership between the sovereign Government of Iraq and the multinational force."[87]

Both letters described coordination modalities to help ensure unity of effort. Both stated the intention to make use of "coordination bodies at the national, regional, and local levels," and noted that multi-national force and Iraqi officials would "keep each other informed of their activities."

Further parameters of the MNF-I presence in Iraq were spelled out in a revised version of Order 17 of the Coalition Provisional Authority, issued on June 27, 2004. The document addressed issues including legal immunities, communications, transportation, customs, entry and departure, for government civilians and contractors as well as military forces. Issued by the legal executive authority of Iraq at the time, the Order was to remain in force "for the duration of U.N. Resolution mandates including subsequent Resolutions, unless rescinded or amended by Iraqi legislation."[88]

Future Security Framework Agreement. The legal basis for the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq is expected to change by the beginning of 2009. The current U.N. authorization, issued on December 18, 2007, extends through December 31, 2008. In requesting it, in a letter appended to the Resolution, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki made clear that this would be the final request by the Government of Iraq for an extension of the current mandate. The Iraqi Government, he wrote, "expects, in future, that the Security Council will be able to deal with the situation in Iraq without the need for action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations."[89]

On November 26, 2007, President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki signed a "Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America." The document stated the "aim to achieve, before July 31, 2008, agreements between the two governments with respect to the political, cultural, economic, and security spheres."[90]

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[87] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 (2004), 8 June 2004 (letters).

[88] Coalition Provisional Authority Order 17 (revised), "Status of the Coalition Provisional Authority, MNF-Iraq, Certain Missions and Personnel in Iraq," available at [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20040627_CPAORD_17_Status_of_Coalition__Rev__with_Annex_A.pdf].

[89] UN Security Council Resolution 1790 (2007), December 18, 2007, available at [http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/650/72/PDF/N0765072.pdf?OpenElement].

[90] "Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America," November 26, 2007, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071126-11.html].

The security agreement is expected to have two parts: a standard Status of Forces Agreement; and a strategic framework, reflecting the topics outlined in the November declaration of principles.

As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have described it, the package is expected Ato set the basic parameters for the U.S. presence in Iraq, including the appropriate authorities and jurisdiction necessary to operate effectively and to carry out essential missions, such as helping the Iraqi government fight al-Qaeda, develop its security forces, and stem the flow of lethal weapons and training from Iran.[91] That AU.S. presence is expected to include contractors as well as government personnel.[92]

As State Department Coordinator for Iraq explained in Congressional testimony in March 2008, the documents would not "include a binding commitment to defend Iraq or any other security commitments that would warrant Senate advice and consent."[93]

Coalition Command Relationships

Since the declared end of major combat operations, the formal relationships among U.S. military and civilian organizations operating in Iraq have shifted several times, in important ways.

The period of formal occupation was characterized by multiple, somewhat confusing relationships.[94] In late April 2003, LTG McKiernan, Commanding General of the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), issued a proclamation stating: "The coalition alone retains absolute authority within Iraq."[95] CFLCC, the military face of the coalition in Iraq, maintained a small headquarters presence in Baghdad, at the Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, while the majority of its staff remained in their pre-war location at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

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[91] Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates, AWhat We Need Next in Iraq,@ *Washington Post*, February 13, 2008.

[92] See Thom Shanker and Steven Lee Myers, AU.S. Asking Iraq for Wide Rights on War,@ *The New York Times*, January 25, 2008.

[93] See also Testimony of Ambassador David M. Satterfield, Coordinator for Iraq, Department of State, before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcomittees on the Middle East and South Asia, and on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight, March 4, 2008, available [http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/sat030408.htm], and Adam Graham-Silverman, "Democrats Don't Buy Administration's Assurances on Iraq Agreements," *Congressional Quarterly Today*, March 5, 2008.

[94] For an account of the year of formal occupation from one of the key protagonists, see L. Paul Bremer III with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. For an account of that year by a journalist who spent considerable time at CPA headquarters, see Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006. For a hard-hitting critique of both civilian and military mistakes during the occupation, see Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2006.

[95] Information from CFLCC and V Corps staff, 2003.

The civilian face of the coalition in Iraq, in that time frame, was the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), whose small staff had arrived in Baghdad in late April. The basic civil-military division of labor was clear — CFLCC was responsible for security, while ORHA focused on reconstruction and humanitarian issues. The command relationship between the two, debated before the war, was never clearly resolved during the very short duration of their partnership on the ground in Iraq.

In early May 2003, President Bush announced his intention to appoint a senior official to serve as Administrator of a new organization, the Coalition Provisional Authority, which would serve as the legal executive authority of Iraq — a much more authoritative mandate than ORHA had held. On May 9, 2003, Ambassador L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer arrived in Baghdad with a small retinue, to take up the assignment. By mandate, Ambassador Bremer reported through the Secretary of Defense to the President. Later, in fall 2003, the White House assumed the lead for coordinating efforts in Iraq, and Ambassador Bremer's direct contacts with the White House became even more frequent.

On June 15, 2003, the headquarters of U.S. Army V Corps, now led by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, assumed the coalition military leadership mantle from CFLCC — and the new body was named the CJTF-7.[96] CJTF-7 reported directly to CENTCOM, and through it to the Secretary of Defense. At the same time, CJTF-7 served in "direct support" to CPA.[97] In the view of many observers, that dual chain of command and accountability was not a recipe for success — particularly when the CENTCOM Commanding General and the CPA Administrator disagreed with each other. In May 2004, CJTF-7 separated into a higher, strategically-focused headquarters, the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), still led by LTG Sanchez, and a lower, operationally-focused headquarters, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I). MNF-I retained CJTF-7's "direct support" relationship with CPA until the end of the formal occupation.

CJTF-7 itself was a combined force, including a UK Deputy Commanding General, and many key staff members, as well as contingents, from coalition partner countries. As a rule, those representatives maintained direct communication with their respective capitals. CPA, too, was "combined," including a senior UK official who shared the leadership role, though not executive signing authority, with Ambassador Bremer, and who maintained a regular and full channel of communication with the UK government in London.

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[96] The previous day, June 14, The V Corps Commanding General who led V Corps during OIF major combat, LTG Wallace, handed command of the Corps to LTG Sanchez. LTG Sanchez had come to Iraq several weeks earlier as the Commanding General of 1st Armored Division. The few CFLCC staff still remaining in Baghdad redeployed to Kuwait.

[97] The phrase, borrowed from field artillery, does not necessarily translate smoothly into bureaucratic relationships. CPA tended to assume that the military command in Iraq simply worked for CPA. In May 2003, at his first meeting with the V Corps Commander, discussing whether their organizations would retain separate headquarters, Ambassador Bremer pointed his finger at the General's chest and said, "It is my commander's intent that you co-locate with me". Participant observation, 2003.

On June 28, 2004, at the "transfer of sovereignty," the Coalition Provisional Authority ceased to exist. The new U.S. Embassy, led by Ambassador John Negroponte, inherited none of CPA's executive authority for Iraq — like other U.S. Embassies around the world, it simply represented U.S. interests in Iraq. The relationship between the Embassy and MNF-I — led by General George Casey beginning on July 1, 2004 — was strictly one of coordination.

Post-Major Combat: The Force

The Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), like its predecessor CJTF-7, is a joint, combined force. It includes some Department of Defense civil servants, and it is supported by civilian contractors.

Structure and Footprint

Headquarters Organization. The MNF-I headquarters, located in Baghdad, is the strategic-level headquarters, currently led by U.S. Army General David Petraeus. The position of MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG) has always been filled by a general officer from the United Kingdom — since June 2007, Lieutenant General William Rollo has served simultaneously as MNF-I DCG and Senior British Military Representative to Iraq. The MNF-I staff is an *ad hoc* headquarters, including senior leaders and staff provided individually by the U.S. military services and by coalition partner countries.

The Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), also located in Baghdad, is the operational-level headquarters, reporting to MNF-I.[98] Its role is synchronizing coalition forces actions throughout Iraq. MNC-I is built around a U.S. Army Corps. As of February 2008, the nucleus of MNC-I is the XVIII Airborne Corps, led by Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin, which replaced III Corps, led by Lieutenant General Ray Odierno. The Army Corps staff is augmented, in each rotation, by additional U.S. and coalition partner senior leaders and staff.

The structure and staffing of both MNF-I and MNC-I have evolved significantly from the early days of OIF. When U.S. Army V Corps became the nucleus of CJTF-7, in June 2003, its pre-war planning and exercising, and its OIF wartime experience, had been focused on the tactical-level ground campaign. Its senior staff positions were filled by Colonels, who were only gradually augmented by General Officers over the course of summer and fall 2003.

Under the command of MNC-I, Divisions or their equivalents are responsible for contiguous areas covering all of Iraq. The boundaries of the divisional areas of

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[98] The 2004 split of CJTF-7 into a higher, four-star HQ, and a lower, three-star HQ, was strongly recommended, in order to give the commanders time to focus full-time on two very large portfolios — strategic work with U.S. and Iraqi leadership, and supervising operations throughout Iraq. As of January 2008, MNF-I and MNC-I staff were reportedly beginning to plan a re-merger of the two headquarters, perhaps to take effect at the following Corps rotation, to avoid apparent duplication of effort by some staff sections.

responsibility have shifted somewhat over time, in part to accommodate major changes in deployments by coalition partner countries.

Provincial Iraqi Control.

The type of coverage varies geographically. In provinces under "Provincial Iraqi Control" (PIC), the Government of Iraq, represented by the provincial Governor, has the lead responsibility for security. Conventional coalition forces may have little or no continual presence.

The PIC designation is the result of a high-level decision process, based on a set of criteria, with input from Iraqi Government, MNF-I, and U.S. and UK officials, and a final decision by Iraq's Ministerial Committee on National Security, which is chaired by the Prime Minister.[99] Some observers have pointed out that there are obvious qualitative differences in the security environment among PIC provinces — for example, between relatively calm Sulaymaniyah in the north and occasionally restive Basra in the south — and therefore, the "PIC" designation alone is not an especially informative indication of security conditions. The Department of Defense itself points out an additional flaw — the lack of a "clear, post-PIC assessment process for determining the degree to which a transitioned province has achieved sustainable security."[100]

U.S. Forces in Iraq

The total number of U.S. forces in Iraq peaked early, during major combat operations, at about 250,000 troops. Since then, the number has varied greatly over time, in response to events on the ground, such as Iraqi elections, and to strategic-level decisions, such as the 2007 surge. The peak surge level of U.S. troops was about 168,000, in October 2007, up from a relative low of 135,000 troops just before surge forces began to arrive.

As of March 1, 2008, the total number of U.S. forces in Iraq was 159,700, of which 134,900 were from the Active Component, and 24,800 from the Reserve Component.[101] The lower total, compared to October 2007, reflects the redeployment from Iraq without replacement of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 1st

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[99] As of January 2008, PIC provinces and their dates of designation include Muthanna, July 2006; Dhi Qar, September 2006; An Najaf, December 2006; Maysan, April 2007; Irbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk, May 2007; Karbala, October 2007; Basrah, December 2007. See MNF-I Provincial Iraqi Control page at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1469&Itemid=78].

[100] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2007.

[101] Joint Staff information paper, ABoots on the Ground,@ March 1, 2008. The breakdown by Service and component: Active Component: 96,800 USA, 8,700 USAF, 5,500 USN, 23,900 USMC. Reserve Component: 14,100 ARNG, 1,100 ANG, 5,100 USAR, 1,000 USAFR, 1,200 USNR, 2,300 USMCR. For more details, and comparisons, see the regularly updated CRS Report RS22449, *U.S. Forces in Iraq*, by JoAnne O'Bryant and Michael Waterhouse.

Cavalry Division, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and the 2nd BCT of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Well before the surge, by many accounts, the demand for forces in Iraq had placed some stress on both the active and reserve components. The operational benefits of continuity, and keeping forces in place long enough to gain understanding and develop expertise, competed against institutional requirements to maintain the health of the force as a whole, including the ability to recruit and retain personnel.

An additional challenge was that pre-war assumptions only very incompletely predicted the scope and scale of post-war mission requirements, which meant in practice, especially early in OIF, that individuals and units deployed without certainty about the length of their tours. U.S. Army V Corps, for example, was not specifically given the mission, before the war, to serve as the post-war task force headquarters, let alone a timeline for that commitment. As the press widely reported after the end of major combat operations, some members of the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID), which had led the Army's charge to Baghdad, publicly stated their desire to redeploy as soon as possible. Major General Buford Blount, the 3ID Commanding General, commented: "You know, a lot of my forces have been over here since September, and fought a great fight and [are] doing great work here in the city. But if you ask the soldiers, they're ready to go home."[102]

Sometimes, changes in the situation on the ground — rather than anticipated political events like Iraqi elections — have prompted decisions to extend deployments. The earliest and possibly most dramatic example took place in April 2004. The young Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his militia, the *Jaish al-Mahdi* (Mahdi Army), staged uprisings in cities and towns throughout Shi'a-populated southern Iraq, just as the volatile, Sunni-populated city of Fallujah, in Al Anbar province, simmered in the wake of the gruesome murders of four Blackwater contractors. The 1st Armored Division (1AD), which had served in Baghdad for one year, and was already in the process of redeploying, was extended by 90 days — and then executed a remarkable series of complex and rapid troop deployments to embattled southern cities.

In early 2007, in an effort to provide greater predictability if not lighter burdens, the Department of Defense, under the leadership of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, announced new rotation policy goals. Active units would deploy for not more than 15 months, and return to home station for not less than 12 months.[103] Reserve units would mobilize for a maximum of 12 months, including pre- and post-

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[102] Department of Defense News Transcript, MG Buford C. Blount III from Baghdad, May 15, 2003, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2608].

[103] Department of Defense News Briefing with Secretary Gates and General Pace from the Pentagon, April 11, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3928]. Secretary Gates clarified that the current expectation was that "not more than 15 months" would generally mean "15 months."

deployment responsibilities, rather than 12 months of "boots on the ground," with the goal of five years between deployments.[104]

Coalition Partner Forces[105]

Since its inception, OIF has been a multinational effort, but the number, size, and nature of contributions by coalition partner countries has varied substantially over time. Some of those contributions have been constrained by national caveats.

Four countries provided boots on the ground for major combat — the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland, in addition to the United States. Coalition forces contributions then reached their peak, in terms of the number of both countries and troops contributed, in the early post-major combat period. Since then, some countries have withdrawn their forces altogether. A number of other countries have withdrawn the bulk of their contingents, but have left a few personnel in Iraq to serve in headquarters staff positions.

Decisions to draw down forces may have been shaped, in some cases, by a perception that the mission had been accomplished. However, far more frequently, decisions seem to have been informed by domestic political considerations, sometimes coupled with apparent pressure from extremists seeking to shape those decisions. Most notable was the Spanish troop withdrawal, catalyzed by the March 11, 2004, commuter train bombings in Madrid, which killed nearly 200 people. The attacks took place just days before scheduled Spanish parliamentary elections, in which the ruling party of Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar Lopez, who had supported OIF, was voted out of office. The new Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, gave orders, within hours after being sworn into office, for Spanish troops to come home from Iraq.

As of February 2008, the major coalition contributors included the United Kingdom, Georgia, Australia, the Republic of Korea, and Poland.

The United Kingdom continues to lead Multi-National Division-Southeast, headquartered in Basra, with about 4,100 troops on the ground as of March 12, 2008.[106] Iraqis formally assumed security responsibility for Basra province in December 2007. As of early 2008, UK forces had pulled back to the Basra airport, thus maintaining a less visible presence throughout the city and province, and had shifted their focus from combat operations to training Iraqi security forces. After

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[104] Department of Defense Press Release, "DoD Announces Changes to Reserve Component Force Management Policy," January 11, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=10389]. The policy is based on unit rotations; individuals who transfer between units may find themselves out of synch with the rotation policy goals. See for example John Vandiver, "Families want answers about deployments and dwell time," *Stars and Stripes*, May 11, 2007.

[105] For more detailed information about foreign contributions to Iraq, including coalition forces, see CRS Report RL32105, *Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Stabilization and Reconstruction*, by Christopher Blanchard and Catherine Dale.

[106] ABrowne visits UK troops in Basra," *The Guardian*, March 12, 2008.

coming to office in June 2007, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown initiated a draw-down of UK forces from about 5,500 in summer 2007, to a projected 2,500 by spring 2008.[107] In late March 2008, amidst heavy fighting in Basra between Iraqi security forces and extremist militias, UK defense officials reportedly suggested that the spring troop withdrawal plans were temporarily on hold.[108]

In March 2007, Georgia increased its contribution from 850 to roughly 2,000 troops, a full combat brigade. The contribution is substantial for a country with a population just over four and a half million, and it is widely believed to be an indirect part of the Georgian government's bid to join NATO. In Iraq, the Georgian troops are based in Wasit province, where many of them man check-points with a particular view to controlling movement from neighboring Iran. The Georgian brigade serves under Multi-National Division-Center, whose Commanding General, Major General Rick Lynch, has praised their efforts and noted with approval that the Georgians are unconstrained by national caveats.[109]

Australia initially sent about 2,000 combat troops to Iraq, including Special Operations Forces, and had about 1,500 troops in and around Iraq as of February 2008.[110] Following elections held in November 2007, new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stated that Australia=s combat forces C about 550 troops C would leave Iraq by mid-2008, and these plans were reportedly discussed at the 19th annual Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations in February 2008. Other Australian forces are expected to continue their Iraq missions C including maritime security operations, training, logistics, and headquarters staff functions.[111]

The Republic of Korea leads Multi-National Division-North East, based in Irbil and responsible for the largely Kurdish-populated northern provinces of Iraq. The division focuses primarily on reconstruction. Korean troops arrived in Iraq in 2004 C a sizable contingent of about 3,600, albeit with some caveats. In December 2007, the Korean parliament voted to extend their mandate for another year.[112] The contingent current includes about 650 troops.[113]

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[107] See, for example, Adrian Croft, AUK Brown on unannounced visit to troops in Iraq,@ *Reuters*, December 9, 2007.

[108] James Hilder, "Basra Crisis Leaves British Withdrawal in Ruins," *London Times*, March 28, 2008. See also Thomas Harding, "Gordon Brown Won't Bring Troops Home Early," *London Daily Telegraph*, March 10, 2008.

[109] Conversation with MG Lynch, 2008. A "national caveat" is a restriction, often in formal written form, imposed by a government on the use of its forces.

[110] See Fred W. Baker III, AU.S., Australia Reinforce Defense Relationships,@ American Forces Press Service, February 23, 2008.

[111] See Rohan Sullivan, AAustralian troops home from Iraq in 2008,@ *Washington Post*, November 29, 2007; and Rob Taylor, AAustralia says job is done for soldiers in Iraq,@ Reuters, February 20, 2008.

[112] See AS. Korea extends Iraq deployment," *BBC News*, December 28, 2007, and AS. Korea approves one-year extension in Iraq,@ *USA Today*, December 28, 2007.

[113] ASeoul to dispatch 212 replacement troops to Iraq,@ *Korea.net*, March 18,

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Poland leads Multi-National Division-Center South (MND-CD), with responsibility for Qadisiyah province. When Poland assumed command of MND-CS in September 2003 from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, the area of responsibility included five provinces south of Baghdad, extending to Iraq's borders with Iran and Saudi Arabia, but now it includes the single province of Qadisiyah. From 2003 through December 2004, Poland maintained about 2,500 troops in Iraq. That number was reduced to about 1,700 in January 2005.[114] On December 21, 2007, Polish President Lech Kaczynski approved a plan to withdraw the remaining 900 Polish troops from Iraq by the end of October 2008.[115] U.S. military leaders in Iraq noted that as of January 2008, Polish troops in Iraq were already preparing for their return home.[116]

For outside observers, determining the total number of non-Iraqi, non-U.S. troops in Iraq is a somewhat complicated process. The actual number is constantly in flux, as contingents deploy and redeploy, contributing countries decide to change the size of their contingents, and some individual numbers vary due to injury or absence. The Department of Defense maintains constantly updated records, but those records are classified due to requests by some contributors.

Further, foreign troops in Iraq serve in several different organizations — MNF-I itself; the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I, which falls under the dual supervision of MNF-I and NATO); and providing security for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Some of those countries that are usually listed as part of the coalition deploy troops that directly support MNF-I but are based outside Iraq — for example, Japan and Singapore.[117]

According to the March 26, 2008, "Iraq Weekly Status Report," published by the Department of State, 25 countries other than the United States had forces serving in MNF-I, with a total of 9,970 troops. Those countries include Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Tonga, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.[118] In addition, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Turkey

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[114] Information from the Embassy of Poland, Washington DC, October 11, 2007.

[115] "Poland to pull troops from Iraq,",*United Press International*, December 22, 2007; and "Polish troops to exit Iraq this year," CNN, January 31, 2008.

[116] Information from MNC-I officials, January 2008.

[117] 200 Japan Air Self-Defense Forces, based in Kuwait, provide airlift between Kuwait and Iraq. Information from the Embassy of Japan, Washington, D.C., October 10, 2007. While Singapore has never provided "boots on the ground", it has provided air and naval support, including deployments of Landing Ship, Tank (LSTs), KC-135 tanker aircraft, and a C-130 transport aircraft. Information from the Embassy of Singapore,Washington, D.C., October 11, 2007.

[118] "Iraq Weekly Status Report, March 26, 2008," available at
(continued...)

contribute directly to NTM-I but not to MNF-I.[119] New Zealand and Fiji provide security support to UNAMI.[120]

Post-Major Combat: Security Situation

The security situation in Iraq is multi-faceted, geographically varied, and constantly evolving. In a society where the rule of law is not completely established, politics — the struggle for power, resources and influence — more readily and frequently takes the form of violence. Iraqi people are often faced with imperfect, pragmatic decisions about who is best suited to protect them and their interests. As a general trajectory, after a brief period of relative quiet following major combat operations, forms of violent expression grew in variety, intensity, and frequency until mid-2007, when the surge reached full strength, but subsequently tapered off in frequency.

Major Sources and Forms of Violence

Sunni Extremism. One major form of violence in Iraq is terrorism practiced by Sunni Arabs with stated Islamic extremist goals. As of March 2008, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was the most prominent organization, but the threat may be better characterized as a loose network of affiliates, including both Iraqis and foreign fighters. Within the networks, assigned roles range from financiers, and planners of coordinated attacks, to unskilled labor recruited to emplace improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Their efforts to recruit primarily young males capitalize on Iraq's widespread under-employment, which can make the prospect of one-time payments appealing,[121] and general disaffection spurred by a perceived lack of opportunities in the new Iraq. The infrastructure used by AQI and its affiliates includes safe houses and lines of communication reaching, especially, through central and northern Iraq.[122]

The AQI network is adaptable, quickly shifting its tactics and its footprint as circumstances change. Pushed out of urban areas, they typically seek refuge and an opportunity to re-group, in deep rural settings. As surge operations (see below, "Surge Operations") pushed AQI and its affiliates out of Baghdad in late 2007, they

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[118] (...continued)
[http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/102858.pdf].

[119] See NATO Training Mission-Iraq website, at [http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Missions/NTM-I/NTMI_part.htm].

[120] See "UN Missions Summary by Country," September 2007, available at [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko.dpko/contributors/2007/sept07_3.pdf].

[121] Based on accounts from detainees and others, MNF-I leaders assess that underemployment, more often than unemployment, is a prime motivation for those recruited to place an IED in return for a one-time cash payment.

[122] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January 2008.

sought new bases of operation to the east and to the north, in the Diyala River Valley in Diyala province, and in the northern Tigris River Valley in Ninewah province.[123]

The network capitalizes on Iraq's still-porous borders. In early 2008, U.S. Division commanders confirmed that the flow of foreign fighters continued, from Syria into Iraq. In its most recent quarterly report to the Congress, the Department of Defense confirmed that "Syria is estimated to be the entry point for 90% of all foreign terrorists known in Iraq."[124]

Shi'a Extremism. Some Shi'a militias have been another major source of violence. A central figure since the days of major combat operations has been the young Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the head of the Office of the Martyr Sadr political organization and its armed militia, the *Jaish al-Mahdi* (Mahdi Army, "JAM"). During the year of formal occupation, al-Sadr frequently delivered Friday sermons at mosques, condemning the coalition and its Iraqi partners and calling for action against them. In April 2004, his followers staged coordinated, violent uprisings in cities throughout southern Iraq. While continuing to voice staunch opposition to the U.S. force presence in Iraq, in August 2007, he declared a ceasefire to which most of JAM adhered. Rogue elements of JAM — known euphemistically as "special groups" — defied the ceasefire call and continued to practice violence.[125]

MNF-I and DoD state that JAM special groups and other Shi'a extremist groups receive funding and support from Iran.[126] Less certain, in most assessments, is the extent to which elements of the Government of Iran are behind that support.[127] The Iranian government has reportedly pledged to help stop the flow of lethal aid into Iraq, but reports suggest that training continues at camps inside Iran, and that trained Iraqi Shi'a extremists continue to make their way back into Iraq after such training.[128] According to officials from the Multi-National Divisions that border Iran, the cross-border flow varies geographically over time, tending to seek the path of least resistance. The deployment of the Georgian full brigade to Wasit province, for

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[123] Information from MNF-I, MNC-I, and MND-North officials, January 2008.

[124] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq", March 2008.

[125] Some at MNF-I note that the possibility cannot be ruled out that some JAM special groups are acting under al-Sadr's orders.

[126] In December 2007, DoD assessed that, compared to September 2007: "There has been no identified decrease in Iranian training and funding of illegal Shi'a militias in Iraq. Tehran's support for Shi'a militant groups who attack Coalition and Iraqi forces remains a significant impediment to progress towards stabilization." Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2007.

[127] Interviews with MNF-I staff, Baghdad, January 2008.

[128] Interviews with MNF-I staff, Baghdad, January 2008. During the February 2008 state visit to Baghdad by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian and Iraqi officials reportedly signed an agreement on the renovation of border posts along their shared land and maritime borders. See "Iran, Iraq Emphasize Need for Renovation of Border Posts," Tehran IRNA agency in English, February 20 2008.

example, made that province harder to traverse and pushed traffic north and south.[129] Meanwhile, the Iranian government apparently continues to seek influence among Iraqi Shi'a through the exercise of "soft power," for example by purchasing a power plant in the Shi'a-populated Sadr City section of Baghdad.

JAM and JAM "special groups" activities in southern Iraq and Baghdad take place against the backdrop of a deeply-rooted intra-Shi'a struggle for power and resources. Some observers assess that, more than the Sunni-based insurgency or any other issue, the struggle for the Shi'a-populated south may shape Iraq's future.[130] The other main protagonist is the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (AISCI, formerly known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), which is backed by its Badr militia and which, like JAM, provides people with goods and services in an effort to extend its influence. The power struggle also includes smaller Shi'a political parties backed by militias, such as *Fadila al-Islamiyah* (Islamic Virtue) which is active in the major southern city and province of Basra.

Two upcoming political markers may exacerbate the contest. First, in April 2008, an 18-month moratorium on implementation of a 2006 law on federalism expires. That law includes provisions for the creation of "regions" from two or more provinces, and major Shi'a groups in the south have already called for different approaches to regionalization, based on their popular bases of support. Second, October 1, 2008, is the deadline for holding provincial elections, in accordance with the Provincial Powers Law passed in February 2008 and approved by the Presidency Council, after some reluctance, in March.[131]

While the power struggle need not necessarily be violent, events on the ground in March 2008 underscored both the complexity and volatility of the contest. In the last week of March, based on direction from Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqi security forces launched a major operation, *Sawlat al-Fursan* (Attack of the Knights) in Basra, with the stated aim of targeting criminals operating under religious or political cover. The estimated 30,000 Iraqi forces included special operations and conventional army forces, as well as police. Coalition support included the transition teams embedded with Iraqi units, and some liaison elements at the Basra Operational Center.[132] Some militiamen reportedly put up fierce resistance. Fighting was also reported in the southern cities of Al Kut and Al Hillah, as well as in the Shi'a-populated Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad.

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[129] Interviews with MNF-I division staff, January 2008.

[130] See for example, AShiite Politics in Iraq: the Role of the Supreme Council@, International Crisis Group, November 15, 2007, available at [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5158]. This view is shared by some key strategists at MNF-I, interviews, January 2008.

[131] See Amit R. Paley, "Iraqi Leaders Veto Law on Elections," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2008. The Provincial Powers Act was passed as part of a "package deal", together with the National Budget and an Amnesty Law. Vice President Abd al-Mehdi initially objected to a provision of the Provincial Powers Act concerning modalities for the removal of provincial governors.

[132] See MNF-I Press Conference, Major General Kevin Bergner, March 26, 2008. The Basra Operational Center coordinates all Iraqi security forces activities in the province.

MNF-I stated that the Basra operations "are not directed at the *Jaish al-Mahdi"*, though criminal JAM "special groups" may be targeted. Some Muqtada al-Sadr loyalists apparently viewed the matter differently, and accused the government of using its armed forces, many of which are strongly influenced by ISCI, to attack a political rival. International Crisis Group expert Joost Hiltermann characterized the operations as "a fairly transparent partisan effort by the Supreme Council [ISCI] dressed in government uniforms to fight the Sadrists and Fadila."[133]

Nature of Sectarian Violence. Less a source than a type of violence, Iraq has struggled for years with sectarian violence, particularly along the fault lines between populations predominantly of different sectarian groups. Those fault lines, some observers suggest, are where local populations are likely to feel most vulnerable, and might in some cases be most open to assurances of protection from one organized armed group or another.

The displacement of many Iraqis from their homes, and the resulting greater segregation in urban areas, has reduced the number of fault lines somewhat.[134]

Sectarian violence in Iraq has tended to perpetuate itself, in cycles of reprisals. The February 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines, prompted Shi'a reprisals targeting Sunnis and Sunni mosques in a number of cities. AQI responded in some locations by staging a series of further attacks.[135]

Criminality. Another major category of violence is opportunistic criminality, practiced with a view to sheer material gain rather than political or ideological goals. The inchoate status of Iraq's judicial system and law enforcement organizations has left room for opportunists to steal, loot, smuggle, kidnap and extort.

Other Security Challenges

In addition to the primary adversaries during major combat operations — the regime's forces and security structures — and the primary sources of violence in the period after major combat, coalition forces in Iraq have had to contend with the presence of two designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations largely unrelated to the rest of the fight but of deep interest to some of Iraq's neighbors. Both cases have

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[133] Quoted by Alexandra Zavis, "Iraqi Shiites Clash in mBasra," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2008. See also "Iraq: Al-Basrah Clashes Could Prove Ominous," Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, March 26, 2008; Sholnn Freeman and Sudarsan Raghavan, "Intense Fighting Erupts in Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2008; Michael Kamber and James Glanz, "Iraqi and U.S. Forces Battle Shiite Militia," *The New York Times*, March 26, 2008.

[134] To be clear, as human rights groups stress, displacement is not a "solution". As a rule, in most situations, people are far more vulnerable in displacement than they are in their homes.

[135] See press accounts including Ellen Knickmeyer and K.I. Ibrahim, "Bombing Shatters Mosque in Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 23, 2006; and Robert F. Worth, "Muslim Clerics Call for an End to Iraqi Rioting," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2006.

consumed substantial time and energy from MNF-I staff in Iraq as well as senior leaders in Washington, D.C., and both have raised the specter of potential additional military requirements.

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The first group is the Kurdistan Workers Party — the PKK, also known over time as KADEK, Kongra-Gel, and the KCK. The PKK is based in southeastern Turkey, but maintains a presence in northern Iraq and reportedly uses that area to rest and re-group from its operations in Turkey. The PKK's stated goal is the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, and it has practiced terror to that end, targeting Turkish security forces and civilian officials. The Secretary of State has designated the PKK a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Since 2003, the Turkish government has pushed for action against PKK members in northern Iraq. The U.S. and Iraqi governments have both strongly supported the Turkish government=s stand against terrorism C and the PKK C in principle. In the past, both the Iraqi government and MNF-I have reportedly expressed concerns that military action against the PKK in Iraq could open a new Anorthern front,@ taxing their already thinly-stretched forces,[136] and the Iraqi government has stressed its concerns about the sovereignty of its territory and air space. In December 2007, the Turkish government launched a series of air strikes, targeting presumed PKK positions in northern Iraq, followed in February 2008 by coordinated air and ground attacks.[137] U.S. senior leaders, reportedly informed in advance about Turkish intentions, publicly called on the government of Turkey to keep the operation as short as possible.[138]

Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK). During the year of formal occupation, CJTF-7, CPA and agency leaders in Washington, D.C., spent considerable time focused on the disposition of the Mujahedin-e Khalq ("MeK"). Formed by students in Iran in the 1960's, in leftist opposition to the Shah and his regime, the MeK later stepped into opposition against what it calls the "mullah regime" that took power after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Over time, the MeK has sought opportunistic alliances, including moving its operational headquarters to Iraq, and making common cause with the Iraqi government, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

Although the MeK is a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, some U.S. officials in the past reportedly considered the possibility of using the MeK as leverage against Tehran. Several times, some Members of Congress — reportedly some 200 in the year 2000 — signed letters expressing their support for the cause advocated by the MeK.[139]

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[136] Information from CJTF-7, MNF-I, DoD, and Iraqi officials, 2003 and 2004.

[137] See for example ATurkish jets in fresh Iraq strike, *BBC America*, December 26, 2007.

[138] See Alissa J. Rubin and Sabrina Tavernise, "Turkish Troops Enter Iraq in Pursuit of Kurdish Militants," *The New York Times*, February 23, 2008; Lolita Baldor, "Gates: Turkey Raid Won't Solve Problems," *Washington Post*, February 23, 2008; Yochi Dreazen, "U.S. Knew of Turkey's Plan to Hit PKK, Didn't Object," *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2008.

[139] Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Terror Watch: Shades of Gray," Newsweek, (continued...)

This awkward policy history was magnified by awkward events on the ground during OIF major combat operations, when, on April 15, 2003, U.S. Special Operations Forces signed a ceasefire agreement with MeK leaders. Subsequent guidance from the Department of Defense through CENTCOM to forces on the ground was to effect a MeK surrender. Following a series of negotiations with MeK leaders, the several thousand MeK members were separated from their well-maintained heavy weapons and brought under coalition control. Efforts have been underway since that time, in coordination with the Iraqi government and the many countries of citizenship of the MeK members, to determine appropriate further disposition. The key operational concern, in the early stages, was that MeK non-compliance could generate large-scale operational requirements, effectively opening another front.

Post-Major Combat: Military Strategy and Operations

Over time, U.S. military strategy for Iraq — and thus also operations on the ground — have been adapted to support evolving U.S. national strategy. In turn, national strategy has directly drawn some lessons from OIF operational experience.

The Administration's basic national strategic objectives have remained roughly consistent over time. So have the major categories of activities (or "lines of operation") — political, economic, essential services, diplomatic — used to help achieve the objectives. What have evolved greatly over time are the views of commanders in the field and decision-makers in Washington, D.C., about the best ways to achieve "security" and how that line of operation fits with the others.

This section highlights key episodes and turning-points in the theory and practice of OIF military operations, including "Fallujah II", COIN operations in Tal Afar, Operation Together Forward, and the operations associated with the 2007 "New Way Forward". The review suggests that the application of counter-insurgency (COIN) theory and practice grew over time, but by no means steadily or consistently.

Nomenclature: Characterizing the Conflict

Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz argued: "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish…the kind of war on which they are embarking."[140] In theory, how the "kind of war" is identified helps shape the tools selected to prosecute it. In the case of OIF after major combat operations, it proved difficult for senior Bush Administration officials and military leaders to agree on what "kind of war" OIF was turning out to be.

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[139] (...continued)
October 17, 2007.

[140] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, p.88.

On July 7, 2003, General John Abizaid, an Arabic speaker who had served during OIF major combat as the Deputy Commanding General of CENTCOM, replaced General Tommy Franks as CENTCOM Commander. At his first press conference in the new role, GEN Abizaid referred to the challenge in Iraq as a "classical guerrilla-type campaign." Slightly more carefully but leaving no room for doubt he added, "I think describing it as guerrilla tactics is a proper way to describe it in strictly military terms."[141]

The Pentagon pointedly did not adopt that terminology. Two weeks later, asked about his reluctance to use the phrase "guerrilla war," Secretary Rumsfeld noted: "I guess the reason I don't use the phrase 'guerrilla war' is because there isn't one, and it would be a misunderstanding and a miscommunication to you and to the people of the country and the world." Instead, in Iraq there were "five different things": "looters, criminals, remnants of the Ba'athist regime, foreign terrorists, and those influenced by Iran."[142]

During the year of formal occupation, a UK officer serving as Special Assistant to the CJTF-7 Commander drafted a paper outlining the concepts of insurgency and counter-insurgency and their possible application to Iraq. He circulated the paper to senior CJTF-7 staff and the ideas gained traction.[143]

However, for years afterward, the Pentagon also resisted the terminology of "insurgency." At a November 2005 press conference, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace, speaking about the adversary in Iraq, said, "I have to use the word 'insurgent' because I can't think of a better word right now." Secretary Rumsfeld cut in — "enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government." He added, "That [using the word "insurgent"] gives them a greater legitimacy than they seem to merit."[144]

Military Operations During Occupation

During the formal occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2004, the military command in Iraq, CJTF-7, was responsible for "security," while the civilian leadership, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), was responsible for all other governance

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[141] See BBC, "US faces Iraq guerrilla war," July 16, 2003, available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3072899.stm].

[142] Department of Defense News Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers, June 30, 2003, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2767]. When a reporter read the DoD definition of guerrilla war — "military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces" — and asked whether that described the situation in Iraq, Secretary Rumsfeld replied, "It really doesn't."

[143] Information from that officer and senior CJTF-7 staff, 2003 and 2004.

[144] News Briefing with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and General Peter Pace, November 29, 2005, DOD website, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1492].

functions.[145] In the views of the CJTF-7 leadership, establishing "security" required more than "killing people and breaking things" — it required simultaneous efforts to achieve popular "buy-in," for example by rebuilding local communities and engaging Iraqis in the process. [146]

Accordingly, CJTF-7 built its plans around four basic lines of operation, or categories of effort — political (governance), economic, essential services, and security — which differ only slightly from the categories in use in early 2008. Those lines of operation were echoed in the plans of CJTF-7's subordinate commands. CJTF-7 would lead the "security" line, and support CPA efforts in the other areas.

Beginning in 2003, CJTF-7's basic theory of the case was that the lines of operation, pursued simultaneously, would be mutually reinforcing. Major General Peter Chiarelli, who commanded the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad from 2004 to 2005, argued after his tour that it was not effective to try to achieve security first, and then turn to the other lines of operation. He wrote: "…if we concentrated solely on establishing a large security force and [conducting] targeted counterinsurgent combat operations — and only after that was accomplished, worked toward establishing a sustainable infrastructure supported by a strong government developing a free-market system — we would have waited too long."[147]

In the "security" line of operation, military operations under CJTF-7 included combat operations focused on "killing or capturing" the adversary. Aggressive operations yielded large numbers of Iraqis detained by the coalition — the large numbers, and frequent difficulties determining whether and where individuals were being held, were reportedly an early and growing source of popular frustration. In April 2004, the unofficial release of graphic photos of apparent detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib generated shock and horror among people inside and outside Iraq. Some observers have suggested that these developments may have helped fuel the insurgency.[148]

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[145] Neither CPA nor CJTF-7 was responsible for the search for possible weapons of mass destruction. That mission was assigned to the Iraq Survey Group, which reported jointly to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and DoD's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and which carried out its work from June 2003 to September 2004. The group's final Report, "Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD," and commonly known as the Duelfer Report, was published on September 30, 2004, and is available at https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq_wmd_2004/index.html.

[146] Information from CJTF-7 leaders, and participant observation, 2003 and 2004.

[147] Major General Peter W. Chiarelli and Major Patrick Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review*, July-August 2005, available at [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/chiarelli.pdf]. The authors characterized the lines of operation as "combat operations, train and employ security forces, essential services, promote governance, and economic pluralism." Echoing the views of CJTF-7 leaders, the authors added, "Further, those who viewed the attainment of security solely as a function of military action alone were mistaken."

[148] In January 2004, when abuse allegations were brought forward, CJTF-7 issued a press (continued...)

CJTF-7 military operations also included early counter-insurgency (COIN) practices for population control. Those practices included creating "gated communities" — including Saddam's home town of al-Awja — by fencing off a town or area and strictly controlling access through the use of check-points and ID cards. To make military operations less antagonistic, when possible, to local residents, units substituted "cordon and knock" approaches for the standard "cordon and search".[149]

The security line of operation also included early partnerships with nascent Iraqi security forces, including mentoring as well as formal training (see below, "ISF Training Efforts During the Formal Occupation"). Where troop strength so permitted, for example in Baghdad and in Mosul, Army Military Police were assigned to local police stations as *de facto* advisors.[150]

While the military command did not have the lead role for the non-security lines of operation, it made contributions to those efforts. To address the most pressing "essential services" concerns, the military command created Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity, and Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil, which were later consolidated into the Gulf Region Division, under the Army Corps of Engineers.

To help jumpstart local economies — and to provide Iraqis with some visible signs of post-war "progress" — the military command launched the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP). As initially crafted, CERP provided commanders with readily available discretionary funds to support small-scale projects, usually initiated at the request of local community leaders.

In the "governance" field, commanders needed Iraqi interlocutors to provide bridges into local communities, and advice concerning the most urgent reconstruction and humanitarian priorities. Since official Iraqi agencies were no longer intact, and since the CPA did not yet have a sufficient regional presence to help build local

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[148] (...continued)
release noting that the command had ordered an inquiry into alleged detainee abuses. Abu Ghraib events prompted a number of investigations and reports. For one account of events and the policies that shaped them, see the Final Report of the Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operations, chaired by former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, and commissioned by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld "to provide independent professional advice on detainee abuses, what caused them, and what actions should be taken to preclude their repetition," available in book form, Department of Defense, *The Schlesinger Report: An Investigation of Abu Ghraib,* New York: Cosimo Reports, November 15, 2005. For a detailed, critical account of Abu Ghraib events and their antecedents and impact, see Seymour Hersch, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib,* New York: Harper Perennial, 2005.

[149] Information from CJTF-7 and Division leaders, 2003 and 2004.

[150] Information from CJTF-7, 1AD, and 101st leaders, and participant observation, 2003 and 2004.

governments, commanders helped select provincial and local councils to serve in temporary advisory capacities.[151]

By most accounts, by the end of the year of formal occupation, in June 2004, the security situation had worsened — catalyzed in April by the simultaneous unrest in Fallujah and al-Sadr-led uprisings throughout the south. Many observers have suggested that none of the lines of operation — whether civilian-led or military-led — was fully implemented during the year of formal occupation, due to a lack of personnel and resources. If that is so, then CJTF-7's basic assumption — that establishing security required simultaneous application of all the lines of operation — was never fully put to the test.

Operation Phantom Fury (Fallujah II)

One of the first very high-profile military operations after major combat was Operation Phantom Fury, designed to "take back" the restive city of Fallujah in the Al Anbar province. In November 2004, Phantom Fury — or "Fallujah II" — highlighted the intransigence of the emerging Sunni Arab insurgency, early coalition military efforts to counter it, and the complex intersection of political considerations and "best military advice" in operational decision-making.[152]

During major combat operations and the early part of the formal occupation, the military command practiced first an "economy of force" approach to Al Anbar province, and then a quick shuffling of responsible military units, which left little opportunity to establish local relationships or build expertise.[153] Building relationships with the population is critical in any counter-insurgency, and it may be particularly important in Al Anbar, where social structure is based largely on complex and powerful tribal affiliations.

Coalition forces in Al Anbar during major combat were primarily limited to Special Operations Forces. After CJTF-7 was established, the first unit assigned responsibility for the large province was the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment — essentially a brigade-sized formation. In fall 2003, the much larger 82nd Airborne Division and subordinate units arrived in Iraq and were assigned to Al Anbar, but their tenure was brief — after six months they handed off responsibility to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (IMEF).[154]

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[151] These efforts continued an initiative to help form district and neighborhood advisory councils in Baghdad, launched by ORHA but discontinued by CPA.

[152] For a detailed account of the military operations, and the political and military events that led up to them, see Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, New York: Bantam Books, 2005.

[153] Al Anbar province, in western Iraq, covers about one-third of Iraq's territory but is relatively lightly populated.

[154] IMEF headquarters and the 1st Marine Division returned to Iraq in spring 2004, after a short stay at home after major combat operations.

The city of Fallujah, like the rest of Al Anbar, is populated largely by Sunni Arabs. Under the old Iraqi regime, Fallujah had enjoyed some special prerogatives and had produced a number of senior leaders in Iraq's various security forces. Many residents therefore had some reason to be concerned about their place in the post-Saddam Iraq.

On March 31, 2004, four American contractors working for Blackwater, who were driving through Fallujah, were ambushed and killed — and then their bodies were mutilated and hung from a bridge. Photos of that grisly aftermath were rapidly transmitted around the world — riveting the attention of leaders in Baghdad, Washington, and other coalition country capitals.

What followed, in April 2004, was a series of highest-level deliberations in Baghdad and Washington concerning the appropriate response. Some key participants in the debates initially favored immediate, overwhelming military action, but those views were quickly tempered by concerns about the reactions that massive military action — and casualties — might produce. Several key Sunni Arab members of the Iraqi leadership body, the Iraqi Governing Council — threatened to resign in the event of an attack on Fallujah.[155] And some senior U.S. officials expressed concerns about the reactions of other governments in the region, and of Sunni Arabs elsewhere in Iraq.[156]

The Administration's guidance, after the initial debates, was to respect the concerns of Iraqi leaders and to avoid sending U.S. military forces into Fallujah. What followed, instead, was a series of "negotiations" by CPA and CJTF-7 leaders with separate sets of Fallujah community representatives, some of them brokered by Iraqi national-level political leaders. And what emerged was a "deal" initiated by IMEF with a local retired Iraqi Army General and a group of locally-recruited fighters, who formed the "Fallujah Brigade" and pledged to restore and maintain order.[157]

When the Fallujah Brigade collapsed that summer, the city of Fallujah had not been "cleared" by either the Brigade or IMEF. Over the summer, insurgents reportedly strengthened their hold on the city.

Decisive military action — Operation Phantom Fury — was launched by IMEF in November 2004. Several factors may have shaped the timing of the Operation. By November, the new interim Iraqi government, led by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, had had some time to establish its credibility — perhaps enough to help quell

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[155] The Iraq Governing Council (IGC) was a critical part of the U.S. strategy for transitioning responsibility and authority to Iraqi leaders. The plans, articulated in the Transitional Administrative Law approved in March 2004, called for the IGC to relinquish its advisory role to a new, appointed Iraqi Interim Government, to which CPA, in turn, would return full governing authority by June 30, 2004. An IGC collapse, it was considered, could disrupt or delay the plans.

[156] Information from CPA and CJTF-7 officials, and participant observation, 2004.

[157] Information from CJTF-7 and IMEF leaders, 2004. See also Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, New York: Bantam Books, 2005.

citizens' concerns in the event of large-scale military action. Key Iraqi elections were scheduled for January 2005, and eliminating a hotbed of insurgency beforehand might increase voter participation. And earlier in November, President Bush had been re-elected, which may have reassured some Iraqi leaders that if they agreed to the military operation, the U.S. Government — and coalition forces — would be likely to continue to provide support to deal with any aftermath.

The Marines began the Fallujah operations by setting conditions — turning off electrical power, and urging the civilians of Fallujah to leave the city. The vast majority of residents did depart — leaving about 500 hardcore fighters, who employed asymmetrical tactics against a far larger, stronger force. That coalition force included one UK battalion, 3 Iraqi battalions, 6 U.S. Marine battalions and 3 U.S. Army battalions. The operation reportedly included 540 air strikes, 14,000 artillery and mortar shells fired, and 2,500 tank main gun rounds fired. Some 70 U.S. personnel were killed, and 609 wounded. In Fallujah, of the city's 39,000 buildings, 18,000 were damaged or destroyed.[158]

In the aftermath, coalition and Iraqi forces established a tight security cordon around the city, with a system of vehicle searches and security passes for residents, to control movement and access. Fingerprints and retinal scans were taken from male residents. Observers noted that by spring 2005, about half the original population, of 250,000, had returned home — many of them to find essential services disrupted and their property damaged.[159] The scale of destruction was criticized by some observers inside Iraq and in the Middle East region more broadly.

The effects of the comprehensive "clearing" were not lasting. Al Qaeda affiliates gradually returned and made Fallujah a strong-hold and base of operations (see below, "Origins of the Awakening Movement in Al Anbar").

Counter-Insurgency in Tal Afar

Military operations in the town of Tal Afar, in 2005, marked an early, multi-faceted, and successful application of counter-insurgency (COIN) approaches, and successful results, in OIF. In Washington, "Tal Afar" gave birth to a new Iraq policy lexicon, and in Iraq — though not immediately — to the expanded use of COIN practices.

Tal Afar is located in Ninewah province, along the route from the provincial capital of Mosul to Syria. Its mixed population of about 290,000 includes Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Yezidis. From April 2003 until early 2004, the 101st Airborne Division had responsibility for Ninewah and Iraq's three northern, largely Kurdish-populated provinces. Because the north was relatively quiet, due in part to the effectiveness of the Kurdish *pesh merga* forces, the 101st was able to concentrate primarily on Ninewah — a relatively high troops-to-population ratio. In early 2004,

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[158] Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, New York: Bantam Books, 2005.

[159] See for example Richard Beeston, "At home in the rubble: siege city reborn as giant gated community," *The Times Online*, May 19, 2005.

when the 101st redeployed, responsibility for the area passed to a much smaller Stryker brigade. That brigade, in turn, was periodically asked to provide forces for operations elsewhere in Iraq, so the coalition force footprint in Ninewah was substantially reduced. Tal Afar — with a convenient trade route location, and a mixed population "perfect" for fomenting sectarian strife — become a base of operations for former regime elements and Sunni extremists, including suicide bombers.

In May 2005, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (3ACR), now commanded by Colonel H.R. McMaster, arrived in Tal Afar. COL McMaster was familiar with OIF issues from his previous service as the Director of GEN Abizaid's Commander's Action Group at CENTCOM.[160] At CENTCOM, he had helped the command to think through the nature of the Iraqi insurgency, and to craft appropriate responses including targeted engagements with key leaders. As the author of a well-known account of Vietnam decision-making, COL McMaster could also readily draw key lessons from that earlier complex engagement.[161]

In early 2005, the 3ACR began their deployment preparations at home in Fort Carson, Colorado — studying COIN approaches, training and exercising those approaches, and learning conversational Arabic. Later, in Iraq, COL McMaster described the Regiment's mission in the classical COIN lexicon of "population security": "...the whole purpose of the operation is to secure the population so that we can lift the enemy's campaign of intimidation and coercion over the population and allow economic and political development to proceed here and to return to normal life."[162]

In practice, that meant taking "a very deliberate approach to the problem," beginning with months of preparatory moves. Those preparatory steps included beefing up security along the Syrian border to the west, and targeting and eliminating enemy safe havens out in the desert. They also included constructing a dirt berm ringing Tal Afar, and establishing check points to control movement in and out of the city.

Before the launch of full-scale operations in September 2005, the Regiment urged civilians to leave Tal Afar. Then 3ACR cleared the city deliberately — block by block. After the clearing operations, 3ACR had sufficient forces to hold the city, setting up 29 patrol bases around town, every few blocks.[163]

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[160] A Commander's Action — or Initiatives — Group, is small group of smart thinkers, hand-selected by the commander to serve as his personal, in-house "think-tank."

[161] His book *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that led to Vietnam* (published by Harper Perennial, 1998) is widely read in U.S. military educational programs and elsewhere.

[162] Department of Defense Press Briefing, H.R. McMaster, September 13, 2005, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2106].

[163] See Thomas E. Ricks, "The Lessons of Counterinsurgency," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2006; "The Insurgency: Interview with COL H.R. McMaster", *Frontline*, PBS, February

(continued...)

Basing coalition forces among the population was an unusual approach at the time. Though common in the early days of OIF, by 2005, most coalition forces in Iraq had been pulled back to relatively large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), secure and separate from the local population. That strategy was driven in part by the theory that the visible presence of coalition forces — and their weapons and their heavy vehicles — could antagonize local communities.[164]

3ACR's COIN approaches also included working closely with their Iraqi security forces counterparts — the 3rd Iraqi Army Division. COL McMaster credited that partnership as essential to the strategy: "What gives us the ability to…clear and hold as a counterinsurgency strategy is the capability of Iraqi security forces."[165] The key to the success in Fallujah, he added — and the major difference from "Fallujah II" — was popular support: "we had the active cooperation of such a large percentage of the population."

COL McMaster's use of the phrase "clear and hold" was not accidental — it had been the name of the counter-insurgency approach introduced in Vietnam by General Creighton Abrams, following years of General William Westmoreland's "search and destroy" approach.[166]

"Clear, Hold, Build"

A short time later, the Administration adopted and expanded on the "clear, hold" lexicon to describe the overall strategy in Iraq.[167] In October 2005, in testimony about Iraq before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice began by stating: "Our political-military strategy has to be clear, hold, and build: to clear areas from insurgent control, to hold them securely, and to build durable, national Iraqi institutions."[168] About three weeks later, in a

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[163] (...continued)
21, 2006, available at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/insurgency/interviews/mcmaster/html]; and George Packer, "Letter from Iraq: The Lesson of Tal Afar," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2006.

[164] Information from CENTCOM and CJTF-7 leaders, 2004.

[165] Department of Defense Press Briefing, H.R. McMaster, September 13, 2005, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2106].

[166] Ibid.

[167] David Ignatius wrote in the *Washington Post* that in 2005, a number of key Iraq decision-makers and practitioners, including COL McMasters' former boss at CENTCOM General Abizaid, were reading Lewis Sorley's book, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and the Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt, 1999), which favorably describes General Abrams' "clear and hold" approach. See David Ignatius, "A Better Strategy for Iraq," *Washington Post*, November 4, 2005.

[168] Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Opening Remarks before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 19, 2005, available at [http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55303.htm]. To be clear, "strategy" refers in general to a set of "ways and means", linked with the "ends" they are intended to achieve. "Clear, hold, build" referred to a new set of (continued...)

major Veterans Day speech, President Bush echoed Secretary Rice's "clear, hold, build" language almost verbatim.[169]

The following month, November 2005, the Administration issued a new *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*. The Strategy argued — roughly consistent with the military's long-standing lines of operation — that success required three major tracks, security, political and economic. Consistent with the basic theory of the case since 2003, these tracks were to be pursued simultaneously, and would be "mutually reinforcing." As the *Strategy* states, "Progress in each of the political, security, and economic tracks reinforces progress in the other tracks."[170]

The new *Strategy* prominently adopted the "clear hold build" lexicon, with a twist. "Clear, hold, build" was now the prescribed set of approaches for the security track alone. The political and economic tracks were also each based on a trinitarian set of approaches. In the security track, "build" now referred specifically to the Iraqi security forces and local institutions. "Build" also appeared in the other two tracks — capturing the focus on national-level institutions from the earlier public statements by President Bush and Secretary Rice.[171]

By March 2006, a complete, official narrative had emerged, in which Tal Afar operations had tested and confirmed both the "clear, hold, build" strategy, and the interdependence of the three major tracks. As a White House Fact Sheet, titled "Clear, Hold, Build", stated: "Tal Afar shows how the three elements of the strategy for victory in Iraq — political, security, and economic — depend on and reinforce one another."[172]

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[168] (...continued)
approaches — of "ways and means" — but the Administration's broad stated goals had not changed.

[169] He said, "Our strategy is to clear, hold, and build. We're working to clear areas from terrorist control, to hold those areas securely, and to build lasting, democratic Iraqi institutions through an increasingly inclusive political process." See "President commemorates Veterans Day, Discusses War on Terror," November 11, 2005, Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/print/20051111-1.html].

[170] The Strategy describes the security mandate to "clear, hold, build" this way: "Clear areas of enemy control by remaining on the offensive, killing and capturing enemy fighters and denying them safe haven; hold areas freed from enemy influence by ensuring that they remain under the control of the Iraqi government with an adequate Iraqi security force presence; and build Iraqi Security Forces and the capacity of local institutions to deliver services, advance the rule of law, and nurture civil society." See *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, November 30, 2005, p. 2, available at White House website, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf]

[171] Ibid., pp.1-2.

[172] White House Fact Sheet: "Strategy for Victory — Clear, Hold, Build," March 20, 2006.

Operation Together Forward

In June 2006, Iraqi and Coalition forces launched "Operation Together Forward," officially based on "clear, hold, build" and aimed at reducing violence and increasing security in Baghdad. Baghdad was chosen as the focus because it was "the center that everybody [was] fighting for — the insurgents, the death squads…the government of Iraq."[173] The Operation was predicated on basic counter-insurgency principles — "to secure the citizens' lives here in Baghdad."[174]

Together Forward included some 48 battalions of Iraqi and coalition forces — about 51,000 troops altogether, including roughly 21,000 Iraqi police, 13,000 Iraqi National Police, 8,500 Iraqi Army, and 7,200 coalition forces.[175] Iraqi forces were in the lead, supported by the coalition. The effort included clearing operations, as well as a series of new security measures including extended curfews, tighter restrictions on carrying weapons, new tips hotlines, more checkpoints, and more police patrols.[176]

Together Forward theoretically included the other major tracks of the November 2005 *National Strategy* — political and economic efforts, as well as security, although the coalition's primary focus was security. As MNF-I spokesman Major General William Caldwell noted in July 2006, "It's obviously a multi-pronged approach…but those [other tracks] are mostly the government of Iraq side of the house."[177]

MNF-I stated publicly from the start that Together Forward was expected to take months, not weeks. For several months after the operation was launched, the levels of violence in the capital rose. As MG Caldwell explained in October 2006, "the insurgent elements, the extremists, are in fact punching back hard." Once the Iraqi and coalition forces cleared an area, the insurgents tried to regain that territory, so the

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[173] Operations Update with Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 24, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1201&Itemid=131].

[174] MNF-I spokesman MG Caldwell attributed that phrase to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, see Operations Update with Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 20, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1027&Itemid=30].

[175] Operations Update with Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 20, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1027&Itemid=30].

[176] Press Conference of the President, the Rose Garden, June 14, 2006, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060614.html].

[177] Operations Update with Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 20, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1027&Itemid=30].

Iraqi and coalition forces were "constantly going back in and doing clearing operations again."[178]

Many observers attributed that circle of violence to a lack of sufficient forces — whether coalition or Iraqi — to "hold" an area once it was "cleared." The vast majority of participating forces were Iraqi, and at that juncture, some observers suggest, their capabilities were limited. MNF-I Spokesman MG Caldwell noted in July 2006: "We are by no means at the end state, at the place where the Iraqi security forces are able to assume complete control of this situation."[179]

By October 2006, MNF-I admitted that Together Forward had not achieved the expected results — it had "not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in the levels of violence."[180] In the event, from the experiences of Tal Afar, Operation Together Forward had applied the principle of close collaboration with host-nation forces, but only the "clear" element of the "clear, hold, build" mandate.

New Way Forward

By late 2006, senior diplomats and commanders in Iraq had concluded that the approaches in use were not achieving the intended results — indeed, levels of violence were continuing to climb. Several strategic reviews were conducted in parallel, options were considered, and a decision was made and announced by the Administration — to pursue a "New Way Forward" in Iraq.

"New Way Forward" National Strategy: Theory of the Case. While the basic long-term objectives for Iraq did not change, the New Way Forward introduced a fundamentally new theory of the case. Until that time, Iraq strategy had assumed that the major tracks of effort — security, political, economic — were mutually reinforcing, and should therefore be implemented simultaneously.

The New Way Forward agreed that all of the tracks — plus a new "regional" track — were important, but argued that security was a prerequisite for progress in the other areas.[181] As a White House summary of the results of the strategy review stated, "While political progress, economic gains and security are all intertwined, political and economic progress are unlikely absent a basic level of security."[182] And

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[178] Press Briefing by Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Force-Iraq, October 19, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6585&Itemid=131].

[179] Operations Update with Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 20, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1027&Itemid=30].

[180] Press Briefing by Major General William B. Caldwell, Multi-National Force-Iraq, October 19, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6585&Itemid=131].

[181] See "Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq," January 10, 2007, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-3.html].

[182] "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review," National Security Council, January 2007, (continued...)

as President Bush stated in his address to the nation on this topic, in January 2007, "The most urgent priority for success in Iraq is security."[183]

This thinking, though new as the premise for U.S. Iraq strategy, was not new. Some practitioners on the ground in Iraq had suggested as early as 2003 that substantial political and economic progress could not be expected, absent basic security conditions that allowed Iraqis to leave their homes, and civilian coalition personnel to engage with local communities.[184]

The "New Way Forward" theory of the case was that security improvements would open up space and opportunities for the Iraqi government to make improvements in other areas. As General David Petraeus described it in March 2007, one month into his tour as the new MNF-I Commander, if security improves, "commerce will return and local economies will grow." And at the same time, "the Iraqi government will have the chance it needs to resolve some of the difficult issues it faces."[185]

By early 2008, the basic premise had met with very broad but not universal support among practitioners and observers. For example, in October 2007, Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Conway told a think-tank audience, "Certainly you have to have a level of security before you can have governance."[186] But retired Marine Corps General James Jones, who led a Congressionally-mandated review of Iraqi Security Forces in 2007, suggested that the relationship between two major components of politics and security — national reconciliation and sectarian violence — is more complex: "It's a little bit of a chicken-and-egg question…The real overall conclusion is that the government of Iraq is the one that has to find a way to achieve political reconciliation, in order to enable a reduction in sectarian violence."[187]

Surge Forces. In his January 10, 2007, address to the nation, President Bush announced that to help implement the New Way Forward, the United States would

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[182] (...continued)
available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/iraq-strategy011007.pdf].

[183] President's Address to the Nation, January 10, 2007, available at White House website, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-7.html].

[184] Conversations with ORHA, CPA and CJTF-7 staff, 2003 and 2004.

[185] Press Briefing by GEN David Petraeus, March 8, 2007, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10475&Itemid=131].

[186] He added, "I think you have to have governance and security before you can have a viable economics plan." See "Remarks by General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps," Center for a New American Security, October 15, 2007.

[187] Remarks by General James Jones, Meeting of the Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, D.C., September 12, 2007. General Jones led the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, required by U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, Public Law 110-28, Section 1314. The Report is available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf], and discussed below.

deploy additional military units to Iraq, primarily to Baghdad. Their mission, a paraphrase of the "clear, hold, build" language, would be: "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs."[188]

The surge forces would eventually include five Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), an Army combat aviation brigade, a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), two Marine infantry battalions, a Division headquarters, and other support troops. Surge force levels reached a peak of about 168,000 U.S. troops in October 2007 (see above, "U.S. Forces in Iraq").

The surge effort also included a civilian component — increasing the number of civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the size of their staffs (see below, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams"). A White House Fact Sheet stated, "PRTs are a key element of the President's 'New Way Forward' Strategy."[189]

Surge Military Strategy: Theory of the Case. The fundamental premise of the Iraqi and coalition surge operations was population security. This marked an important shift from previous years, when the top imperative was transitioning responsibility to Iraqis.[190] The two efforts were not considered mutually exclusive — during the surge, efforts would continue to train, mentor and equip Iraqi security forces to prepare for transitioning increasing responsibilities to them. But the relative priority of the "population security" and "transition" efforts was adjusted.

In early 2008, some Division Commanders commented that their guidance from their higher headquarters — MNC-I — was to practice patience, not to be in too much of a hurry to move to an overwatch posture or to transition responsibility to Iraqi security forces.[191] The mission statement of one division provides a good illustration of the new priorities — population security first, with a view to laying the groundwork for future transition. The division, "in participation with Iraqi security forces and the provincial government, secures the population, neutralizes insurgents and militia groups, and defeats terrorists and irreconcilable extremists, to establish sustainable security and set conditions for transition to tactical overwatch and Iraqi security self-reliance."[192]

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[188] President's Address to the Nation, January 10, 2007, available at White House website, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-7.html].

[189] See "Fact Sheet: Helping Iraq Achieve Economic and Political Stabilization," January 8, 2008, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080108-4.html].

[190] A famous quote by T.E. Lawrence — "Lawrence of Arabia" — appears frequently in briefings and on office walls, of coalition forces in Iraq: "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are there to help them, not to win it for them." The quote, although still popular, more closely reflects an emphasis on "transition" than on "population security."

[191] Conversations with Division Commanders, January 2008.

[192] Mission statement of one Multi-National Division, January 2008.

The surge aimed to provide "population security" not merely with greater troop strength, but also by changing some of the approaches those troops used. One major emphasis was population control — including the extensive use of concrete barriers, checkpoints, curfews, and biometric technologies for identification including fingerprinting and retinal scans.

In April 2007, some key Baghdad neighborhoods were entirely sealed off using these approaches, prompting the use of the moniker "gated communities." In an Op-Ed piece, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander Lieutenant General Ray Odierno explained that the "communities" were "being put up to protect the Iraqi population by hindering the ability of terrorists to carry out the car bombings and suicide attacks."[193] As counter-insurgency expert Dave Kilcullen described it, "once an area is cleared and secured, with troops on the ground, controls make it hard to infiltrate or intimidate…and thus [they] also protect the population."[194]

Some initial press coverage took note of some citizens' dismay at the tighter controls that gated communities brought.[195] By early 2008, coalition and Iraqi leaders reported anecdotally that Iraqi residents were pleased at the added protection the "gated community" measures provided them — by "keeping the bad guys out."[196]

Another key set of population security approaches involved troop presence — including not only increasing the number of troops but also changing their footprint. From late in the formal occupation through 2006 — including Operation Together Forward — coalition forces in Iraq had been consolidated at relatively large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Surge strategy called for getting troops off of the FOBs and out into local communities, to live and work among the population.

As Major General James Simmons, III Corps and MNC-I Deputy Commanding General, stated: "You have to get out and live with the people."[197] Multi-National Force-West leaders agreed that the key is "living with the population", because "it makes Iraqis see us as partners in the fighting and rebuilding."[198]

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[193] Ray Odierno, "In Defense of Baghdad's Walls," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2007.

[194] Dave Kilcullen, "The Urban Tourniquet — Gated Communities in Baghdad," April 27, 2007, at *Small Wars Journal*, [http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/04/the-urban-tourniquet-gated-com/]. Dr. Kilcullen has served at MNF-I in Baghdad as an advisor to GEN Petraeus.

[195] See for example Karin Brulliard, "'Gated Communities' for the War-Ravaged," *Washington Post*, April 23, 2007. See also Tim Kilbride, "Coalition Positioned to Break Iraq's Cycle of Violence," *American Forces Press Service*, May 25, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=46184]).

[196] Information from Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008.

[197] Interview, January 2008, Baghdad. MG Simmons brought to bear considerable comparative perspective. He held the post of III Corps DCG for over four and a half years, and thus also served as MNC-I DCG on the Corps' first tour in Iraq as the nucleus of MNC-I, from 2004 to 2005.

[198] Conversation with MNF-West leaders, January 2008.

Accordingly, coalition forces established scores of small combat outposts (COPs) and joint security stations (JSSs) in populated areas. A JSS includes co-located units from coalition forces, the Iraqi police, and the Iraqi Army. Each component continues to report to its own chain of command, but they share space — and information. A COP is coalition-only, usually manned by a "company-minus." As of January 2008, for example, Multi-National Division-Center had established 53 such bases in their restive area south of Baghdad.

Senior commanders at all levels stress the critical role JSSs and COPs have played in the surge. General Petraeus noted in March 2007 that they allow the development of relationships with local populations.[199] Multi-National Division-Baghdad leaders called the creation of these outposts the "biggest change over time" in coalition operations in Iraq.

Surge strategy still called on Iraqi and coalition forces to "clear, hold, build." Administration and coalition leaders admitted that in the past — in Operation Together Forward in 2006 — insufficient forces had been available to "hold" an area once it was cleared. The surge was designed to correct that.

As the President noted in his January 10, 2007, address to the nation, "In earlier operations, Iraqi and American forces cleared many neighborhoods of terrorists and insurgents, but when our forces moved on to other targets, the killers returned. This time," he added, "we'll have the force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared."[200] General Petraeus confirmed the approach, and the contrast with past operations, in March 2007: "Importantly, Iraqi and coalition forces will not just clear neighborhoods, they will also hold them to facilitate the build phase of the operation."[201] Key outside observers agreed. Retired General Jack Keane, a strong surge advocate, noted, "We're going to secure the population for the first time. What we've never been able to do in the past is have enough forces to stay in those neighborhoods and protect the people."[202]

President Bush announced one other major change which would make surge military operations different from those of the past — the lifting of political restrictions on operations, which had been imposed in the past by an Iraqi leadership concerned about its own fragility. In the past, President Bush noted, "political and sectarian interference prevented Iraqi and American forces from going into neighborhoods that are home to those fueling the sectarian violence." But this time,

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[199] Press Briefing by GEN David Petraeus, March 8, 2007, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10475&Itemid=131].

[200] President's Address to the Nation, January 10, 2007, available at White House website, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-7.html].

[201] Press Briefing by General David Petraeus, March 8, 2007, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10475&Itemid=131].

[202] Adam Brookes, "Bush Iraq plan likely to cost dear," *BBC news*, January 11, 2007, available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6250657.stm].

Iraqi leaders had signaled that Iraqi and coalition forces would have "a green light" to enter those neighborhoods.[203]

Surge Operations. In February 2007, just as surge forces began to flow into Iraq, U.S. and Iraqi forces launched Operation *Fardh al-Qanoon*, often referred to as the Baghdad Security Plan. Its primary emphasis was population security, and the primary geographical focal point was Baghdad, broadly defined.[204] As MNC-I Commander LTG Odierno put it, "The population and the government are the center of gravity."[205]

The basic theory of the case was another paraphrase of "clear, hold, build." At the outset of operations, Major General Joseph Fil, Commander of 1st Cavalry Division and the Multi-National Division-Baghdad, described the plan as "clear, control, and retain." That meant, he explained, clearing out extremists, neighborhood by neighborhood; controlling those neighborhoods with a "full-time presence on the streets" by coalition and Iraqi forces; and retaining the neighborhoods with Iraqi security forces "fully responsible for the day-to-day security mission."[206]

The specific targets of the Operation included Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and its affiliates, and rogue Shi'a militia elements including the *Jaish al-Mahdi* "special groups."

"Baghdad" was defined to include the surrounding areas, or "belts," which had been providing bases of operation and transit points, with access into the capital, for both Sunni and Shi'a extremists. LTG Odierno's guidance to his subordinate commanders was to stop the flow of "accelerants of the violence" through those areas into Baghdad.[207]

Operating in the "belts" required shifting the footprint of coalition forces to cover all the major supply lines leading into Baghdad. Coalition presence in many of the belt areas had previously been very light. During the spring of 2007, incoming surge brigades were deployed into Baghdad and its belts. April 1, 2007, a new division headquarters was added — the Multi-National Division-Center, led by 3rd Infantry Division — to cover parts of Baghdad province and other provinces just south of Baghdad.[208]

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[203] President's Address to the Nation, January 10, 2007, available at White House website, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-7.html].

[204] "Baghdad" is the name of both the capital city and the province where it is located.

[205] See Department of Defense Press Briefing with Lieutenant General Odierno, May 31, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3973].

[206] See Department of Defense press briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, February 16, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3891].

[207] Information from Division Commanders and staff, January 2008.

[208] Information from MNC-I and Division officials, January 2008. See also Kimberly Kagan, "The Real Surge: Preparing for Operation Phantom Thunder," *Iraq Report*, The (continued...)

Beginning in June 2007, once all the coalition surge forces had arrived in Iraq, coalition forces, in coordination with Iraqi counterparts, launched a series of operations: Phantom Thunder, followed by Phantom Strike, and then Phantom Phoenix. As "Corps-level operations," these were sets of division- and brigade-level actions coordinated and integrated across Iraq by MNC-I. They have included close coordination with U.S. Special Operations Forces as well as with Iraqi military and police forces.

The city of Baghdad is the most complex battlespace in Iraq, due to the strong presence of both AQI and JAM special groups, the many potential fault lines among different neighborhoods, and a security "temperature" that can vary on a block-by-block basis. In the series of Corps-level operations, the Multi-National Division-Baghdad, led by the 4th Infantry Division since December 2007, focused first on clearing the city, and then on establishing a strong presence to hold each neighborhood.[209]

The area just south of Baghdad and along the Tigris River, with its mixed Shi'a/ Sunni population, had long provided safe havens and a gateway to Baghdad for AQI and its affiliates from Al Anbar and Iraq's western borders, and for Shi'a extremists coming from southern Iraq or from Iraq's border with Iran. As part of the Corps-level operations, Multi-National Division-Center, led by 3ID, has focused on clearing these restive areas, narrowing down to more specific pockets of resistance, including Salman Pak and Arab Jabour, as progress is made.

To the north, Multi-National Division-North, led by 1st Armored Division since October 2007, has focused on clearing and then holding those areas where AQI affiliates sought refuge as they were pushed out of Baghdad.[210] Many AQI affiliates, pushed out of Baghdad by surge operations, initially relocated to Baquba, the capital city of Diyala province east of Baghdad. Reports suggested they had renamed it the new "capital of the Islamic State of Iraq."[211] As operations by MND-North and Iraqi security forces pushed AQI out of that city, some AQI moved east up the Diyala River Valley, into the so-called "breadbasket" of Iraq near the city of Muqtadiyah — a focal point for the Division's operations in January 2008. Working in Diyala in partnership with the Iraqi 5th Army Division, the combined forces uncovered a number of major weapons caches, and had "some very tough fights."[212]

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[208] (...continued)
Institute for the Study of War and The Weekly Standard, February 14, 2007-June 15, 2007, available at [http://www.understandingwar.org/IraqReport/IraqReport05.pdf].

[209] Information from MND-Baghdad, January 2008.

[210] Retired Army Major General Scales provides a clear description of the early stages of these operations, based on a visit to Iraq in Robert H. Scales MG (ret), "Petraeus's Iraq," *Wall Street Journal,* November 21, 2007.

[211] Information from MND-North, January 2008.

[212] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Mark Hertling, January 22, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4124].

Other AQI affiliates sought to regroup and establish a new stronghold in the northern city of Mosul.[213] On January 25, 2008, Prime Minister Maliki announced a major new Iraqi and coalition offensive against AQI in Mosul and stated that it would be "decisive."[214]

In Al Anbar province to the west, the Multi-National Force-West, led by II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), working closely with Iraqi counterparts, has focused surge operations on a pocket of AQI concentration around Lake Thar Thar, northwest of Baghdad. As AQI was pushed out of major population centers including Ramadi and Fallujah, they tended to attempt to regroup in the desert, so another major coalition and Iraqi focus in Al Anbar has been targeting the AQI remnants in rural areas.[215]

Counter-IED Efforts. Complementing other surge efforts, MNC-I under III Corps, and its subordinate divisions, made it a top priority to counter the enemy's "weapon of choice" — improvised explosive devices (IEDs).[216] As of early 2008, over 78% of those detained by coalition forces were interned based on suspicion of some IED-related activity.[217]

IEDs — usually made with technologically simple, off-the-shelf materials — have long been the leading cause of coalition casualties in Iraq. The potential hazard IEDs pose for ground convoys has also driven changes in coalition operations — including an increased reliance on air lift for transportation of personnel and cargo.

The premise of the counter-IED efforts has been to "attack the network." That involves not just capturing the IED emplacers, usually hired for a one-time payment, but also, in the words of one Division Commander, "influencing the decisions of those who place IEDs."[218] More broadly, it includes mapping the relationships among emplacers, financiers, and overall strategists, including the support they receive from outside Iraq.

To strengthen the effort, MNC-I and its subordinate Divisions created dedicated counter-IED cells. The effort includes information-sharing about the latest enemy tactics, techniques and procedures, distributing and providing training for the latest counter-IED technology, training the force to recognize how the network operates,

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[213] Information from MND-North, January 2008.

[214] See for example "Iraq to Go After Al-Qaeda in Mosul," Associated Press, *Washington Post*, January 25, 2008.

[215] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Maj.Gen. Walter Gaskin, December 10, 2007, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4103].

[216] Communication from LTG Odierno, and information from MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[217] Information from Task Force-134, Baghdad, January 2008.

[218] Conversation with Division Commander, January 2008.

and integrating all available intelligence assets to better define — and target — the networks.[219]

Special Operations Forces in the Surge. U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) have played an integral role throughout the surge, including targeting key enemy leaders. MNF-I leaders note that as of January 2008, SOF and conventional forces work in a much more closely integrated way than they did earlier in OIF. SOF is particularly well-suited to infiltrate difficult areas to reach key individual targets. But according to MNF-I and MNC-I leaders, SOF often rely on conventional units' detailed, daily familiarity with their battlespace, based on long-standing relationships with local Iraqi counterparts. Further, commanders stress, after a SOF action, it is the conventional forces — in partnership with Iraqi forces — that stay to "hold" the area.

The Use of Air Power in the Surge. Most press coverage of the surge, and of OIF in general, has focused on the role of ground forces — the Army and the Marine Corps — including the number of troops on the ground, the approaches they have used, and the stress on those two Military Services.[220] Air power is also an integral element of the OIF effort — and importantly from an analytical perspective, an element that has evolved over time.

The role of air power in Iraq is multi-faceted, including providing critical Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and facilitating mobility — particularly given the lack of mass transit of troops by ground.[221]

One of the major shifts has been in the kinetic use of air power — defense expert Anthony Cordesman has pointed to its "steadily more important role over time."[222] In November 2007, Major General Dave Edgington, MNF-I Air Component

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[219] At the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint IED Defeat Organization, led since December 2007 by Lieutenant General Tom Metz, is mandated to facilitate the rapid development, production and fielding of new technologies and approaches.

[220] Indeed, the ground Services themselves may tend to view counter-insurgency primarily as a ground forces effort. In his provocative monograph, "Shortchanging the Joint Fight?," Air Force Major General Charles Dunlap notes that the new Army and Marine Corps COIN doctrine, FM 3-24, devotes only a 5-page appendix to the role of air power in COIN, and argues for a "genuinely joint approach" that takes account of "the full potential of today's airpower capabilities." See Maj. Gen. Charles Dunlap, "Shortchanging the Joint Fight? An Airman's Assessment of FM 3-24 and the Case for Developing Truly Joint COIN Doctrine," Air University monograph, December 2007, available at [http://aupress.maxwell.af.mil/121007dunlap.pdf].

[221] For a detailed discussion of air operations in support of OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, including the widespread use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, see Mark Benjamin, "Killing 'Bubba' from the Skies," *Slate.com*, February 15, 2008, available at [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2008/02/15/air_war/].

[222] Anthony H. Cordesman, "US Airpower in Iraq and Afghanistan: 2004-2007," Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 13, 2007.

Coordination Element Director, confirmed a recent sharp spike in the number of weapons dropped from fighters and bombers.[223]

Statistics released in January 2008 by the Combined Force Air Component Command (CFACC), the air component of CENTCOM, provided further detail about the upswing in the use of weapons. The yearly number of close air support (CAS) strikes, with munitions dropped, in OIF, rose from 86 in 2004, to 176 in 2005, to 1,770 in 2006, to 3,030 in 2007. During 2007, the monthly number of CAS strikes rose from 89 in January, then 36 in February, to 171 in June, 303 in July, and 166 in August, before dropping back to double-digits for the rest of the year.[224]

In January 2008, Maj. Gen. Edgington explained that close air support — or "on-call" support — is the type of kinetic air power that has been most in demand in Iraq. Coordinated air/ground operations during the first several months after the arrival of the full surge force produced the heaviest CAS requirements, but afterward the demand tapered off. The significantly higher demand for CAS had been less a reflection of a deliberate strategy to use more air power, than a natural result of a significantly larger number of U.S. troops, working significantly more closely with Iraqi counterparts and in local neighborhoods, and getting better information that made target identification much easier. As of January 2008, in a shift from mid-2007, the majority of weapons dropped were targeting deeply buried IEDs.[225]

Some counter-insurgency specialists have questioned the use of kinetic air power in counter-insurgency operations because it risks civilian casualties that could fuel the insurgency. For example, Kalev Sepp has written: "These killings drive family and community members into the insurgency and create lifelong antagonisms toward the United States."[226]

Commanders stress, in turn, that although there is always a chance of accidental civilian casualties, the likelihood has greatly diminished with the development of precision capabilities. Further, the decision cycle before a weapon is dropped includes a series of decision points that give commanders the opportunity to stop an action if new and better information becomes available about a civilian presence in the target area.[227] In his December 2007 assessment of the use of air power in Iraq

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[223] MNF-I press briefing, Major General Dave Edgington, MNF-I Air Component Coordination Element Director, November 4, 2007, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15033&Itemid=128].

[224] "2004-2007 Combined Forces Air Component Commander Airpower Statistics," U.S. CENTAF Combined Air and Space Operations Center, January 3, 2008.

[225] Information from Maj. Gen. Edgington, Baghdad, January 2008.

[226] See "The Insurgency: Can it be Defeated?" Interview with Kalev Sepp, *PBS Frontline,* February 21, 2006, available at [http://www/pbs.org/wgbh.pages/frontline/insurgency/can/]. Other observers question the use of kinetic air power simply on the grounds that any risk of inadvertent civilian loss of life is unacceptable.

[227] Conversations with MNF-I and MNC-I leaders, January 2008.

and Afghanistan, Anthony Cordesman concludes that "considerable restraint was used in both wars."[228]

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

As of early 2008, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) consisted of three major groups: the Army, Navy and Air Force under the Ministry of Defense (MoD); the Iraqi Police Service, the National Police, and the Department of Border Enforcement under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), as well as the Facilities Protection Service that was still being consolidated under the MoI; and the Iraqi Special Operations Forces that report to the Counter-Terrorism Bureau, under the office of the Prime Minister.

Developing the ISF and the security Ministries that oversee them is a critical component of the role of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq — a role that has evolved over time in response to events on the ground and changes in U.S. strategy.

Requirement for New Iraqi Security Forces

The scope of the challenge has been extensive, since none of Iraq's pre-war security forces or structures were left intact or available for duty after major combat operations.

U.S. pre-war planning had foreseen an immediate and practical need for law enforcement, and for security more broadly, after major combat — particularly since some challenges to law and order might reasonably be expected after the collapse of the old regime. Planning had also stressed the need for security providers to have an "Iraqi face," to calm and reassure the Iraqi people.

However, pre-war planning had erroneously assumed that Iraqi local police forces would be available, as needed, to help provide security for the Iraqi people. Instead, in the immediate aftermath of major combat, coalition forces found that civilian law enforcement bodies had effectively disappeared.

Meanwhile, military pre-war planning had also assumed that Iraqi military units would be available for recall and reassignment after the war, as needed. Military plans counted on the "capitulation" of Iraqi forces, and included options for using some of those forces to guard borders or perform other tasks.[229]

Instead, on May 23, 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issued CPA Order Number 2, which dissolved all Iraqi military services including the Army.

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[228] Anthony H. Cordesman, "US Airpower in Iraq and Afghanistan: 2004-2007", Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 13, 2007.

[229] Information from CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2002 and 2003. See also Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.)

That decision foreclosed the option of unit recall to support security or reconstruction activities, or to serve as building blocks for a new, post-Saddam army.[230]

Post-war Iraq was not, however, a blank slate in terms of trained and organized fighters. The Kurds in northern Iraq had long maintained well-trained and well-equipped forces — the *pesh merga* — which had worked closely with coalition forces during major combat (see above, "The Ground Campaign"). Somewhat more equivocally, a major Shi'a Arab political party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, later ISCI), maintained its own militia, the Badr Corps,[231] which had been trained in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Like the *pesh merga*, Badr members were trained and equipped, but unlike them, they had no history of cooperation with coalition forces in Iraq. In the early days of the formal occupation, in various contexts, both militias offered their services to help provide security. The coalition — then the executive authority of Iraq — thus faced the additional challenge of whether and how to incorporate these militias into official Iraqi security structures.

ISF Training Efforts During the Formal Occupation

During the year of formal occupation, Iraqi security forces training was led and primarily executed by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Particularly in the earliest days, the efforts were characterized by limited long-term strategic planning, and by resources too limited for the scope and scale of the tasks.

Police training began as a function of the CPA "Ministry of the Interior" office, initially under the leadership of former New York Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik. He was supported by a skeleton staff in Baghdad, and by some resources from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Based on priorities articulated by Washington, the team focused initially on the capital city, including rebuilding the Baghdad Police Academy. The office also launched a call-back and re-training effort for former Iraqi police officers, but the effort was constrained by limited resources and staff — including a very limited presence outside Baghdad.[232]

Meanwhile, military units throughout Iraq had recognized an immediate need for some Iraqi law enforcement presence on the ground in their areas of

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[230] See CPA Order 2, "Dissolution of Entities," available at [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf]. Note that the date of the Order is given incorrectly on the CPA website table of contents, but is correctly printed on the Order itself.

[231] Previously the "Badr Brigade," subsequently the "Badr Organization."

[232] Regarding funding for the Iraqi civilian law enforcement system, Ambassador Bremer writes that CPA began with $25 million from the State Department to assess the Iraqi criminal justice system, and Ambassador Bremer allocated an additional $120 million from Iraqi government funds for training and equipping Iraqi police. See Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

responsibility. To the frustration of some CPA officials,[233] military commanders launched police re-training initiatives in their areas, initially in the form of three-week courses, with the goal of quickly fielding at least temporary Iraqi security providers. Ambassador Bremer eventually instructed CJTF-7 to cease police recruiting.[234]

CPA also initially had responsibility for rebuilding Iraq's Army, under the supervision of Walt Slocombe, the CPA Senior Advisor for National Security, and a former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. In an August 2003 Order, CPA directed the creation of the New Iraqi Army (NIA).[235] The training effort, led day-to-day by Major General Paul Eaton, focused on recruiting and training Iraqi Soldiers battalion-by-battalion. The plan was to create higher headquarters later on — and in particular, once an Iraqi civilian leadership was in place to provide civilian control of the military. The initial, ambitious goal was the creation of 27 battalions in two years, which was adjusted to the even more ambitious goal of 27 battalions in one year.[236]

In early September 2003, as a stop-gap measure, at the urging of CJTF-7 with backing from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, CPA announced the establishment of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC). The ICDC would be a trained, uniformed, armed "security and emergency service agency for Iraq."[237] In accordance with the Order he signed, establishing the ICDC, Ambassador Bremer delegated responsibility for its development to the senior military commander in Iraq — LTG Sanchez. Under CJTF-7's authority, Division Commanders launched ICDC recruiting and training programs, supporting the efforts in part with their own organic assets, and in part with CERP funding.

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[233] Personal communications from CPA officials, 2003. Also, in his Iraq memoir, Ambassador Bremer minces no words. He quotes Doug Brand, the U.K. Constable who replaced Kerik, as saying: "The Army is sweeping up half-educated men off the streets, running them through a three-week training course, arming them, and then calling them police. It's a scandal, pure and simple." See Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006, page 183.

[234] In his memoir, Ambassador Bremer recalls an October 2003 meeting with CJTF-7 Commander LTG Sanchez, when he instructed CJTF-7 to stop recruiting police. The incident underscored the difficult position in the chain of command of CJTF-7 (see above), which was in direct support of CPA, but still reported to CENTCOM — which had instructed CJTF-7 to recruit and train police. Communications from CJTF-7 officials, 2003, and Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

[235] Coalition Provisional Authority Order 22, "Creation of a New Iraqi Army," 18 August 2003, available at [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030818_CPAORD_22_Creation_of_a_New_Iraqi_Army.pdf].

[236] See Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

[237] See Coalition Provisional Authority Order 28, "Establishment of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps," 3 September 2003, available at [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030903_CPAORD_28_Est_of_the_Iraqi_Civil_Defense_Corps.pdf].

Unity of Effort: Creation of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq

In 2003 and early 2004, the various ISF training efforts — for the police, the NIA and the ICDC — proceeded in parallel, led by separate entities within the coalition, with little opportunity for integrated strategic planning and resourcing.

The military command in Iraq had sought for some time to be assigned responsibility for the entire ISF training mission, based on the view that CPA did not have the capacity to accomplish all of it, or to coordinate its many elements in a single strategy. Ambassador Bremer resisted this design, based on the view that the military was not trained to train police forces.[238]

On May 11, 2004, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 36, which assigned the mission of organizing, training and equipping all Iraqi security forces (ISF) to CENTCOM. This included both directing all U.S. efforts, and coordinating all supporting international efforts. It explicitly included Iraq's civilian police as well as its military forces.[239]

CENTCOM, in turn, created the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), a new three-star headquarters that would fall under the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), to bring together all Iraqi security forces training under a single lead in Iraq.[240]

Since December 2004, in keeping with the original NSPD mandate concerning international contributions, the MNSTC-I Commander has been dual-hatted as the Commander of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I). NTM-I provides training, both inside and outside Iraq, to Iraqi security forces; assistance with equipping; and technical advice and assistance. Its permanent mission in Iraq includes representatives of 12 countries. Major initiatives have included helping the Iraqi Army build a Non-Commissioned Officer Corps; helping establish and structure Iraqi

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[238] Conversations with CPA and CJTF-7 leaders, 2003 and 2004. In his memoir, Ambassador Bremer describes a September 2003 meeting at which GEN Abizaid and LTG Sanchez proposed that CJTF-7 take over the police training mission. He observes in his memoir: "I didn't like it…Although our soldiers were the best combat troops in the world, they had been trained and equipped for fast-moving operations where they killed the enemy, not for community policing and criminal investigations." See Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006, pp.168-169.

[239] See National Security Presidential Directive 36, "United States Government Operations in Iraq," May 11, 2004, available at Federation of American Scientists website, [http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd051104.pdf].

[240] In May 2004, CJTF-7 split into a higher, four-star headquarters, MNF-I, and a lower, three-star headquarters, MNC-I, (see above).

military educational institutions; and — with a strong contribution from Italy's Carabinieri — helping update the skills and training of Iraq's National Police.[241]

On October 1, 2005, MNSTC-I was given the additional responsibility of mentoring and helping build capacity in the Ministries of Defense and Interior.[242]

ISF Training: Theory of the Case

At the heart of the ISF training mission is the practice of embedding coalition forces and other advisors and experts — now called "transition teams" — with Iraqi military or civilian units, to train, mentor and advise them.

That practice, though it has grown over time, is not new. In early 2004, under CJTF-7, some Army units embedded teams with the newly-generated New Iraqi Army battalions. Under General George Casey, MNF-I, together with MNSTC-I (then led by LTG Petraeus), initiated a more aggressive embedding strategy, and the effort expanded still further in scope when GEN Petraeus assumed command of MNF-I in February 2007.[243]

What has changed over time is the focus of that embedding.

As MNSTC-I's name suggests, the initial stated goal of MNSTC-I and the ISF training effort in general was to transition security responsibility to Iraqis. The sooner the Iraqis were capable of providing security for themselves, the sooner U.S. and other coalition forces could go home.[244] Accordingly, embedded teams worked

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[241] See [http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Missions/NTM-I/NTM-I.htm].

[242] See for example LTG Martin Dempsey, Statement before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, June 12, 2007, available at HASC website, [http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/OI061207/Dempsey_Testimony061207.pdf]. The US Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Embassy's Iraq Transition Assistance Office, share responsibility for facilitating the development of all other Iraqi Ministries.

[243] See Major General Carter F. Ham, "Transition Team's Role in Iraq," *Military Training Technology*, Vol.12, Issue 1, April 10, 2007, available at [http://www.military-training-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=1972]. In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group had recommended sharply enhancing the embedding program — down to the company level in the Iraqi Army — and "paying" for this increase in embedded troops with reductions in the number of troops assigned to combat brigades. See *The Iraq Study Group Report*, James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, December 6, 2006, Recommendation 44, p. 51, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_ report.pdf].

[244] In his memoir, Ambassador Bremer provides a clear example of the early focus on transition, citing verbatim a memorandum from Secretary Rumsfeld to himself and General Abizaid: "Our goal should be to ramp up the Iraqi numbers, try to get some additional international forces and find ways to put less stress on our forces, enabling us to reduce the U.S. role. The faster the Iraqi forces grow, the lower the percentage will be of U.S. forces out of the total forces." Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006, pp. 162.

with their Iraqi counterparts with a view to the earliest possible independence of those Iraqi units.

In early 2007, in keeping with the Administration's New Way Forward and the surge emphasis on "population security" as a prerequisite for complete transition, the emphasis of the training and embedding mission shifted. The ultimate goal was still to transition security responsibility to Iraqis, but the timeline was relaxed. The primary focus, in the near term, was working with Iraqi units to help them better provide population security. Working closely with U.S. counterparts on real-world missions, Iraqi units would be practicing the skills they would need to operate independently.[245]

ISF Training: Organizational Structure and Responsibilities

Under MNF-I, specific responsibilities for training Iraqi Security Forces and their respective headquarters institutions have shifted somewhat, over time, among MNF-I subordinate bodies. MNSTC-I's broad mandate is still to "assist with the organization, manning, equipping, training and basing of the Iraqi Security Forces" — including the Army, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Forces, National Police, Provincial Police, and Border Police — and to "assist the institutional capacity development of the Iraqi Security Ministries" — Defense, Interior, and Counter-Terrorism Bureau.[246]

In practice, MNSTC-I divides those responsibilities with Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the three-star operational command that also reports directly to MNF-I. In general, MNC-I focuses on the "tooth" — fielding military and police forces through training, mentoring and embedding. MNSTC-I, in turn, focuses on the "tail" — improving ministerial performance, and generating and replenishing the forces. MNSTC-I is slated to transform, eventually, into a more traditional U.S. office of security cooperation.

Under MNC-I, the Iraq Assistance Group (IAG), a one-star command created in February 2005, is the "principal coordinating agency for the Iraqi Security Forces" within MNC-I. Originally, the IAG "owned" all the transition teams that embed with Iraqi units, but a major change was made in mid-2007. At that time, transition teams, while still assigned to the IAG, were attached to the brigade combat teams responsible, respectively, for the areas in which the teams were working. As previous IAG commander Brigadier General Dana Pittard explained, the change provided "unity of effort and unity of command in a brigade combat team's area of operations."[247]

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[245] Conversations from MNF-I, MNC-I, and MNSTC-I officials, Baghdad, January 2008.

[246] Information from MNSTC-I, January 2008.

[247] U.S. Central Command Press Release, "Iraq Assistance Group Supports the Feature Performance," May 17, 2007, available at [http://www2.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom2/FrontPage%20Stories/Iraq%20Assistance%20Group%20Supports%20the%20Feature%20Performance.aspx].

The IAG continues to serve as the executive agent for transition teams throughout Iraq, ensuring they have the training and support they need. This includes synchronizing the curricula at the transition team training sites inside and outside Iraq, providing the teams with equipment and related training, and supporting the teams' Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSOI) as they arrive in Iraq.

The IAG also directly supports transition teams working with three Iraqi headquarters staffs: the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, the National Police headquarters, and the Department of Border Enforcement headquarters. And the IAG is helping spearhead the creation of an Iraqi Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corps — as of January 2008, newly trained Iraqi NCOs were running and teaching the new NCO training courses, and a second, more advanced "commando course" had begun.[248]

ISF Training: Transition Teams

Transition teams have been called the "linchpin of the training and mentoring effort."[249] The teams vary in size, composition and focus, based on the needs of the Iraqi forces they partner with and the specific local circumstances, but the theory of the case is consistent: the teams simultaneously "advise, teach, and mentor," and "provide direct access to Coalition capabilities such as air support, artillery, medical evacuation and intelligence-gathering."[250]

Transition teams work with units in each of the Iraqi military and police services, with key operational headquarters, and with the security ministries. Due in part to resource constraints, coverage of Iraqi units by training teams is not one-to-one.

For Ministry of Interior forces, the Department of Defense reported that as of March 2008, there were 28 border transition teams (BTTs) working with about two-thirds of Department of Border Enforcement units at battalion-level or above; and 40 National Police Transition Teams (NPTTs) which were partnering with about 80% of National Police units at battalion-level or above. For the Iraqi Police, there were 263 Police Transition Teams (PTTs) working with Iraqi police at local, district and provincial levels. DoD reported in December 2007 that while the ratio of PTTs to police stations is 1:1 in Baghdad, it was as high as 1:7 in some provinces.[251]

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[248] Information from the IAG, January 2008.

[249] See Major General Carter Ham, "Transition Team's Role in Iraq," *Military Training Technology*, Vol.12, Issue 1, April 10, 2007, available at [http://www.military-training-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=1972]. Then-MG Ham wrote this piece while serving as the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division, which was assigned responsibility for preparing transition teams to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. LTG Ham now serves as the Joint Staff Director for Operations (J3).

[250] Ibid.

[251] See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2007, (continued...)

The overall Police Transition Team mission is led by a U.S. Military Police brigade — since October 2007, the 18th MP Brigade — which falls under MNC-I. The MPs' efforts are complemented by International Police Advisors (IPAs) who, according to the Department of Defense, "provide civilian law enforcement expertise in criminal investigation and police station management." Some contemporary observers have suggested — echoing the CPA's Ambassador Bremer — that military forces, including MPs, are not optimally suited to train civilian law enforcement personnel, and have urged the expansion of the IPA program.[252]

For Ministry of Defense forces, the Department of Defense reported in March 2008 that the Navy is supported by a Maritime Strategic Transition Team (MaSTT) advising the headquarters, and a Naval Transition Team (NaTT) embedded with sailors at the Umm Qasr Naval Base. The Coalition Air Force Transition Team provides advisor teams to the Iraqi Air Staff, Air Operations Center, and squadrons.

For the Iraqi Army, as of March 2008 there were 207 Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) working with Iraqi units from battalion to division level. At the Iraqi division level, the standard pattern calls a 15-member team led by a Colonel (or equivalent); at the brigade level — a 10-member team led by a Lieutenant Colonel; and at the battalion level — an 11-member team led by a Major. The teams, though small, include a wide array of specializations — including intelligence, logistics, maneuver trainers, effects, communications, and medical expertise.[253]

The methodology for forming the MiTTs and preparing them for their assignments has evolved significantly over the short duration of the program. Initially, in the push to field trainers quickly, teams were pulled together from individual volunteers and trained at seven different locations in the U.S., without specific standards.

Subsequently, the Army consolidated a training program for Army, Navy, and Air Force transition team members, under the auspices of the 1st Infantry Division at Ft. Riley, Kansas.[254] The program includes 72 days at Ft. Riley, including 12 days

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[251] (...continued)
pp. 37-38.

[252] See for example the Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.18, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf]. The Commission noted: "U.S. military officers rather than senior civilian law enforcement personnel lead the Coalition training effort for the Iraqi Police Service; this arrangement has inadvertently marginalized civilian police advisors and limited the overall effectiveness of the training and advisory effort". "…The number of civilian international police advisors is insufficient." DoD apparently agrees — and refers to the low level of funding for, and availability of, IPAs.

[253] IAG and other officials note that it would be difficult to streamline the teams any further, given their small size and the array of expertise they include.

[254] The Marine Corps created a separate program to prepare trainers — the Marine Corps training and Advisory Group (MCTAG). Its mission is to "coordinate, form, train and equip Marine Corps advisor and training teams for current and projected operations." See Corporal Margaret Hughes, "USMC Forms MCTAG, Consolidates Reconnaissance
(continued...)

of inprocessing and 60 days of training, followed by a theater orientation at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and then by further counter-insurgency training and hands-on equipment training at Camp Taji, Iraq. The program sends new team leaders out to the field for a brief visit, at the very beginning of their training at Ft. Riley, and it solicits "lessons learned" from Transition Team members both mid-tour and at the end of their tours in Iraq.

While the program of preparation has improved markedly, the participants were still, as of January 2008, individual volunteers, who could come from any occupational specialty. As one program leader commented, the curriculum at Ft. Riley includes a measure of "move, shoot, and communicate" skills, as a refresher for all the "professors and protocol specialists" who volunteer.[255]

As of January 2008, the Department of the Army, the Joint Staff and multi-national force leaders in Iraq were actively considering how best to continue to source the Transition Team mission in Iraq.[256] Some officials in Iraq suggested that in the future, brigade combat teams in Iraq, possibly augmented with training experts, could simply split their focus between the fight and the training mission.

The majority of MiTTs in Iraq come out of the Ft. Riley-based system. However, to help meet demand, about 20% of the MiTTs are "taken out of hide" — that is, their members are pulled from U.S. units already serving in Iraq.[257]

In practice, several different patterns of training partnerships are in use. Sometimes, particularly when Iraqi capabilities are more urgently needed to contribute to the fight, "standard-sized" MiTTs are augmented with thirty to forty additional personnel and equipment, to boost the ability of Iraqi partner unit to operate more autonomously.

In other cases, some U.S. combat brigades have established more comprehensive partnerships. In early 2008, in northern Babil province, the 4th BCT of the 3rd Infantry Division, under MND-Center, established a robust partnership with

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[254] (...continued)
Training," *Marine Corps News*, November 14, 2007, available at [http://www.marines.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/ad983156332a819185256cb600677af3/2e2ee9165ebacf9a85257395006859a2?OpenDocument].

[255] Conversation with training official, January 2008.

[256] The "Iraq" training debate has helped fuel a larger, on-going debate about sourcing the full array of future training requirements. Most provocatively, Army Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl has proposed that the Army create a permanent, standing Advisor Corps, of 20,000 combat advisors, to develop the security forces of international partners. The three-star-led Corps would be responsible for doctrine, training, and employment, and would be prepared to deploy as needed. See John A. Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps," The Future of the U.S. Military Series, Center for a New American Security, CNAS website [http://www.cnas.org/en/cms/?145].

[257] The balance varies both by area and over time — for example, in January 2008, in MND-Center, a much higher percentage of training teams had been "taken out of hide."

the entire 8th Iraqi Army Division, with regular leadership contacts at brigade and division level, in addition to the work of the embedded MiTT teams.[258]

In 2007, in the turbulent area of Mahmudiyah and Yusufiyah south of Baghdad, Colonel Mike Kershaw, Commander of the 2nd Brigade of 10th Mountain Division, tasked his entire field artillery battalion to embed with the 4th Brigade of the 6th Iraqi Army Division and its battalions. The *de facto* transition team — 350 soldiers, staff, and all of their enablers — was far more robust than a MiTT, and had the added value of providing a visible example of how a U.S. battalion is organized and functions. The results in terms of Iraqi operational capabilities were apparently positive. Near the end of the brigade's tour, COL Kershaw reported, "We really conduct almost no operations where we do not have Iraqi forces either embedded with us, or where they are in the lead."[259]

Iraqi Security Forces: The Numbers

MNF-I noted that as of February 29, 2008, there were 544,725 assigned members of the Iraqi Security Forces.[260] The Department of Defense reported that as of March 19, 2008, the following numbers of Iraqi Security Forces, by category, had been "authorized" by the Government of Iraq; "assigned" based on payroll data; and "trained."[261]

Table 1. Iraqi Security Forces as of March 19, 2008

Component	Authorized	Assigned	Trained
Ministry of the Interior			
Police	288,001	279,870	166,037
National Police	33,670	33,531	44,156
Border Enforcement	38,205	40,852	28,023
Total MoI	359,876	354,253	238,216
Ministry of Defense			
Army	186,352	160,248	180,263
Support Forces	17,369	18,087	19,750

[258] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Colonel Tom James, February 22, 2008.

[259] Department of Defense Press Briefing, Colonel Mike Kershaw, Pentagon, October 5, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4053].

[260] Information from MNF-I, March 2008.

[261] The chart does not include Ministry staff. The chart also does not reflect the Facilities Protection Service (FPS), an armed, uniformed service that provides critical infrastructure protection for ministries and other government organizations. A new FPS Reform Law directed the consolidation of the FPS under the Interior Ministry (with a few exceptions including the Ministries of Oil and Electricity) but accordingly to MNSTC-I, the consolidation process was incomplete as of early 2008.

Air Force	2,907	1,344	1,370
Navy	1,483	1,123	1,194
Total MoD	208,111	180,802	202,577
Counter-Terrorism Bureau			
Special Operations	4,857	3,144	3,709
Total ISF	572,844	538,199	444,502

Source: Department of State, "Iraq Weekly Status Report," March 26, 2008

The three categories — authorized, assigned, and trained — are not a continuum. Some of those "trained" may not currently be "assigned" — on the payroll — for example due to casualties, or having left the service for other reasons. Further, in some cases the numbers "assigned" have outstripped the numbers "authorized", frequently due to hirings at the provincial level not yet approved at the national level. Finally, the Department of Defense notes that the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior still faces challenges accounting for its personnel, and thus it is not certain how many of the 354,253 assigned personnel are actually reporting for duty.

The overall numbers of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continue to grow, driven by revised estimates by the Government of Iraq of the forces required to provide security; by provincial-level requests for more police forces; and by the consolidation of forces from other ministries under the Defense and Interior Ministries.

MNSTC-I and MNF-I estimate that the ISF numbers are likely to grow further in the near future. The Ministry of Interior total force is projected to grow to about 389,000 by the end of 2008.[262] In January 2008 Congressional testimony, MNSTC-I Commander Lieutenant General James Dubik noted that the total ISF may exceed 580,000 by the end of 2008, and that the Government of Iraq has a "general goal of about 600,000 to 650,000" for the future.[263]

Iraqi Security Forces: Evaluating the Results

The total numbers of ISF alone provide only a partial gauge of progress toward the broadly recognized ultimate goal of independent and self-sustaining Iraqi security forces. Recent qualitative assessments of capabilities and gaps, by current officials and outside experts, provide a more complete picture.

Iraqi Security Forces as a Whole. Both internal and external assessments of the ISF point to growing evidence of operational capabilities, but raise some questions about how close Iraqi forces and their oversight ministries are to completely independent and competent functioning.

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[262] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[263] Lieutenant General James Dubik, Testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, January 17, 2008.

Overall, MNF-I underscores that while challenges remain in all of the ISF, all of them have made, and are continuing to make, progress. As one leader with multiple tours in Iraq noted, improved ISF capabilities are the single biggest difference between now and several years ago.[264] Operationally, another leader observed, "The Iraqis are holding their ground, responsible for their own turf."[265] Every day, at MNC-I's Battle Update Assessment, Division Commanders describe to the MNC-I Commander operations carried out unilaterally, or with coalition tactical overwatch, by Iraqi forces.

Based on a recent visit to Iraq, retired General Barry McCaffrey also concluded that the ISF are making operational contributions. He wrote after the trip that while the Iraqi police are "a mixed bag", and "much remains to be done" in the Iraqi Army, overall, the "Iraqi Security Forces are now beginning to take a major and independent successful role in the war."[266]

By far the most comprehensive external assessment to date of the ISF was carried out in 2007 by the Congressionally-mandated Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, led by retired Marine Corps General James Jones (the "Jones Commission").[267] The Commission benefitted from the participation of many senior leaders with years of experience in policing as well as military matters, and from spending considerable time in Iraq with the ISF. In its September 2007 Report, the Commission concluded, somewhat pessimistically, that "…in the next 12 to 18 months, there will be continued improvement in their [ISF] readiness and capability, but not the ability to operate independently."[268]

In the views of some advisors, the biggest long-term challenges faced by the Iraqi Security Forces as a whole may be institutional, rather than operational. These include improving ministerial capacity and effectiveness; clarifying chains of command; and crafting long-term, integrated force modernization plans for personnel and equipment.

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[264] Communication from an MNC-I leader, January 2008.

[265] Communication from an MNC-I leader, January 2008.

[266] General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (ret), "Visit to Iraq and Kuwait, 5-11 December 2007, After Action Report," December 18, 2007.

[267] See *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq*, September 6, 2007, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf]. The Report was required by the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, Public Law 110-28. Section 1314(e)(2)(A) mandated DoD to commission an "independent private sector entity" to assess three things: (i) the readiness of the ISF to assume responsibility for maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying international terrorists a safe haven, and bringing greater security to Iraq's 18 provinces in the next 12 to 18 months, and bringing an end to sectarian violence to achieve national reconciliation; (ii) the training, equipping, command control and intelligence capabilities, and logistics capacity of the ISF; and (iii) the likelihood that, given the ISF's record of preparedness to date, following years of training and equipping by U.S. forces, the continued support of U.S. troops would contribute to the readiness of the ISF to fulfill the missions outlined in clause (i).

[268] Ibid, p. 12.

Some advisors stress that the most critical issue, instead, may be overcoming lingering sectarianism. The ISF as a whole is one of the most powerful national-level Iraqi institutions. A resurgence of sectarianism in the ranks could potentially turn key tools of the Iraqi government — the capabilities of its security forces — into potential threats to the unified whole state.[269]

Iraqi Army. By the numbers, both the size and the overall capabilities of the Iraqi Army continue to grow. The Department of Defense reports that as of February 1, 2008, the Iraqi Army had 123 battalions conducting operations, with an additional 37 battalions currently planned or in force generation.[270]

In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group provided a very cautious overall assessment of the Army's capabilities, noting: "The Iraqi Army is making fitful progress toward becoming a reliable and disciplined fighting force loyal to the national government."[271] In September 2007, the Jones Commission noted more positively that the Iraqi Army was increasingly effective at COIN, and increasingly reliable in general, but progress among units has been uneven.[272] Since actual ISF capabilities appear to be evolving quickly, both assessments could have been accurate snap-shots at those two junctures.

More recently, coalition commanders in Iraq have noted that Iraqi Army operational capabilities are improving. Major General Mark Hertling commands Multi-National Division-North, with responsibility for the provinces east and north of Baghdad where many AQI affiliates sought refuge in the wake of early surge operations. In January 2008, he noted that the Division partners with four different Iraqi army divisions, "growing in size and capacity every day." He commented, "Where we can't be, they can be, and in many cases we're conducting operations with them."[273]

Also in January 2008, as part of Operation Phantom Phoenix, the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Iraqi Army Division deployed independently, with less than a week's notice, from Al Anbar province in the west to Diyala in the east to support combat operations in the Diyala River Valley.[274] According to MNF-I leaders, while not as attention-grabbing as combat operations, the move demonstrated a different but very

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[269] Conversations with coalition advisors, January 2008. See CRS Report RS22093 *The Iraqi Security Forces: The Challenges of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, by Jeremy Sharp.

[270] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[271] See James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, December 6, 2006, p.12, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf].

[272] *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq*, September 6, 2007, p. 14, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[273] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Mark Hertling, January 22, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4124].

[274] See Press Briefing, Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, January 17, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4122].

important set of capabilities that Iraqi units will need to master, to operate independently in the future.[275]

U.S. Commanders also assess that Iraqi Army capabilities are growing at the headquarters levels. In December 2007, Major General Joseph Fil, the out-going commander of Multi-National Division-Baghdad, commented on the status of the Baghdad Operational Command, a headquarters led by General Abud Qanbar, which includes two Iraqi Army divisions and has responsibility for the capital. MG Fil noted: "They are making good tactical decisions. They are planning true operations that involve multiple forces, combined operations that are frequently intelligence-driven."[276]

The list of the major developmental challenges faced by the Iraqi Army — endstrength, leadership, and logistics — has remained relatively consistent over time, although commanders and advisors on the ground point to specific incremental marks of progress in each area.[277]

In theory, an Army's endstrength reflects, in part, the missions those forces are expected to accomplish. The Iraqi Army, currently focused primarily on counter-insurgency operations, is expected to shift its primary focus, in coming years, from internal to external security challenges, as civilian forces are able to assume more of the responsibility for providing internal security.[278] In September 2007, the Jones Commission concluded that the Iraqi Army did "not have sufficient forces to enhance border security and conduct counterinsurgency operations simultaneously."[279] Reflecting that perceived need for more forces, the Government of Iraq has continued to increase the Army's authorized endstrength — by five divisions altogether in 2007.

Like all the other Iraqi security forces, the Iraqi Army has faced the challenge of quickly developing a capable leadership cadre. As many U.S. military commanders in Iraq point out, a basic problem is that leadership abilities depend in part on experience — their production cannot easily be "accelerated." The Army's leadership challenge may be more acute than that faced by the other security forces, since it is both large and, unlike the Iraqi Police, a nationally-based service whose leaders must be able to command diverse mixes of soldiers in all regions of Iraq.

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[275] Conversations with MNF-I leaders, January 2008.

[276] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, December 17, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4107].

[277] Concerning the consistency of the challenges, see Department of Defense Press Briefing, Colonel H.R. McMaster, September 13, 2005, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2106]. COL McMaster, describing his partnership with Iraq Army units in Tal Afar in September 2005, commented that the Iraqi army needed "… the ability to command and control operations over wide areas…greater logistical capabilities … more experienced and effective leadership…."

[278] Information from MNF-I and MNSTC-I officials, January 2008.

[279] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p. 13, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group pointed out simply that the Iraqi Security Forces lacked leadership.[280] In September 2007, the Jones Commission also noted that the Army was "short of seasoned leadership at all levels," and pointed in particular to "marginal leadership at senior military and civilian positions both in the Ministry of Defense and in the operational commands."[281] In Congressional testimony in January 2008, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Mark Kimmitt indicated that the most important gap was in mid-level leadership[282] — non-commissioned officers and field grade officers, who are required in far greater numbers than senior leaders. To help redress the situation, the Iraqi Army has launched several initiatives, including accelerated officer commissioning for university graduates, waivers to promotion requirements, and recruitment of former Army officers.[283] It is possible that it will prove easier to generate leaders "on paper", than to accelerate generation of leadership qualities.

Finally, logistics and sustainment — which are absolutely essential to an Army's ability to operate independently — remain an area with room for improvement.[284] In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group pointed out that the Iraqi Army lacked logistics and support to sustain their own operations.[285] Later, in September 2007, the Jones Commission called logistics the Army's "Achilles' heel," and observed: "The lack of logistics experience and expertise within the Iraqi armed forces is substantial and hampers their readiness and capability."[286] The Commission further concluded that the Army would continue to rely on coalition forces for combat support and combat service support — though the Commission did not estimate for how long that reliance would continue.

Testifying before Congress in January 2008, MNSTC-I Commander LTG Dubik agreed that the Army "…cannot fix, supply, arm or fuel themselves completely enough at this point."[287] As of March 2008, the Army now feeds itself - a key

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[280] James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, December 6, 2006, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/ iraq_study_group_report.pdf].

[281] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.14 and p.9, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[282] Mark Kimmitt, Testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, January 17, 2007.

[283] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[284] Virtually every famous military commander in history has made note of the crucial role of logistics — some of them quite memorably. Alexander the Great is credited with observing, "My logisticians are a humorous lot — they know that if my campaign fails, they are the first ones I will slay."

[285] James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, December 6, 2006, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_ report.pdf].

[286] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.14 and p.13, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[287] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services (continued...)

component of life support. The Army's maintenance backlog continues, but they have better visibility than previously on what needs to be repaired. The Army has some ability to allocate fuel, although some fuel is still provided by coalition forces. The Army is developing a national-level maintenance and supply system, including the new National Depot at Taji which is scheduled to be completed by late summer 2008.[288] Meanwhile, according to DoD, the Army's ability "to maintain accountability for U.S.-provided equipment remains a challenge."[289]

Iraqi Air Force. As of March2008, the Iraqi Air Force had about 1,300 personnel on its payrolls, out of an authorized force of about 2,900.[290] The Iraqi Air Force expects to have about 6,000 personnel by the end of 2009.[291]

By any measure, the Iraqi Air Force is still a fledgling institution, in the early stages of recruiting and training personnel. To date, it has focused exclusively on COIN.[292] In September 2007, the Jones Commission assessed that the Air Force was "well designed as the air component to the existing counterinsurgency effort, but not for the future needs of a fully capable air force."[293] In his December 2007 assessment, however, General McCaffrey argued that the Iraqi Air Force's progress in COIN was still limited. The ISF, he wrote, "lacks any semblance of an Air Force with a robust lift and attack helicopter force and fixed-wing C-130 lift to support counter-insurgency."[294]

Commanders on the ground confirm that the training effort is still in its early stages. Air Force Major General Robert Allardice, the Commander of the Coalition Air Force Transition Team, noted in early February 2008 that an accelerated training effort had begun one year earlier. At that time, the Iraqis were flying only about 30 sorties per week.[295] As MNSTC-I Commander LTG Dubik testified in January 2008,

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[287] (...continued)
Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008.

[288] Information from MNSTC-I, January 2008. See Dubik testimony, January 17, 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[289] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[290] Department of State, "Iraq Weekly Status Report," March 19, 2008.

[291] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Robert Allardice, March 17, 2008.

[292] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Robert Allardice, March 17, 2008.

[293] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.9,15, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[294] General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (ret), "Visit to Iraq and Kuwait, 5-11 December 2007, After Action Report," December 18, 2007.

[295] Brig. Gen. Robert R. Allardice, Council on Foreign Relations, interview by Greg Bruno, February 5, 2008, audio tape available at [http://www.cfr.org/publication/15421/allardice.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F405%2Firaq]. Allardice was promoted to Major General on February 25, 2008, between the interviews cited here.

as of December 2007, the Iraqi Air Force was conducting about 300 patrols a week — "up 1,000 percent from just a year ago."[296]

As of March 2008, the small Iraqi air fleet included 59 assigned aircraft and 146 pilots, including Soviet-built Mi-17 and UH-1H "Huey" helicopters, 8 light Cessna 172's, and three C-130 transport aircraft, as well as the first of six King Air 350's, which provide ISR capability, and which are expected to be delivered in 2008. Maj. Gen. Allardice noted in March that current Iraqi Air Force missions, which they do fly independently, include transportation of troops and medical supplies, and providing intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance support to joint counterinsurgency operations.[297] According to Lieutenant Colonel Cy Bartlett, whose team trains and advises Iraqi helicopter operations, as of January 2008, Iraqi helicopter pilots had completed over 500 combat missions.[298]

Maj. Gen. Allardice noted that in its next phase, the training effort will shift focus from battlefield mobility, to "more aggressively shooting from the skies". A final, eventual stage is expected to be the use of jet aircraft to defend Iraq's air space. The Iraqi Air Force relies on contracted support for maintenance. Maj. Gen. Allardice estimated that Iraqis could have a self-sustaining Air Force with these capabilities "in about the 2011 or 2012 timeframe," depending on the investments they make.[299]

An open question for the future is what sort of air force — with what capabilities, personnel, and equipment — the Iraqi Ministry of Defense will determine it needs, to meet its full spectrum of security requirements.

Iraqi Navy. Like the Iraqi Air Force, the Iraqi Navy is still in the early stages of development. The Department of Defense notes that as of March 2008, the Iraqi Navy included about 1,100 assigned personnel, and that number was expected to increase to about 1,500 by fall 2008. The small Navy is based primarily in the southern port city of Umm Qasr, and includes an operational headquarters, one squadron afloat, one support squadron, and one battalion of Marines.[300] Its missions including protecting Iraq's coastline and offshore assets.

In September 2007, the Jones Commission assessed that the Iraqi Navy was not yet large enough to fulfill its mission. The Commission added that so far, the Navy

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[296] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008.

[297] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Robert Allardice, March 17, 2008.

[298] Kristen Noel, "Iraqi Air Force Coming on Strong, U.S. Commander Says," *American Forces Press Service*, January 15, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48663].

[299] Brig. Gen. Robert R. Allardice, Council on Foreign Relations, interview by Greg Bruno, February 5, 2008, audio tape available at [http://www.cfr.org/publication/15421/allardice.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion% 2F405%2Firaq].

[300] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

had not been the government's top military priority: "Its maturation is hampered by the Ministry of Defense's understandable focus on ground forces and counterinsurgency operations."[301] As for the Air Force, the Ministry's "future force vision" for the Iraqi Navy is expected to continue to mature.

Iraqi Special Operations Forces. Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF), an early priority for Iraqi and coalition forces leaders, now include one brigade composed of an elite counter-terrorism battalion, three commando battalions, and support units. Four regional commando battalions are currently in generation, to be based in Basra, Mosul, Diyala, and Al Asad.[302] The Department of Defense reports that as of March 2008, there were over 3,100 personnel on the ISOF payrolls, out of nearly 4,900 authorized personnel.

According to both U.S. commanders in Iraq and outside assessments, the ISOF are extremely competent.[303] As the Jones Commission reported in September 2007, "The Special Operations brigade is highly capable and extremely effective."[304] The selection process is reportedly very competitive, and training — conducted by U.S. SOF — highly demanding.[305]

As of January 2008, ISOF reports not to the Ministry of Defense, but to the Counter Terrorism Bureau, under the Prime Minister's office. Although this is not an uncommon arrangement in the region, one possible issue for Iraqi leaders in the future will be ensuring adequate integration of the ISOF and Iraqi conventional forces.

Iraqi Police Service. The Iraqi Police Service includes three categories — patrol police, station police, and traffic police. All are based on the principle of local recruitment and local service. Over time, the Iraqi Police (IPs) are expected to assume a greater share of the responsibility for providing internal security, backed up by the National Police (see below, "Iraqi National Police"), while the Iraqi Army turns its focus toward external security challenges.

The Department of Defense reported that as of March 2008, almost 280,000 IPs were assigned to the Ministry of the Interior. 166,000 IPs had been trained, leaving a backlog for the initial 80-hour training (and possibly more, since some of those trained may no longer be serving).[306] According to MNSTC-I, the through-put of Iraqi police training facilities is expected to increase in early 2008. As of January

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[301] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.16, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[302] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[303] Communications from MNC-I leaders and Division Commanders, January 2008.

[304] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.16, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[305] See for example Monte Morin, "Turning Iraqi Recruits into Commandos," *Stars and Stripes*, March 14, 2006.

[306] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

2008, both Ministry of Interior and MNF-I officials were reportedly considering interim measures, such as shorter initial training courses, to bring new recruits and recalled former police officers on board more quickly.[307]

In September 2007, the Jones Commission concluded that Iraqi Police capabilities are improving at the local level, particularly when the IPs are locally recruited from relatively ethnically homogenous neighborhoods.[308] In December 2007, General McCaffrey similarly observed that "many local units are now effectively providing security and intelligence penetration of their neighborhoods".[309] While both assessments pointed to emerging IP capabilities, both also indicated substantial room for improvement. The Jones Commission noted that the IPs were "…incapable today of providing security at a level sufficient to protect Iraqi neighborhoods from insurgents and sectarian violence", in part because they were "compromised by militia and insurgent infiltration."[310]

In early 2008, a number of U.S. military commanders in Iraq described recent examples of specific operations planned and carried out in their areas of responsibility by Iraqi Police, stressing that these capabilities to plan and act independently — and successfully — have emerged relatively recently. Commanders also stressed the importance of the visible presence of the IPs at police stations and on patrol in local neighborhoods, and together with Iraqi Army and coalition forces at joint security stations, in helping provide population security.[311]

Iraqi National Police. The Iraqi National Police (NPs), unlike the IPs, are intended to be a national asset, not a regionally-based one. While they initially focused on Baghdad, the Interior Ministry's plan is that the NPs will "regionalize," eventually establishing a presence in every province, where they will provide backup for the IPs.[312]

The Department of Defense reported that as of March 2008, 38 NP battalions were operational, of which 9 were judged to be "capable of planning, executing, and sustaining operations with coalition support."[313]

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[307] Conversations with MNF-I staff, January 2008.

[308] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.9, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[309] General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (ret), "Visit to Iraq and Kuwait, 5-11 December 2007, After Action Report," December 18, 2007.

[310] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.18,10, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[311] Information from U.S. commanders, January 2008. In one example, the local IP commander briefed the multi-national division commander in detail on the IPs' plans for the upcoming Ashura holiday. The plans included some coalition ISR assets — requested at the initiate of the IPs.

[312] Information from MNSTC-I officials, January 2008.

[313] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

To date, the NPs have more consistently prompted concerns about competence, corruption, and sectarian bias, than any other Iraqi security force. In June 2007, outgoing MNSTC-I Commander Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey testified to Congress that the NPs are "the single organization in Iraq with the most sectarian influence and sectarian problems."[314] In September 2007, the Jones Commission stated flatly: "The National Police have proven operationally ineffective. Sectarianism in its units undermines its ability to provide security; the force is not viable in its current form."[315]

Outside experts have suggested several possible remedies. The Iraq Study Group recommended moving the NPs from the Interior Ministry to the Ministry of Defense, and giving them closer supervision.[316] The Jones Commission recommended disbanding the NPs altogether.[317]

The Iraqi leadership opted for a different approach. One step was replacing NP senior leaders. Between late 2006 and January 2008, both of the NP division commanders, all 9 brigade commanders, and about 18 of 28 battalion commanders were replaced.[318] The other major step was re-training — or "re-bluing" — both leaders and ranks at the Numaniyah National Police Academy. In January 2008, MNSTC-I Commander LTG Dubik testified that the re-bluing process was one hundred percent completed.[319]

The most recent NP training initiative is a close partnership with Italy's Carabinieri, under the rubric of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq, launched in October 2007. The curriculum is based on Carabinieri tactics, techniques and procedures.

In early 2008, some U.S. commanders in Iraq confirmed that there have been serious problems with the NPs, and suggested that the leadership changes and re-education have produced mixed results. As one Brigade Commander noted, "The

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[314] Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, June 12, 2007, audio transcript available at [http://www.house.gov/hasc/hearing_information.shtml].

[315] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.20, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[316] See James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, December 6, 2006, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_ report.pdf].

[317] See Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.20, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[318] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008. LTG Dubik pointed out that "ten out of nine" brigade commanders were replaced, since two changes were made to one brigade's command.

[319] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008.

National Police have been terrible!"[320] One Division Commander praised the work of one NP brigade in solving problems in his area of responsibility, while noting that another NP brigade actually is the problem.[321]

The current NP leadership apparently recognizes that the organization continues to face challenges of both fact and perception. One coalition leader credits Iraqi National Police Commander Major General Hussein with this remark: "The National Police has two enemies — the insurgency, and our own reputation."[322]

Department of Border Enforcement. The Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) faces the daunting task of protecting Iraq's 3,650 kilometers of land borders, some of it rugged and mountainous, against apparent infiltration by extremist groups from some neighbor countries, as well as controlling the usual flow of cross-border traffic.

In March 2008, the DBE had nearly 41,000 assigned personnel (of 38,000 authorized), organized into 12 brigades of 44 battalions. About 28,000 personnel had been trained. The training gap — and the relatively low level of training in general — impinge on the DBE's effectiveness.[323] Given the ratio of distances to personnel, and the current capabilities of those personnel, the DBE — as DoD put it in December 2007 — is "stretched thin."[324] The Jones Commission stated more flatly: "Iraq's borders are porous."[325]

The Iraqi Government's proposed way forward includes constructing up to 585 border forts, to establish a line-of-sight perimeter, and increasing the use of biometric scan systems and personal information databases. In the near future at least, DBE efforts are expected to be supported by coalition overwatch.[326]

Both coalition advisors and outside assessments have pointed out that the DBE continues to face additional challenges from corruption of several kinds. In early 2008, coalition officials in Iraq agreed with the assessments by the Jones Commission that the DBE is infiltrated by outside interests, and that some members are apparently involved in cross-border smuggling.[327]

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[320] Information from Brigade Commander, Baghdad, January 2008.

[321] Information from Division Commander, January 2008.

[322] Information from MNF-I staff, January 2008.

[323] Information from coalition advisors, January 2008.

[324] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2007.

[325] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.20, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[326] Information from MNSTC-I officials, January 2008.

[327] Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008, and Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.20, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

Ministry of the Interior. Both coalition advisors and outside assessments have consistently pointed to two serious shortcomings in the Ministry of Interior (MoI) itself: a lack of capacity and corruption.

Capacity challenges apparently plague most of the Ministry's activities. The Department of Defense reported in December 2007: "Coalition advisors continue to report steady but sometimes inconsistent improvement in the MoI's ability to perform key ministry functions, such as force management, personnel management, acquisition, training, logistics and sustainment, and developing and implementing plans and policies."[328]

One particularly serious constraint, according to coalition officials, is that the Ministry of Interior lacks sufficient capacity to process the large and growing demand for personnel — to screen recruits, to train them, and to continue to account for them.[329] To address this shortcoming, the Ministry is expanding the capacity of its training base; rapidly generating officers through a recall and training program for former army and police officers; and improving personnel accountability in part with a new automated pay system.[330]

Corruption — and the perception of corruption — may be the even more difficult challenge for the MoI to eradicate. In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group concluded flatly that the MoI was corrupt. In September 2007, the Jones Commission assessed that "…sectarianism and corruption are pervasive in the MoI", and that the Ministry is "…widely regarded as being dysfunctional and sectarian."[331] In January 2008, one coalition advisor stated bluntly that the MoI is filled with "card-carrying gangsters."[332]

The MoI has apparently taken some steps to battle internal corruption. The Department of Defense reported that in 2007, the MoI had opened 6,652 investigations of ministry personnel. Of these, 6,159 were closed during 2007, including 1,112 that resulted in firings, 438 in disciplinary actions, and 23 in forced retirement.[333] According to MNSTC-I Commander LTG Dubik, the MoI had also

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[328] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[329] Information from coalition advisors, January 2008.

[330] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[331] See James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report,* December 6, 2006, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf], and Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.17, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[332] Comment by coalition advisor, January 2008.

[333] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

opened 500 cases, of which 61 had gone to the Iraqi court system, of which 31 had ended in convictions.[334]

Ministry of Defense. In September 2007, the Jones Commission concluded that the Ministry of Defense (MoD) suffered from "bureaucratic inexperience, excessive layering, and over-centralization."[335] In March 2008, the Department of Defense agreed that the Ministry continued to face leadership and staffing challenges.[336]

MNF-I officials suggest, however, that compared to other Iraqi ministries, the MoD is a model of progress — it has not faced the magnitude of corruption endemic at the MoI, and with close advisory support from the coalition, it has made substantial progress in both management and strategic planning.[337]

One major future challenge for the Ministry of Defense will be clarifying and rationalizing the chain of command. As the Jones Commission pointed out in September 2007: "Parallel lines of direct communication to military units have been established under the control of the Prime Minister. He is perceived by many as having created a second, and politically-motivated, chain of command."[338] Coalition advisors confirmed this assessment in January 2008, and DoD noted in March 2008 that "the lines of command remain opaque and serve to encourage control at the highest level."[339] The Iraqi Ground Forces Command reports to the Joint Headquarters, which reports to the MoD, but some ground forces skip portions of this chain.

Currently, the 6th and 9th Army Divisions report to the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), which reports directly to the office of the Prime Minister. The Basra Operations Center reports to the MoD. Other Operations Centers have been established in Ninewah, Samarra, Diyala, Karbala and Anbar.[340] For the future, the Defense Ministry is reportedly considering turning the BOC and analogous Commands into three-star Army Corps headquarters.[341]

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[334] Lieutenant General James Dubik, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008.

[335] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, pp.9,12, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[336] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[337] Conversations with MNF-I officials, January 2008.

[338] Conversations with MNF-I officials, January 2008, and Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, pp.13, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf].

[339] Information from coalition advisors, January 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[340] Information from MNF-I, March 2008.

[341] Information from coalition advisors, January 2008.

Iraqi Population: "Reconciliation"

A central tenet of counter-insurgency is reaching out to the local population and securing at least their acceptance, if not their active support.

In Iraq, a number of commanders have pointed to changes in the attitudes and behavior of the Iraqi population as the most important difference between 2007 and earlier periods. In December 2007, for example, the out-going commander of Multi-National Division-Baghdad, Major General Joseph Fil, noted: "I attribute a great deal of the security progress to the willingness of the population to step forward and band together against terrorist and criminal militia."[342]

Coalition and Iraqi government efforts to reach out to the Iraqi population have increasingly fallen under the broad semantic rubric of "reconciliation." As of 2008, the term is very broadly used — from U.S. national strategy, to Congressional legislation, to the names of Iraqi government structures and of offices and job titles in coalition headquarters.[343] The term is variously used, but in the broadest sense, it refers to a multi-lateral reconciliation among all sub-groups and members of Iraqi society, except the self-designated truly "irreconcilables" and those who may have disqualified themselves by some egregious action.

In practice, "reconciliation" in Iraq has taken a number of forms, several of which, discussed below, have played critical roles in shaping the security climate.

Coalition Outreach to the Disaffected

Early in OIF, coalition forces recognized the importance of reaching out to disaffected Iraqi communities, but coalition efforts were constrained by lack of expertise, limited resources, and — initially — policy decisions.

In 2003, some CPA and CJTF-7 leaders recognized the importance and the complexity of tribal dynamics in Iraq.[344] As coalition forces commanders on the ground throughout Iraq frequently engaged with local tribal leaders, it rapidly became apparent that the coalition lacked detailed expertise in tribal history and dynamics. The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) — the first national-level advisory body, established by CPA in July 2003 — included very little tribal representation.[345]

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[342] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, Pentagon, December 17, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4107]. His comments echoed H.R. McMaster's assessment of the role of local population in 3ACR's successful COIN operations in Tal Afar in 2005.

[343] At the national level in Iraq, the key agency is the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR), appointed by Prime Minister Maliki.

[344] For information about Iraqi tribes, see CRS Report RS22626, *Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social and Political Activities* (archived), by Hussein Hassan.

[345] Some members of CPA admitted that gaining a complete understanding of tribal dynamics and capturing them adequately in the IGC, in a very short time frame, was simply

(continued...)

In summer 2003, coalition forces launched a concerted outreach effort to Sunni Arab communities in the restive "Sunni Triangle" in central and north-central Iraq. On August 7, 2003, CENTCOM Commander General John Abizaid convened community leaders from throughout the region to urge them to cease all tacit support for insurgents, in exchange for future assistance with reconstruction needs, political representation, and other concerns. However, for most of the rest of that year, the very limited presence of coalition civilian experts in these provinces, and limited resources for reconstruction, made it difficult to fully implement the proposed "bargain."

By early 2004, CPA established an outreach office, to engage directly with both tribal leaders and leaders of other disaffected groups, including some religious extremists. Also in early 2004, U.S. national leadership crafted a series of "Sunni engagement strategies" that included "carrots" such as greater political representation, economic assistance, and detainee releases.

By 2005, coalition leaders in Iraq began to pursue more direct contacts with insurgents and their supporters — in coordination with, and often brokered by, Iraqi leaders. As a rule, those talks were reportedly based on a familiar theme — a cessation of violent action against Iraqis and the coalition, in exchange for benefits that might include amnesty for some detainees, and improved opportunities to participate politically or economically in Iraqi society.[346]

Some critics have suggested that "negotiating" with known or suspected perpetrators of violence is an ethically ambiguous practice that, moreover, is unlikely to succeed because it depends for its success on commitments by those who have violated the rule of law.

Coalition leaders confirm that they understand who these interlocutors are. In December 2007, MNF-I official Major General Paul Newton, a UK officer leading the outreach effort, commented: "Do we talk to people with blood on their hands? I certainly hope so. There is no point in us talking to people who haven't."[347] As a senior MNC-I leader with considerable experience in Iraq described it, "You reconcile with your enemy, not with your friend."[348]

In the view of some participants and observers, what may distinguish the 2007 outreach from earlier efforts is a change in the perceptions of insurgents and would-

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[345] (...continued)
too complex, and the risks of error too great. Conversations with CPA officials, 2003.

[346] See for example Rory Carroll, "US in talks with Iraqi insurgents," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2005; Ned Parker and Tom Baldwin, "Peace deal offers Iraq insurgents an amnesty", *The Times*, June 23, 2006; and Colin Freeman, "British general to talk to Iraqi insurgents", *Telegraph*, December 11, 2007.

[347] See Colin Freeman, "British general to talk to Iraqi insurgents", *Telegraph*, December 11, 2007.

[348] Communication from MNC-I official, January 2008.

be insurgents about their own prospects. As the senior MNC-I leader added, "You can only reconcile with an enemy when he feels a sense of hopelessness."[349]

"Awakening" Movements

In the views of many practitioners and observers, "awakening" movements are powerfully reshaping the security climate as well as the political climate in many parts of Iraq. While they all have "ground-up" origins — and borrow from one another's experiences — they vary greatly in character, and in likely impact, by region.

Origins of the Awakening Movement in Al Anbar. The movements got their start in Al Anbar province. As described by Multi-National Force-West leaders, in the aftermath of regime removal, Al Anbar was a "perfect storm": The region was traditionally independent-minded, and relatively secular, but dependent on the central government for key resources. After the old regime collapsed, the province's big state-owned enterprises closed, state pensions were not being paid, De-Ba'athification policies meant lost jobs, and many Anbaris felt disenfranchised and left out of national-level politics.[350]

That context provided fertile ground for Al Qaeda affiliates to infiltrate the region with promises to "rescue" the population, but their actions proved to be absolutely brutal — including swift and violent punishment, or even death, for perceived infractions. One observer has called it a "campaign of murder and intimidation", including the murders of prominent local tribal leaders.[351]

The first rising in Al Anbar took place in 2005 — a movement that became known as the "Desert Protectors". Members of local tribes in al Qaim and Haditha volunteered to begin working with some U.S. Special Operating Forces and later with the Marines.[352]

The movement that became known as the "awakening" developed later, in Al Anbar's capital Ramadi, drawing on the model of the Desert Protectors — including the premise of an alliance among several key tribes. The initial leading figure of the awakening was Sheikh Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi, of the Albu Risha tribe, who was killed on September 13, 2007, by a roadside bomb. In late 2006, he had spearheaded the signing of a manifesto denouncing Al Qaeda and pledging support to coalition forces. According to MNF-West, by January 2008, of the eleven sheikhs

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[349] Communication from MNC-I official, January 2008.

[350] Information from MNF-West leadership, January 2008. Information from coalition officials, and Al Anbar provincial and community leaders, 2003 and 2004.

[351] Bill Roggio, "Anbar Rising," Long War Journal, May 11, 2007, available at [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/anbar_rising.php]. See also Mario Loyola, "Return of the Sheik," *National Review*, October 8, 2007.

[352] Information from MNF-West staff, 2007.

who initially stood up to challenge Al Qaeda, six were dead.[353] The movement, initially known as *Sahawa al Anbar* when it formed around a core from the Albu Risha tribe, changed its name to *Sahawa al Iraq* as more tribes joined the cause.[354]

According to MNF-West, leading sheikhs in the awakening movement describe their relationship with Al Qaeda as a "blood feud." The tribal leaders do not want coalition forces to stay forever — they simply want help killing Al Qaeda.[355]

Spread of the Awakening Movements to the North. During 2007, awakenings began to "spread" through the provinces of north-central Iraq — Ninewah, Salah ad Din, Kirkuk (At Ta'amin), and Diyala — drawing on the Al Anbar example. The northern "climate" includes several dynamics that could prompt more Sunni Arabs to self-organize to protect their interests.

As in Al Anbar, there is an Al Qaeda affiliate presence in the north-central provinces. In the wake of successful surge operations in Baghdad, Al Qaeda affiliates took up residence in several parts of the region, including Mosul and the upper Diyala River Valley.[356]

Sunni Arabs in northern provinces, like those in Al Anbar, have some grounds for feeling politically disenfranchised. In Ninewah, for example, Sunni Arabs, who constitute about 75% of the province's population, generally did not vote in provincial elections and are thus under-represented on the Provincial Council.[357]

Across the north (and unique to the region), according to Multi-National Division-North leaders, *de facto* Kurdish expansion continues, extending beyond the Green Line into parts of Mosul and oil-rich Kirkuk. In Kirkuk, in particular, many Kurds are taking up residence — or returning to live — in anticipation of a popular referendum that will decide Kirkuk's political future.[358] Coalition officials judge that Sunni Arabs in the region could find this dynamic threatening.[359]

Spread of the Awakening Movements to the South. Both security conditions on the ground, and direct exposure to "awakenings" elsewhere in Iraq, have helped generate nascent "awakening" movements among some tribal leaders in largely Shi'a-populated southern Iraq. These incipient initiatives share with their Sunni Arab counterparts their ground-up impetus, based on a desire for security and opportunity for their families, and a disinclination to be imposed on by outsiders.

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[353] Information from MNF-West leadership, January 2008.

[354] See William S. McCallister, "Iraqi Islamic Party, Kurds, and the Tribal Awakening," January 18, 2008, unpublished paper.

[355] Information from MNF-West leadership, January 2008.

[356] Information from MNF-I, MNC-I, and MND-North officials, January 2008.

[357] Information from MNF-I and MND-North officials, January 2008.

[358] Information from Multi-National Division-North, January 2008.

[359] Conversations with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January 2008.

The character of the southern movements, however, is distinctly different from those in north-central Iraq, due to a quite different political and religious backdrop, and thus quite different "targets" of frustration.[360] The most prominent feature of politics in southern Iraq is the power struggle between two major political groupings and the militias that back them: on one hand, the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI, formerly SCIRI) and its Badr militia; and on the other hand, the Office of the Martyr Sadr, led by Muqtada al-Sadr, and its militia, the *Jaish al-Mahdi* (JAM). Schisms in the *Jaish al-Mahdi*, in the wake of al-Sadr's declared ceasefire, produced splinter groups — "special groups" — apparently acting independently, that continued to practice violence (see above, "Shi'a Extremism").

MNF-I leaders suggest that the southern "awakening" movements are motivated primarily by growing popular impatience with both of the leading contenders for political power in the south, and in particular, with their past or current Iranian connections. ISCI's Badr forces were trained in Iran, during the Iran-Iraq War. Muqtada al-Sadr has maintained personal ties with clerics in Iran, and as of January 2008, JAM "special groups" were benefiting from Iranian training and support.[361]

Security Volunteers and "Sons of Iraq"

Military commanders in Iraq have credited the "Sons of Iraq" (SOIs) with playing an essential and substantial role in the improvement of security in Iraq, beginning in late 2007. Both terminology and specific characteristics vary by region, but in general, SOIs are local residents who have stepped forward, in some organized way, to help protect and defend their communities.[362]

Who the "Sons of Iraq" Are. MNF-I noted that as of March 27, 2008, there were 91,349 SOIs in Iraq altogether; 4,733 in MNF-West's area, Al Anbar province; 20,044 in MND-North's area, which includes the four provinces north and east of Baghdad; 30,278 in MND-Baghdad's area; 34,291 in MND-Center's area, which includes four provinces immediately south of Baghdad; 2,003 in MND-Center South's area, which is Qadisiyah province; and none in MND-Southeast's area, which includes the four southernmost provinces.[363]

The majority of SOIs, but not all of them, are Sunni Arabs. The Department of Defense reports that as of March 2008, about 71,500 were Sunni and about 19,500

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[360] For additional and slightly different views about the differences among awakening movements, see Mohammed Fadhil, "Why Southern Iraq Won't Awaken Like Anbar," November 7, 2007, available at [http://pajamasmedia.com/2007/11/post_252.php].

[361] Information from MNF-I staff, January 2008. MNF-I notes that before regime change, 70% of the members of the Ba'ath Party were Shi'a.

[362] The term "Sons of Iraq" replaced "concerned local citizens" in January 2008, apparently based on consultations with the Government of Iraq. Information from MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[363] Information from MNF-I staff, March 2008.

Shi'a.[364] Most groups are relatively homogenous but some are mixed. For example, in the area of Multi-National Division-Center, a mixed region south of Baghdad, 60% of the SOI groups are Sunni Arab, 20% are Shi'a Arab, and 20% are mixed.[365]

Coalition force commanders readily admit that the SOIs include former insurgents. One Brigade Commander commented, "There's no doubt that some of these concerned citizens were at least tacitly participating in the insurgency before us," and one Division Commander stated more boldly: "80% of these guys are former insurgents."[366] Other commanders note that the SOIs include not only "reformed" insurgents, but also some infiltrators currently affiliated with extremist groups.[367]

Origins of the "Sons of Iraq" Movement. The SOI movement was not the product of a carefully-crafted strategy by the Government of Iraq or by coalition forces. Instead, like the "awakenings", it began from the ground up — in this case, as a series of *ad hoc*, neighborhood watch-like initiatives by Iraqis who self-organized and "deployed" to key locations in their own communities, to dissuade potential trouble-makers. The response by coalition forces to the dynamic was also initially *ad hoc*, as some coalition units provided volunteers in their areas with equipment, or payments in kind for information, or other forms of support. Frequently, coalition forces named their new partners — with heroic-sounding names like the "Ghazaliyah Guardians", or with NFL team names.

MNF-I leaders and commanders on the ground have observed that SOIs initially come forward only after Al Qaeda affiliates and other threats are eliminated from an area. Some commanders also point out that SOIs volunteer to serve once a coalition forces presence has been established — they have to be convinced that coalition forces will actually remain in the area and not pull back to their FOBs.[368]

How the "Sons of Iraq" System Works. After its *ad hoc* beginnings, the SOI system was loosely standardized by coalition forces, in coordination with Iraqi security forces counterparts.

SOIs are paid by coalition forces, with funding from the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), based on 90-day renewable contracts. The

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[364] Department of Defense, "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," March 2008.

[365] Information from MND-C leaders, January 2008.

[366] Department of Defense press briefing with Colonel Mike Kershaw, Pentagon, October 5, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4053]; and conversation with a Division Commander, January 2008.

[367] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Mark Hertling, January 22, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4124].

[368] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I leaders, and division commanders, January 2008. See also Department of Defense News Briefing with Major General Walter Gaskin, Commanding General, MND-W, IIMEF, December 10, 2007, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4103], where Maj. Gen. Gaskin noted that coalition forces' elimination of Al Qaeda plays a role in prompting local Iraqis to serve.

money is paid to a single contractor, often a tribal sheikh or other community leader, who is then responsible for paying the SOIs' salaries and providing any uniforms, vehicles or other equipment that may be required. In practice, most SOIs earn about $300 per month, roughly equivalent to about two-thirds of the total income of a member of the Iraqi Police.[369]

In theory, SOIs "work for" the ISF, while the coalition forces pay them. Division and brigade commanders on the ground, interacting with SOIs, reinforce that message. In practice, however, SOIs are designed to fill the gaps — to "thicken the ranks" — where ISF presence is limited, so they may be more likely to have regular interaction with coalition forces counterparts.[370] In any case, SOI groups are only created in areas where their work can be supervised.

Most SOIs are hired to man check points or to protect critical infrastructure, and to provide information about suspicious activity. MNF-I leaders and commanders on the ground stress that SOI contributions have directly saved lives and equipment — as a rule, when an SOI group is established in an area, the level of IED attacks goes down.[371] Some commanders wryly admit that part of the reason may be that some SOIs themselves were formerly IED emplacers.

Security Volunteers in Al Anbar: Provincial Security Force. Multi-National Force-West leaders noted in the past that "'concerned local citizen' was not a term of art in Al Anbar province," where security volunteers have been organized in several alternative ways.

In Al Anbar, early tribal offers to provide volunteers were channeled into the formation of "provincial security forces" (PSF) — a gateway step to joining the Iraqi security forces in a more permanent capacity. Members of the PSF, who all receive 80 hours of training from the Marines, are formally personnel of the Ministry of Interior, and the MoI pays their salaries.[372] Other local residents in Al Anbar have self-organized into neighborhood watch-style organizations.[373]

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[369] Details provided by MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[370] Participant observation, and information from division and brigade commanders, January 2008.

[371] Conversations with MNF-I, MND-Baghdad, MND-Center and MND-North leaders, January 2008. See also Department of Defense Press Briefing with COL Mike Kershaw, October 5, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4053]. COL Kershaw notes that in his battlespace, SOIs had established their own check points and secured those roads. He adds that, since the SOIs began working, IED attacks were down, and the SOIs had turned in, or given information about, "over 85 terrorists."

[372] Information from MNF-West staff, 2007.

[373] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Walter Gaskin, December 10, 2007, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4103].

Concerns About the "Sons of Iraq". The SOI movement has raised some concerns among both Iraqis and some outside observers.

Iraqi Government officials, and representatives of official and unofficial groups in Iraq, who might otherwise have extraordinarily little in common, do share a concern that the SOIs could return to violence, form new militias, or otherwise pose a threat to the authority or influence they currently enjoy.[374]

Key Shi'a leaders of the Government of Iraq are apparently concerned about a potential ground-up challenge to their leadership, based on Shi'a tribal organizations, which could theoretically grow out of SOI groups in the south. Prime Minister Maliki named a very close associate, a Shi'a Arab, to head the Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation (IFCNR), the body responsible, among other matters, for facilitating the integration of SOIs into Iraqi government structures.[375] In turn, neither supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr nor members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq — or the militias that support them — are apparently eager to face competition for influence in Shi'a-populated southern Iraq.

Meanwhile, a leading Sunni Arab political party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, apparently views the SOIs and related awakening movements as potential organized competitors for support among Sunni Arab Iraqis. And northern Kurds, in turn, may be reluctant to see the rise of more organized Sunni Arab constituencies, included armed potential fighters, in politically contested cities such as Kirkuk.

In December 2007, at a session of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS), Iraqi government and coalition leaders reached an agreement confirming the ground rules for the SOI program. Those rules included a cap on the total number of SOIs nationwide, of 103,000, as well as a complete prohibition against SOI recruitment and hiring in Multi-National Division-Southeast's area — Iraq's four southernmost, largely Shi'a-inhabited, provinces. The rules also stipulated, for example, that SOIs could not represent political parties, that SOI groups must reflect the demographic balance in their area, and that coalition forces could not arm the SOIs.[376]

Following the December MCNS session, key Iraqi leaders — including Prime Minister Maliki, his National Security Advisor Mowaffaq al-Rubbaie, and ISCI leader Abdul Aziz Hakim — have all publicly expressed support for the SOI program.

Meanwhile, outside observers have expressed concerns that the SOI movement may be creating and alternative — and a potential future challenge — to the national

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[374] Assessments by MNF-I and MNC-I leaders and staff, January 2008. See also William S. McCallister, "Iraqi Islamic Party, Kurds, and the Tribal Awakening", January 18, 2008, unpublished paper.

[375] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I leaders and staff, including some who have worked personally with IFCNR, January 2008.

[376] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

government's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, by empowering new forces that may or may not support the central government in the future. "At worst," one observer commented, "it will perpetuate a fractured and fractious Iraq."[377]

Some SOIs have also registered frustration. In February 2008, some SOIs in Diyala province left their posts to urge replacement of the province's police chief. In other locations, allegations that coalition forces had killed SOIs have fueled resentments;[378] in practice, such allegations may be complicated by the fact that many SOIs are reportedly former insurgents.

"Sons of Iraq" Integration into Permanent Jobs. The Government of Iraq (GoI) and coalition forces have agreed that the SOI program is temporary. The agreed way forward includes, in principle, integrating some SOIs — roughly 20% — into the Iraqi security forces, and facilitating employment for the rest in the public or private sector. In either case, the plans include getting the SOIs off of the CERP payroll.[379] In March 2008, the Department of Defense expressed concern at the "lack of a cohesive plan to transition the Sons of Iraq to the Iraqi forces and civilian employment."[380]

The Department of Defense reported that as of March 2008, more than 9,000 former SOIs had joined various Iraqi forces in Baghdad[381]. For most of the SOIs interested in joining the ISF, the top choice is the Iraqi Police, which would allow them to continue to serve in their local communities. An application process is in place for SOIs seeking to become IPs, but it is cumbersome. After the SOI declares his interest, local-level screenings are carried out by coalition forces, local civilian officials, local tribal sheikhs, and appropriate ISF representatives. The review process considers, among other issues, an applicant's background, proof of residency, and any special skills the applicant may have, as well as the area's demographic balance. Formal ISF requirements also include literacy, a physical fitness test, and a medical check. Those candidates who pass through these reviews are referred to the Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation (IFCNR), attached to the office of the Prime Minister, for approval. Candidates approved by IFCNR are forwarded to the Ministry of Interior for vetting, selection and — if successful — the issuing of hiring orders. Applications do not specifically state that a candidate is a SOI.[382]

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[377] Anthony Bubalo, "Lawrence of Arabia is out of place in Iraq," *Financial Times*, November 11, 2007. See also, for example, Interview with Toby Dodge, Foreign Policy Online, September 2007, available at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3982].

[378] See Sudarsan Raghavan and Amit R. Paley, "Sunni Forces Losing Patience with U.S.," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2008.

[379] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008. A deadline of July 2008 was initially proposed, but by January 2008, that seemed less realistic to coalition officials.

[380] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[381] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq", March 2008.

[382] Information from MNF-I, MNC-I, and commanders, January 2008.

One constraint, regardless of intent, is that the Interior Ministry's personnel and training systems are overloaded, and cannot easily absorb a large influx of new personnel (see above, "Ministry of Interior").

For those SOIs not incorporated into the ISF, the broad intent of the government of Iraq and the coalition forces is to facilitate their transition into civilian jobs — ideally, jobs that are both sustainable and actually productive.[383] One major constraint is the absence of a thriving and diverse private sector, so most proposals and programs to date have focused on potential state sector jobs.

The Coalition is working with several Iraqi ministries to implement the new Joint Technical Education and Reintegration Program (JTERP), launched in two pilot locations on March 23, 2008.[384] The program is expected to include vocational training, on-the-job training, and job placement, with priority to SOIs and recently released detainees.[385]

Another innovative initiative, launched by MNC-I based on the recommendation of commanders on the ground, would create new "Civil Service Departments" (CSDs), as part of a new Civil Services Corps, modeled loosely on the New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps.[386] As planned, the CSDs would provide essential services such as electricity, sewage, and sports, to complement, not replace, those already provided by the central Baghdad government. MNC-I has launched a pilot CSD project in the Ar Rashid district of Baghdad. Each of the initial three CSDs - "public works battalions" - is expected to train and employ about 400 personnel, drawing heavily from former SOIs.

The coalition plans to provide some initial funding for the project with the goal of transferring full funding responsibility to the Iraqi government some time in calendar year 2009. The theory, explained one Brigade Commander, is "build it and they will come" — that is, once the new structure demonstrates its worth, the Iraqi government would fully embrace the initiative.[387] For its part, IFCNR has expressed support, encouraging increasing both the size and number of the proposed CSDs, and reportedly agreeing to pay the salaries of CSD employees, while the coalition provides equipment and training costs.[388]

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[383] The U.S. Agency for International Development, for example, runs a Community Stabilization Program, which typically pays relatively low salaries — approximately $90 per month — in exchange for tasks such as garbage collection. For SOIs' transition into the civilian world, the goal is to find, where possible, more directly productive employment.

[384] The two pilots are located in Tikrit and Mahmudiyah. The second phase is scheduled to include two larger pilots, in Kirkuk and Fallujah. Information from MNF-I, March 2008

[385] See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008; and information from MNF-I, January and March 2008.

[386] Information about the CSD initiative, including the Jihad pilot, from MNC-I officials, January 2008.

[387] Conversation with Brigade Commander, January 2008.

[388] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I, March 2008.

Detainee Operations

The broad "reconciliation" intent extends to an additional subset of the Iraqi population — those who have been detained by coalition forces.

Accountability. By the beginning of 2008, coalition detainee operations had evolved markedly from the days of the formal occupation, when they were characterized by under-staffing, limited facilities, and — due to ongoing aggressive military operations — a large and quickly growing detainee population. In the early days, it was common to find local communities frustrated first by detentions they perceived to be groundless, and then by the difficulty of determining the location and status of those detained.[389]

One important, gradual change since then, according to coalition officials, is much better accountability, based on the introduction of biometrics, better information-sharing throughout the detention system, and simply better cultural familiarity with the multi-part names commonly used in the region.[390]

"COIN Inside the Wire" Detainee Program. A second major change, introduced by the current MNF-I leadership, is a set of "COIN inside the wire" practices, designed to identify and separate the truly "irreconcilables" from the rest of the detainees.[391]

This new approach is based partly on a better understanding of the detainee population, which apparently includes far more opportunists than ring-leaders — for example, under-employed young men who agree to emplace an IED in exchange for a one-time payment. The opportunism seems to be corroborated by the low recidivism rate — about 9 out of 100.[392]

According to coalition officials, in the past, the coalition used its theater internment facilities simply to "warehouse" detainees. Those facilities effectively served as "jihadist universities" where detainees with extremist agendas could recruit and train followers. Today, the coalition cultivates the majority of the detainee population by providing detainees with voluntary literacy and vocational training, and bringing in imams to offer literacy and religious education. A family visitation program allows about 1,600 visits per week.[393] According to a senior coalition

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[389] Information from CPA and CJTF-7 officials, 2003 and 2004.

[390] Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008.

[391] Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008.

[392] Over 78% of those detained by coalition forces are interned based on suspicion of some IED-related activity. The recidivism rate is based on numerical data. The under-employment assessment is based on accounts from detainees. Information from Task Force-134, Baghdad, January 2008.

[393] Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008, and see Donna Miles, "Anti-Insurgency Tactics Succeeding in Iraqi Detention Facilities," American Forces Press Service, March 12, 2008.

official, "Now detainees themselves point out the trouble-makers."[394] To support this effort, two Theater Internment Reintegration Facilities are under construction, in Taji and Ramadi, to provide further education and skills training.[395]

Detainee Releases. A third initiative is a planned release of detainees, projected to include a majority of the 23,845 current detainees in the coalition detention facilities. During 2007, the detainee population grew from about 14,000 at the start of the year to 25,000, due to surge operations and better incoming information from Iraqi sources.[396] The release initiative is motivated partly by the overall emphasis on reconciliation, and partly by concerns that the forthcoming "security framework agreement" (see above, "Future Security Framework Agreement") may place new constraints on coalition detainee operations.

The targeted release program draws on the results of "COIN inside the wire" in separating the hardcore cases from one-time offenders. The program makes use of a guarantor system, in which tribal sheikhs and other local leaders may vouch for, and accept responsibility for, the future good conduct of detainees released back to their communities.[397]

The release program calls for giving ground commanders the opportunity to comment on proposed releases. Some commanders have expressed concerns about the practical implications of the program, wondering in particular how jobs will be found for the released detainees, and what will restrain them from low-level, opportunistic criminality in the future if full-employment jobs are not found.[398]

Civil/Military Partnership in Governance and Economics

From the earliest days after major combat operations, civilian and military coalition leaders in Iraq have recognized the central importance of the governance and economics "lines of operation" — indeed, military commanders have consistently viewed them as essential counterparts to security. The 2007 surge "theory of the case" adjusted the sequencing — improved security would now lay the groundwork for progress in governance and economics — but all three lines remained essential to long-term success (see above, "'New Way Forward' National Strategy: Theory of the Case"). The Iraqi government would have the lead role in

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[394] Information from Task Force-134, Baghdad, January 2008.

[395] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[396] Information from Task Force-134, Baghdad, January 2008, and from MNF-I, March 2008.

[397] The use of a "guarantor system" for targeted detainee releases was initially applied in Iraq in 2004, Information from CJTF-7, 2004.

[398] Conversations with ground commanders, January 2008. One commander, asked for his views about the process, simply exclaimed, "Don't go there!"

governance and economics, but the coalition, including civilian and military personnel, would support their efforts.

The key tension over time has centered on the balance of civilian and military roles and responsibilities in these areas. While all agree that civilian agencies are best placed, by training and experience, to lead the governance and economics lines of operation, civilian efforts have been hampered by the relatively limited resources of their agencies, and by delayed and limited staffing. Military forces, with far greater numbers of "boots on the ground," have sometimes stepped in to spearhead these efforts, and have consistently played at least a supporting role.

Relatively recent developments include a revitalization of the civilian/military Provincial Reconstruction Team effort, as part of the surge. At the same time, as surge operations have helped improve security in many areas, military units have turned a greater share of their own attention to governance and economic activities.

Civil/Military Partnership in Iraq: Background

The idea to apply coordinated civilian and military capabilities at the provincial level in Iraq dates from before the start of the formal occupation. Throughout, that "coordination" has had two important aspects: coordination within civil/military teams assigned to the provinces, and coordination between those teams and their military unit counterparts.

Early military operational-level post-war plans called for provincial-level "Governorate Support Teams", led by State Department personnel and including military Civil Affairs officers and representatives of the U.S. Agency for International Development.[399]

Under CPA, those plans began to be realized, with some delays and in slightly modified form. The State Department (and some coalition partner countries) provided Foreign Service Officers to serve as "Governorate Coordinators," eventually supported by small, civil/military staffs. In August 2003 — before most provinces were staffed — CPA and CJTF-7 launched what became a regular series of regional meetings, bringing Division Commanders and CPA Coordinators from the regions of Iraq to Baghdad, to share concerns and lessons learned.[400]

At the end of the formal occupation — and thus the tenure of the CPA — the new U.S. Embassy established several regional offices to provide consular services, but the provincially-based "GC" system was disestablished.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), *per se*, were established in Iraq in 2005, as provincially-based offices led by State Department representatives, with

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[399] Information from CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2003.

[400] Information from CPA and CJTF-7 staff, and participant observation, 2003.

mixed civilian/military staffs. The term "PRT" was borrowed from Afghanistan, where PRTs take a wide variety of forms, depending in part on which coalition country leads them. As of January 2008, the stated purpose of the PRTs was: "To assist Iraq's provincial and local governments' capacity to develop a transparent and sustained capability to govern, while supporting economic, political, and social development and respect for the rule of law."[401]

In 2007, as part of the surge, the PRT effort was expanded in scale, on the premise that increased security would create growing opportunities for meaningful economic and governance work at the provincial level. In June 2007, President Bush praised the effort, noting: "Much of the progress we are seeing is the result of the work of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams. These teams bring together military and civilian experts to help local Iraqi communities pursue reconciliation, strengthen moderates, and speed the transition to Iraqi self-reliance."[402]

PRTs are based on a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of State and the Department of Defense, signed on February 22, 2007 and retroactively applicable to previously-established PRTs. The Memorandum names PRTs "a joint DoS-DoD mission," which falls "under joint policy guidance from the Chief of Mission and the Commander of MNF-I". By mandate, the Department of State leads the PRTs, the PRTs report to the Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and the Chief of Mission "provides political and economic guidance and direction to all PRTs." Brigade Combat Team commanders partnered with PRTs exercise authority only for "security and movement of personnel."[403]

As of March 2008, there were 31 PRT-like structures in Iraq, with about 800 total staff. These teams "cover" all of Iraq — but that coverage is uneven. The 31 teams included 9 U.S.-led full PRTs; 3 coalition-led full PRTs, in Irbil (Republic of Korea), Dhi Qar (Italy), and Basra (UK); 13 smaller "embedded PRTs" (ePRTs) partnered with Brigade Combat Teams; and 6 non-self-sustaining "provincial support teams" which are based with a PRT but cover another location — for example, personnel based in Irbil cover Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk in northern Iraq, and personnel based in Dhi Qar cover Muthanna and Maysan in southern Iraq.[404]

The size and composition of the various forms of PRTs varies substantially, from a four-person core staff at the smallest ePRT to the 123 personnel at the Baghdad PRT. OPA notes that an ePRT typically has between 4 and 12 members, and a PRT — between 90 and 100.

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[401] Information from the Office of Provincial Affairs, U.S. Embassy Baghdad, January 2008.

[402] Cited in "Iraq PRTs" brochure, U.S. Agency for International Development, September 2007.

[403] "Memorandum of Agreement," dated February 22, 2007, signed by Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte and Deputy Secretary of Defense England.

[404] Information from Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008; and see U.S. Embassy Baghdad Press Release, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams Fact Sheet", March 20, 2008.

In January 2008, the single largest group of PRT personnel was "locally engaged staff." Of the 798 personnel on duty, 73 were State Department Foreign Service Officers, and 25 were USAID Foreign Service Officers. The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Justice provided specific, critical expertise in small numbers — 16 and 6, respectively. Contractors and Department of Defense personnel — civilian and military — filled many of the remaining slots.[405]

Within PRTs, the civil/military balance of responsibilities varies by location. At the Baghdad PRT, for example, as of January 2008, members of the U.S. military had the lead responsibility for PRT operations, and for all infrastructure projects and half of the rule of law efforts (including police, detainees, and prisons). They shared responsibility with civilian counterparts for economics and governance initiatives.[406]

Coordination Between PRTs and Military Units

Perhaps more important in terms of current impact than civil/military coordination within PRTs, is civil/military coordination between PRTs and the military units they partner with. In Iraq in early 2008, these relationships varied a great deal.

Each ePRT is co-located and partnered with a Brigade Combat Team (BCT). In theory, all ePRTs operate independently, but in practice, if an ePRTs lacks its own transportation and force protection assets, it relies on the BCT to support its operations. The ePRTs formally report up to the Office of Provincial Affairs at the U.S. Embassy, but anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases, BCT commanders request information and point out areas where ePRTs could help. Some ePRTs may thus function more like a BCT staff section than a partner organization.[407]

The much-larger full PRTs typically operate much more independently. There is great variation in the type of military units PRTs are partnered with, which range from a BCT that has responsibility for the same province, as in north central Iraq; to a single two-star headquarters, as in the partnership with MNF-West in Al Anbar province; to, in the case of the Baghdad PRT, two Division headquarters (MND-Baghdad, responsible for the city, and MND-Center, responsible for other parts of the province).

In general, military commanders praise the expertise and contributions of their PRT counterparts, but stress the need for far more of that expertise and presence, particularly right now, during the general improvement in the security climate. Some commanders ask, "Where's the civilian surge?" while some officials at MNF-I put it more bluntly: "Get State out here!"[408] Some commanders have expressed particular

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[405] Information from Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008. In 2007, DoD temporarily filled 129 slots formally assigned to DoS, with DoD civilians.

[406] Information from Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008.

[407] Information from BCT staff and PRT members, January 2008.

[408] Conversations with Division and BCT Commanders, and MNF-I officials, January 2008.
(continued...)

frustration at the lack of comprehensive PRT coverage — for example, the coverage of Najaf and Karbala provinces by teams based in Hillah, in Babil province.[409] OPA officials, in turn, stress that the current PRT presence *is* the civilian surge.[410]

Some OPA and PRT officials, meanwhile, express frustration with the military in Iraq for trying to do too much governance and economic work, instead of leaving those missions to far better qualified civilian experts. As one civilian official expressed: "The military needs to start transitioning governance and economics to other agencies".[411] Apparently most military commanders would agree — many note that they would readily transition responsibilities whenever civilians are available to receive them.[412]

Many practitioners and outside observers note that institutional cultural differences help shape the PRT/military relationships. One civilian official in Iraq commented, only partly tongue in cheek, that it's a case of "'sit back and reflect' versus 'take that hill!'"[413] For example, one Division, frustrated by delays in the arrival of ePRTs, launched a campaign to "recruit" ePRT members from its own staff and subordinate units. Officials of OPA, to which PRTs and ePRTs report, viewed that initiative as stepping on their prerogatives.[414]

Other practitioners stress that individual personalities play the key role. As one civilian official commented: "It's mostly about personalities — it's not something you can just fix."[415]

Some civilian and military officials suggest that more appropriately-targeted training might better prepare civilians for PRT service, particularly those scheduled to work closely with military units. Some current civilian PRT members note that their pre-deployment visit to Ft. Bragg, and their counter-insurgency training at the Phoenix Academy at Camp Taji, Iraq, were invaluable, primarily for the exposure they provided to military culture and organization.

Military Role in Governance and Economics

While civilian and military officials generally agree that governance and economics-related tasks might in theory be better performed by civilian experts, as

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[408] (...continued)
It has been a common practice, throughout OIF, for military commanders to use "State" as a somewhat misleading shorthand to refer to civilian expertise from multiple agencies.

[409] Conversation with Division Commander, January 2008.

[410] Conversation with OPA, January 2008.

[411] Conversation with PRT member, January 2008.

[412] Conversations with Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008.

[413] Conversation with OPA official, January 2008.

[414] Conversations with Division staff, and with OPA and PRT officials, January 2008.

[415] Conversation with PRT official, January 2008.

of early 2008, coalition forces in Iraq continued to play significant roles in those fields.

Governance. The Office of Provincial Affairs briefing materials state: "PRTs serve as the primary U.S. Government interface between U.S., coalition partners, and provincial and local governments throughout all of Iraq's 18 provinces."[416] It might be more accurate to say that PRTs play the "lead" role in governance, rather than the "primary" one, given the sheer magnitude of ongoing interaction by coalition forces with Iraqi provincial and local officials.[417]

In Baghdad, for example, the full Baghdad PRT interacts with the Governor, the Mayor, and the Provincial Council Chair, while ePRTs are tasked to work with the district- and neighborhood-level councils. A small ePRT, with responsibility for a given district, might work closely with that district council, but due to personnel and resource constraints, the ePRT might have difficulty working equally closely and frequently with all of the subordinate neighborhood councils within that district.

Military units are likely to have far more frequent interactions with Iraqi officials. Battalion commanders meet regularly with neighborhood councils, Civil Affairs units and other military staff work continually with local officials on essential services and other public works projects, and Captains and their staffs at Joint Security Stations — and their ISF counterparts — meet often with local officials who use the JSSs as community meeting sites.[418]

A central and long-standing focus of coalition governance efforts is helping Iraqis achieve connectivity between the top-down national ministries and their appointed representatives for each province, on one hand, and the ground-up provincial and local governments chosen by local populations, on the other. Military commanders in every region attest that provincial officials have no authority over — and little relationship with — the ministerially-appointed representatives for their province.[419]

As described by Colonel Tom James, commander of the 4th BCT of 3rd Infantry Division, stationed south of Baghdad in early 2008: "One of the things we really focused on is linkages, making sure that local governments are representative of the

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[416] "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" brief, Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008.

[417] Coalition military "governance" efforts in 2008 are very similar to those in 2003. In 2003, faced with a very limited civilian presence, commanders "leaned forward" and worked with Iraqis to form provincial and local councils, to help Iraqis articulate, prioritize, and represent their concerns.

[418] Conversations with BCT commanders, BN commanders, CA personnel, and PRT officials, January 2008.

[419] Conversations with commanders and staff in MNF-West, MND-North, MND-Baghdad, and MND-Center, January 2008. The problems were in part legacies of the centrally-controlled old regime, including Iraq's 1969 Law of Governorates, based on a "strong center" model, which named specific authorities that provincial governments could exercise — for example, "consulting on ministerial regional appointments", and "promoting sanitation and public health."

people, and they they're linked to higher governments so that we can process, prioritize, and resource the people that need things."[420] Commanders at every level have expressed hope that the Provincial Powers Law, passed by the Iraqi parliament on February 2008 and approved by the Iraqi presidency in March, will take constructive steps toward clarifying the relationships.[421]

Current governance efforts by coalition forces include fostering connectivity among the levels of government, by mentoring Iraqi interlocutors at each level. For example, in one town, community leaders were apparently frustrated because they felt disconnected from the deliberations of the nearest local council. The Army Captain leading the JSS in the city started bringing local community leaders together regularly, challenging and helping them to articulate and prioritize their concerns. Coalition forces then connected that informal body with the Iraqi officials formally chosen to represent that area. That mentoring has been backed up by higher levels of the Captain's chain of command, on their frequent visits.[422]

In another area, a Brigade Commander and representatives of his subordinate units regularly review the membership of all the local councils, based on the units' frequent interactions with them, checking for vacancies, for the presence of "outsiders" from outside a given neighborhood, and for roughly accurate reflections of the demographic balance. Where local councils fall short, the units that regularly engage them point out the concerns to them and urge improvement.[423]

In the views of many commanders, PRTs and ePRTs are simply not robust enough to conduct the governance mission comprehensively. As one Division staff member framed the issue: "The Division needs to help the PRTs help establish governance".[424]

Economics. Military commanders in Iraq confirm that for U.S. personnel, economic policy guidance is provided by the U.S. Embassy, and that PRTs have the lead role in the economic line of operation. But as for governance, since the earliest post-major combat days, the U.S. military has played a role in the economic reconstruction of Iraq.

The military role in economic reconstruction has typically focused on local-level initiatives. In early 2008, one economic focus for the military was neighborhood economic revitalization — usually measured in terms of the number of small shops opened. The first shops to re-open in a neighborhood, as security improves, typically include fruit and vegetable stands, and shops selling convenience foods like bottles of soda. To facilitate that process, commanders may seek a local Iraqi partner to serve

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[420] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Colonel Tom James, February 22, 2008.

[421] Conversations with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008. The law calls for provincial elections to be held by October 1, 2008.

[422] Conversations with Division, Brigade, Battalion and Company Commanders, and participant observation, January 2008.

[423] Conversations with Brigade staff, January 2008.

[424] Conversation with Division staff, January 2008.

as the primary contractor for reconstruction in a neighborhood, and to encourage other local entrepreneurs to come onboard.[425]

Commanders also make available micro-grants, through a Department of Defense program, which allows them to provide fledgling Iraqi businesses with start-up funds ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars, to purchase equipment or raw materials. For example, a micro-grant enabled one man in Baghdad to buy power saws and raw wood to jumpstart his furniture-making business.[426]

Both civilian and military officials in Iraq point out that the number of open shops alone may be a good way to gauge the security climate — how safe the local population feels. Longer-term, sustainable development, civilian and military officials note, requires not just local shops but also production — which in turn requires sustainable and secure systems of supply and distribution, as well as a customer base.[427] Civilian development experts in Iraq caution that this will simply take time. Military commanders, meanwhile, have been tasked to keep an eye open for potential "medium-sized businesses" to support.[428]

Meanwhile, military commanders continue to make use of the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), which provides brigade commanders with discretionary funding for a wide array of projects. As of early 2008, the majority of CERP funding was being used to support essential services, and other sustained initiatives such as the Sons of Iraq program (see above, "Security Volunteers and 'Sons of Iraq'"). Anecdotally, in some instances, CERP may have lost some of its initial flexibility — in the accounts of several BCT commanders, who may nominally spend CERP funds at their own discretion, they must now seek approval from their Division headquarters to spend CERP money.

As of January 2008, there was no formal requirement for military units to coordinate CERP spending with Iraqi officials. At the same time, Division, Brigade and Battalion Commanders noted that most projects nominated for CERP support are initially put forward by local Iraqi officials and residents. Further, although it is not mandated, the military typically cross-walks proposed initiatives with the existing

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[425] In January 2008, coalition forces in the Ar Rashid district of southwest Baghdad were working closely with Iraqi cardiac surgeon and local resident, Dr. Moyad, on the revitalization of the 60th Street market area. Dr. Moyad had already successfully facilitated revitalization of another nearby market area.

[426] Conversations with brigade and battalion commanders, January 2008.

[427] Conversations with MNF-I and PRT officials, and brigade staff, January 2008.

[428] In the midst of a discussion with subordinates about possible medium-sized business opportunities in their area, one Brigade Commander sensibly interrupted, "Somebody tell me what a medium-sized business is!" Some civilian officials question the role of the military in developing medium-sized businesses.

plans of local Iraqi councils.[429] There is also no formal requirement for the military to coordinate CERP spending with PRT or ePRT counterparts.

Some OPA and PRT officials have raised concerns regarding the apparent lack of complete coordination of economic reconstruction spending among the military's CERP, the QRF funding available to PRTs,[430] and Iraqi government funding. Too-liberal use of CERP funding, some civilian officials argue, could counteract the broad policy goal of encouraging Iraqis to solve as many problems as possible by themselves.[431]

Assessing the Results to Date

Strategically-based decision-making about the United States' next steps in Iraq and its future relations with that country requires a clear assessment of the security situation *status quo*, an clear explanation of the causes of the security changes to date, and an evaluation of the validity of the overall theory of the case — the proposition that security improvements would help create opportunities for the Iraqi government to make broader progress. Numerical metrics can provide a starting point, but a full assessment requires qualitative evaluations and the exercise of subjective judgment.

Security Situation by Metrics

Multi-National Force-Iraq leaders use a series of quantitative metrics to track and describe both snapshots of the security situation and trajectories over time. The qualitative significance of the metrics is open to some interpretation, but overall, current metrics suggest a marked though not steady improvement in the security situation from the start of surge operations to the present.

Overall Attacks. The metric usually described first is "overall attacks" — including attacks against Iraqi infrastructure and government facilities; bombs found and exploded; small arms attacks including snipers, ambushes, and grenades; and mortar, rocket and surface-to-air attacks.

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[429] Conversations with Brigade and Battalion Commanders, January 2008. For example, residents of one town approached coalition forces at a JSS with a request for an ambulance. Checking with the local council, the unit found there were no immediate plans to meet that need, so the unit sought CERP funding to support the request. On the other hand, when the same local residents sought funding to renovate local schools, the unit discovered that the responsible Iraqi council had already formulated — though not yet implemented — prioritized school renovation plans, so the coalition unit did not seek CERP support for the schools.

[430] According to the Office of Provincial Affairs in January 2008, $125 million in QRF funding is available to PRTs in Fiscal Year 2007. PRT officials added that QRF funds cannot be used for security-related projects; and that they can be used in smaller amounts — and thus more flexibly — than CERP. Conversations with OPA and PRT officials, January 2008.

[431] Conversations with OPA and PRT officials, January 2008.

According to MNF-I, overall attacks grew from a low point in mid-2004, when records begin, to a peak of over 1,500 weekly attacks in June 2007, just as the final surge units arrived in Iraq and Operation Phantom Thunder was launched. That gradual growth was punctuated by sharp upward spikes at key Iraqi political junctures, including the January 2005 elections and the October 2005 constitutional referendum, and, less sharply, during Ramadan each year. Between June 2007 and March 2008, according to MNF-I, overall attacks declined by 60 percent, to levels comparable with those in early 2005.[432]

Commanders on the ground point out that a low level of attacks in a given geographical area does not necessarily mean that no adversaries remain there. It could also indicate that a place — such as Arab Jabour south of Baghdad — is being used as a sanctuary.[433] In turn, a high level of attacks is generally expected, at least temporarily, during major operations in an area, as extremist groups attempt to push back.[434]

Iraqi Civilian Deaths. Another key metric tracked by MNF-I is the number of Iraqi civilian deaths due to the actions of extremists.[435] The number of monthly deaths peaked in late 2006, before the launch of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon in early 2007. MNF-I reports that beginning in July and August 2007, after the start of the Phoenix-series of operations, the level of civilian deaths fell sharply and then continued to decline through January 2008, a decline of over 72%, before rising slightly in February 2008. Early 2008 civilian death levels were roughly comparable with those in early 2006, before the Samarra mosque bombing.[436]

Weapons Caches. A further metric regularly recorded and tracked is the number of weapons caches found and cleared. That number skyrocketed from 1,711 in 2004 (the first year of full, available records), to 6,955 in 2007, and 2,436 in the first three months of 2008 alone.[437]

The cache numbers alone, however, tell an incomplete story, first of all because the sizes of the caches are not indicated. In addition, there is no way to confirm the

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[432] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008; and slide "Overall Weekly Iraq Attack Trends, September 25, 2004-March 21, 2008" provided by MNF-I, March 2008.

[433] Observation from MND-C, January 2008.

[434] MNF-I and MNC-I observations, January 2008.

[435] MNF-I tracks Iraqi civilian deaths by compiling coalition forces' reports of "significant acts"; by reviewing Iraqi reports from the Coalition Intelligence Operations Center which may be unverified; and then by checking where possible for redundancies. Reporting depends on coverage by coalition or Iraqi personnel — and may not be comprehensive.

[436] Information from MNF-I, January 2008, and slide "Civilian Deaths January 1, 2006-March 21, 2008" from MNF-I, March 2008. See also Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008. MNF-I tracks civilian deaths using both "coalition reports only", and "coalition and Iraqi reports" - which may contain some overlap.

[437] Slide, "Caches Found and Cleared, January 9, 2004-March 21, 2008", provided by MNF-I, March 2008. MNF-I notes there were 2,862 caches in 2005, and 2,660 in 2006.

discovery success rate by comparing the number of caches found with the total number of weapons caches in Iraq at any given point. Larger numbers of found caches could indicate that the problem is growing — for example, that more weapons are coming into Iraq. Larger numbers could also simply reflect more aggressive — and more successful — operations, based on better information from Iraqi sources about cache locations.

High-Profile Attacks. MNF-I also tracks the category of "high profile attacks" — including explosions involving the use of car bombs, suicide car bombs, and individuals wearing suicide vests. In 2007, the monthly total reached a peak of about 130 in March before falling, unevenly, to about 40 in December. MNF-I noted that erecting barriers and hardening sites, as well as kinetic operations against would-be perpetrators, had helped lower the total of vehicular attacks.[438] High profile attacks rose slightly in January and February 2008 in all categories, and particularly suicide vests.[439]

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). MNF-I tracks improvised explosive devices (IEDs) based on two metrics — the number of IED explosions, and the total number of IED incidents including explosions, IEDs found and disarmed, and IED hoaxes. The second metric can be viewed as a broader measure of adversary intent.

MNF-I reports that the total number of IED explosions reached a high point of 1,700 in June 2007, just before the start of the series of Corps-level offensives, and fell to a low point in November 2007, before rising slightly in December, to just under 700. The number of total IED incidents followed a similar trajectory over that time period. In early January 2008, Al Anbar, Baghdad, and the area south of Baghdad were relatively quiet, but the area north of Baghdad was more active — with 61% of all IED incidents.[440]

IED use can also be evaluated qualitatively, as well as quantitatively. By the end of 2007, less sophisticated forms of IEDs — such as command wire- and pressure plate-detonated devices — had become the most common, possibly indicating a degradation in the supply networks or ability to coordinate and operate of the adversary. In turn, by far the most deadly form of IEDs are explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs), supplied as a rule from Iran. Trends in EFP incidents — such as a brief early January 2008 incident spike followed by a quick decline — may indicate changes in the networks and transit routes that facilitate the flow of these weapons.

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[438] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January 2008.

[439] Slide "High Profile Attacks (Explosions), May 1, 2006-March 21, 2008", provided by MNF-I, March 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008.

[440] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

Security Situation: Commanders' Qualitative Assessments

Testifying to Congress in September 2007, several months into Corps-level operations utilizing the full surge force, General Petraeus stated, "As a bottom line up front, the military objectives of the surge are, in large measure, being met."[441] In addition to using security metrics, commanders on the ground describe progress in meeting military objectives in terms of the impact to date on the adversary.

According to commanders, by January 2008, the capabilities of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and its affiliates had been seriously diminished, and its members were focused on survival — as they lost key personnel, access to external funding and support, and long-standing bases of operation.[442] Yet as one Brigade Commander in Baghdad noted, "As we push them out of one place, they go to another," so completing the mission would still take some time.[443] In other locations, AQI operatives had apparently gone to ground, ceasing activities but, according to one Division Commander, "lurking in the shadows, where they are working quietly, secretly, and I think very determinedly to regain power…."[444]

According to both the Department of Defense and commanders in Iraq, in March 2008 AQI remained a "serious threat,"[445] still capable of carrying out "spectacular and highly lethal terrorist attacks."[446] AQI had shifted much of its focus to targeting Sons of Iraq and other Iraqi community leaders.[447] As MND-North

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[441] See General David Petraeus, Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq, House Foreign Affairs Committee website, [http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/pet091007.pdf]. The September 2007 reports to the Congress by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker were required by U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, Public Law 110-28, Section 1314(b)(3).

[442] Department of Defense News Transcript, Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, January 17, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4122].

[443] Communication from a brigade commander, Baghdad, January 2008.

[444] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, December 17, 2007, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4107].

[445] Department of Defense News Transcript, Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, January 17, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4122].

[446] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq", March 2008.

[447] In January 2008, for example in Adhamiyah in Baghdad, a retired Iraqi Colonel who had become a key leader of the Sons of Iraq (SOI, previously known as Concerned Local Citizens, see below) was killed in a complex attack, which included the use of a suicide vest, at the Sunni Endowment building. Also in early January 2008, five SOIs were found beheaded, north of Muqtadiyah, with hand-written notes attached to them including threats against the SOI program. Information from MNC-I, January 2008.

Commander Major General Mark Hertling stated, "The fight against these extremists is a tough one, and there is more fighting ahead."[448]

By January 2008, the ability of *Jaish al-Mahdi* (JAM) "special groups" to carry out attacks had also been diminished but not entirely eliminated, according to commanders. One Division Commander noted that the biggest thing that keeps him up at night is the possibility that Muqtada al-Sadr might call off his unilateral ceasefire, and that the full JAM might return to the fight.[449]

Overall, in early 2008, MNF-I leaders continued to note positive trends but urged caution — the security situation was still "tenuous" and "reversible", and the fight was not yet over.[450] As one Division Commander noted, "We're making progress but we're not dancing in the end zone." Another described a recent conversation with an important tribal sheikh who said, "You don't take a cake out of the oven when it smells good — you wait until it's done."[451]

Security Improvement: Commanders' Explanations

MNF-I leaders and commanders on the ground attribute the improvements in the security situation not just to one or two key factors, but to a compendium of factors. Moreover, commanders note, those factors are made particularly effective by their interaction effects — for example, coalition personnel who have previous service in Iraq, making use of more sophisticated technologies.

The most fundamental factor is the strategic shift, under the New Way Forward strategy, from an emphasis on transition — a quick hand-over to Iraqis — to a focus on achieving population security. Additional key factors more frequently cited by commanders include targeted operations by special operations forces; operations and much greater presence by conventional coalition forces; operations, presence, and greatly improved capabilities of Iraqi Security Forces; efforts by the Sons of Iraq and other security volunteers, and Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire.[452]

In addition, according to commanders, compared to the first years of OIF, far more intelligence assets are available in-country, and at lower levels of command, greatly improving commanders' ability to make decisions and respond in a timely way.[453] New technologies — particularly rapidly fielded counter-IED equipment and

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[448] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Mark Hertling, January 22, 2008, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4124].

[449] Conversation with Division Commander, January 2008.

[450] Conversations with MNF-I leaders, January 2008. See also "Interview with General Petraeus," *National Public Radio*, March 18, 2008.

[451] Conversations with Division Commanders, January 2008.

[452] Conversations with MNF-I leaders, MNC-I leaders, and Division Commanders, January 2008.

[453] Conversations with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and Division and Brigade Commanders, (continued...)

approaches — are helping coalition forces against the adversaries' deadliest weapons and, according to commanders, saving lives.[454]

Not only are various components of the coalition forces contributing to the fight, their efforts are far better integrated than they were several years ago, and that integration helps explain security improvements to date. For example, commanders note that the air component now contributes more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to ground commanders, to support and inform their operations. The greater ground forces presence, and the better information from Iraqis that it generates, in turn, have made possible the more frequent and more effective use of air strikes. Commanders note that conventional forces continue to rely on SOF and their high-end capabilities to reach some high-profile targets in their areas, while conventional forces are increasingly contributing insights based on their presence in local neighborhoods, to make SOF efforts more effective.

Finally, as many practitioners on the ground point out, force leaders, staff, commanders, and troops in the field now bring significant previous experience to the mission. Most leaders and commanders have served at least one previous tour in Iraq, and their familiarity with Iraqi governing structures, basic laws, and customs, is markedly greater than the limited knowledge the first coalition teams brought to Iraq.[455] Leaders also point out that they have had time to absorb the lessons from their earlier tours, including absorbing the 2006 COIN manual that captured lessons from recent operational experience.[456]

Security Benchmarks

The Congress, too, has sought — and legislated — mechanisms for assessing progress in Iraq. In spring 2007, the Congress mandated that the President and the Comptroller-General of the United States each provide an assessment of progress to date. The legislation was based partly on a December 2006 recommendation by the Iraq Study Group to establish clear benchmarks, and to link progress in those areas to positive and negative reinforcement.[457]

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[453] (...continued)
January 2008.

[454] Conversations with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008.

[455] Participant observation 2003 and 2004, and conversations with coalition leaders, staff, and commanders, 2008.

[456] FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, December 2006, available at [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf].

[457] James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, December 6, 2006, available at [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf]. The ISG recommended that "…the United States should lay out an agenda for continued support to help Iraq achieve milestones, as well as underscoring the consequences if Iraq does not act," (p.42). It also stated: "If the Iraqi government does not make substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones on (continued...)

The legislation established 18 benchmarks — 9 of them security-related. It required the President to provide an initial report by July 15, 2007, and a second report by September 15, 2007, addressing "whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved."[458] The legislation also required the Comptroller General of the United States to report, not later than September 1, 2007, on "whether or not each such benchmark has been met."[459]

Table 2 depicts the September 2007 assessments of the nine security-related benchmarks, by the White House and by the Government Accountability Office. Some discrepancies are apparently due to a key semantic difference between the two mandates — progress that "is being achieved" versus benchmarks that "have been met." Some other differences are apparently due to choices of emphasis in the assessments of benchmarks that address more than one subject.

In all cases, the conclusions pertain to the situation that pertained in September 2007 or earlier, when the assessments were conducted. It is likely that specific conditions on the ground have evolved significantly since that time, but the benchmarks still suggest broad analytical categories that might usefully be employed to gauge progress in Iraq.

Table 2. Benchmark Assessments as of September 2007

Benchmark	White House September 2007	GAO
(viii) Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.	Satisfactory.	Met.
(ix) Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.	Satisfactory. The MoD generated 8 BDE HQs and 27 BNs to support Baghdad operations. "Some of these units have performed exceptionally well…some units have been less impressive."	Partially met. 9 BNs, in 90-day rotations, have been provided. Of 19 units to date, only 5 performed well (Page 41).

[457] (...continued)
national reconciliation, security and governance, the United States should reduce its political, military or economic support for the Iraqi government," (p.43).

[458] U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, P.L. 110-28, Section 1314(b)(2). Section 1314(b)(1)(A) lists the 18 benchmarks.

[459] U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, P.L. 110-28, Section 1314(e)(1)(A).

Benchmark	White House September 2007	GAO
(x) Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	Partially satisfactory. Iraqi commanders have been given the necessary authorities, but political intervention in operations continues.	Not met. Iraqi commanders faced political intervention (Page 12).
(xi) Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even handed enforcement of the law.	Partially satisfactory. Progress with the Iraqi Army is satisfactory "though much remains to be done." The "Iraqi police has not made satisfactory progress."	Not met. "The government has not always ensured that ISF were providing even-handed enforcement of the law." (Page 12)
(xii) Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said ``the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."	Satisfactory. There has been "a steady improvement in population security…but work remains to be done, especially in the Sadr City area of Baghdad and in Kadhamiyah."	Partially met. "Opportunities for creating safe havens still exist due to the political intervention of Iraqi government officials and the strong sectarian loyalties and militia infiltration of security forces." (Page 9, 46)
(xiii) Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security	Partially satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made toward reducing sectarian violence, but not toward eliminating militia control of local security.	Not met. "We could not determine if sectarian violence had declined….since the perpetrator's intent is not always clearly known." "Militia control of local security forces remains a problem." (Page 9, 51)
(xiv) Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.	Satisfactory. 30 JSSs, and 31 coalition combat outposts, established as of August 31, 2007.	Met. 32 of 34 JSS's established.
(xv) Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.	Not satisfactory. There is progress in the development and operation of ISF, but not significant progress toward increasing the number of units able to operate independently.	Not met. "The number of Iraqi army units operating independently decreased from March to July 2007." (Page 58).
(xviii) Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi Security Forces.	Not satisfactory. Some "progress is clearly being made" but "there remains much work to be done."	Not met. Evidence of undermining and false accusations was found. (Page 12)

Sources: The White House's "Benchmark Assessment Report, September 14, 2007," at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/09/20070914.pdf]; and "Securing, Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security and Economic Benchmarks," GAO-07-1195, United States Government Accountability Office, Washington, D.C., September 2007.

Theory of the Case: Improved Security Creates Opportunities for Progress?

The Administration's "New Way Forward" strategy, announced in January 2007, aimed at improving security in order to give the Iraqi government "breathing space" to make progress in governance, economics, and reconciliation.[460] Many proposals for "post-surge options" in Iraq are based in part on assessments of how effectively the strategy has worked. While most observers agree that security in Iraq has improved, many disagree about the extent of "reconciliation" progress to date, and thus about the validity of the basic strategy.

Some observers argue that there has been little or no progress. For example, Andrew Bacevich writes, "As the violence in Baghdad and Anbar province abates, the political and economic dysfunction enveloping Iraq has become all the more apparent."[461] Some stress that the problem is the lack of a truly functioning central government. For example, retired General Barry McCaffrey writes, "Incompetence, corruption, factional paranoia, and political gridlock have paralyzed the state."[462]

Other observers give the Iraqi government a mixed report card, pointing to advances including *de facto* oil revenue sharing, and the recent passage of key legislation on De-Ba'athification and Provincial Powers, but noting that some political benchmarks have not yet been met.[463] As one observer notes, on the basis of an early-2008 assessment in Iraq, "Major improvements are still required in the Iraqi government and in governance at the national, provincial, and local levels."[464]

Rigorously assessing the validity of the theory that security improvements can create "space" for progress by the Iraqi government is a challenge, because the theory contains no timelines and no guarantees. The theory assumes that even after security improves, political and economic progress would still depend on additional efforts and choice by Iraqi leaders.

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[460] See President's Address to the Nation, January 10, 2007, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html]; and "Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq," January 10, 2007, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-3.html].

[461] Andrew Bacevich, "Surge to Nowhere," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2008. In a virtually unqualified indictment, he also refers to Iraq as "…a ramshackle, ungovernable and unresponsive dependency that is incapable of security its own borders or managing its own affairs."

[462] General Barry R. McCaffrey, "After Action Report, Visit Iraq and Kuwait 5-11 December 2007," December 18, 2007, submitted as a Statement for the Record for the HASC O&I Subcommittee hearing on January 16, 2008.

[463] See for example Michael O'Hanlon, Frederick Kagan, Jack Keane, "Making Iraq Safe for Politics," *The Washington Post*, January 20, 2008; and Max Boot, "We Are Winning, We Haven't Won," *The Weekly Standard*, January 28, 2008.

[464] Anthony Cordesman, "Creating a Stable and Secure 'Iraqracy': The Continuing Need for Strategic Patience," February 14, 2008, available at [http://www.csis.org/index.php?option=com_csis_pubs&task=view&id=4334].

Some observers who believe there has been some political progress in Iraq attribute that progress directly to the security results of the surge. As one group of observers writes, "The political progress resulted from a year's worth of substantial effort to reduce violence in Iraq."[465] It seems likely that to the extent that there has been some political progress, security improvements played a role in bringing it about.

It is also possible that improved security is the most important prerequisite for political progress, but that more time is required for "improved security" to have its full effect. One possible gauge — to avoid an absolutely open-ended assessment — is to expect to see national-level leaders make progress at about the time that Iraqis in local communities turn their attention from personal security to other concerns. In early 2008, U.S. commanders in Baghdad, south of Baghdad, and in Al Anbar, reported that increasingly, the top concerns of community leaders and local residents were unemployment and electricity, rather than violence in their neighborhoods.[466]

Further, it is possible that security improvements alone can do little to spur broader progress. To the extent that other factors — such as institutionalized sectarianism or even inflexible personalities — are also hindering full reconciliation, security improvements alone may not be enough to facilitate political progress by the Iraqi government.

Post-Surge Options

While the Administration has not yet articulated a concrete policy, and the Congress has not yet proposed specific legislation this year, past proposals and debates suggest several major post-surge options and their possible ramifications. In general, an option's "success" should be measured against the objectives it is designed to achieve. These objectives are not the same in every case, or even among all the proponents of the same course of action.

All of the options envisage some form of troop withdrawal from Iraq. Any future withdrawal plans will be shaped in part by several sets of constraints, including available ground and air transportation for withdrawing personnel and equipment from Iraq, and both the willingness and capacity of neighboring states to provide access and transit.

Conditions-Based Further Decision-Making

One option is to continue the status quo — that is, continue to apply all of the current lines of operation, including the military's current activities, while drawing down U.S. forces to pre-surge levels (15 brigade combat teams) by summer 2008, with the intention of making future decisions about force levels and missions based

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[465] Michael O'Hanlon, Frederick Kagan, Jack Keane, "Making Iraq Safe for Politics," *The Washington Post*, January 20, 2008.

[466] Information from Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008.

on future assessments of progress — in particular, the status of the fight against various adversaries, and the development of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

Commanders on the ground in Iraq generally favor a "conditions-based approach." General Petraeus has spoken in favor of taking an "operational pause" following the redeployment of the surge troops, as a "period of consolidation and evaluation after reducing our ground combat forces by over a quarter."[467] Speaking at the Pentagon in March, on the fifth anniversary of the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, President Bush indicated his inclination to support such an approach: "Any further drawdown will be based on conditions on the ground and the recommendations of our commanders - and they must not jeopardize the hard-fought gains our troops and civilians have made over the past year."[468]

This option is highly dynamic. MNF-I expects a progression over time in its relationships with ISF partners — from "leadership" to "partnership" to tactical and then operational "overwatch," with the caveats that the progression is unlikely to be steady, and that it will vary from area to area, and even within areas.[469] The process would be expected to include the hand-over of Joint Security Stations and Combat Outposts (see above) to Iraqi forces, to maintain the security footprint needed to secure the population. As the out-going Commander of MND-Baghdad described it, in December 2007: "The plan that we believe makes the most sense at this point, and that we're embarking upon, is one of simply thinning the ranks, if you will, in areas that are going well, retaining some coalition presence there to continue to work with the Iraqi security forces and these security volunteers…so that there's tactical overwatch or operational overwatch, if you will, and retaining [U.S. troop] strength in the areas where we're still working hard."[470]

Proponents argue that this approach supports well-informed decision-making, and is the most responsive to changing circumstances on the ground, since decisions are made close to the time of execution rather than a long time in advance. It would avoid the danger, in the words of some commanders, of "going too quickly". In this view, a too-hasty withdrawal, unguided by conditions on the ground, could allow AQI affiliates and Shi'a renegade militias to reassert themselves and attempt to regain lost ground, before Iraqi security forces are capable of making up the difference.

Some observers, including many who are inclined to support this approach, nevertheless point with caution to the inherently open-ended nature of a conditions-based commitment. How, some wonder, with such an approach, can Iraqi leaders be

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[467] Cameron Barr, "Petraeus: Iraqi Leaders Not Making 'Sufficient Progress', *Washington Post*, March 14, 2008.

[468] See "President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror," March 19, 2008, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/03/print/20080319-2.html].

[469] See General David Petraeus, Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq, House Foreign Affairs Committee website, [http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/pet091007.pdf].

[470] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, December 17, 2007, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4107].

pressed to assume greater responsibility and make more marked progress toward reconciliation?

Opponents of the conditions-based option argue from two very different vantage points. Some, for whom the primary objective is reducing the U.S. troop commitment in Iraq as soon as possible, are dissatisfied because this approach does not necessarily support that goal.

Other opponents, whose assessments of current status differ from those by commanders on the ground, argue that the status quo should be changed because either the current strategy or the current approaches are not working. Some of these opponents argue that the strategy is ineffective because security gains have not in fact led to substantial political and economic progress. Others argue that current approaches on the ground — for example, "offering arms and bribes to Sunni insurgents", a reference to the SOI program — are ineffective at best or even potentially harmful.[471]

Withdrawal According to a Timeline

A second option is to draw down all remaining U.S. forces in Iraq by a set deadline, or in accordance with a set schedule — for example, as some have proposed, by one Brigade Combat Team per month.

Most proponents of this "bring the troops home" option focus on different objectives than the future of Iraq, *per se*. For some of them, the primary objective is simply to end the U.S. commitment in Iraq — on the grounds that the mission simply should not be a top U.S. national priority. This option would meet that objective by definition.

Other proponents of a scheduled withdrawal stress that the U.S. troop and dollar commitments in Iraq are detracting from the United States' ability to prepare to meet other security challenges. Some point in particular to stress on the ground forces — the Army and the Marine Corps — and argue that a near-term draw down would relieve that stress, help guarantee the availability of forces for Afghanistan and other contingencies, and make it easier for the Services to recruit and retain.[472]

A few proponents base their support at least in part on the view that the U.S. troop presence in Iraq — and the antipathy that may be generated by the presence of a *de facto* occupier — could be hindering further progress. They suggest in turn that

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[471] Andrew Bacevich, "Surge to Nowhere," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2008.

[472] In his December 2007 assessment, retired General Barry McCaffrey, who advocates not a complete withdrawal but rather drawing down to 12 BCTs by January 2009, commented that "The Army is starting to unravel," pointing to current recruiting campaigns that are bringing on board "those who should not be in uniform" due e.g. to drug use or criminality; to the loss of mid-career officers and NCOs; and to the "stretched and under-resourced" Reserve Component. See General Barry R. McCaffrey, "After Action Report, Visit Iraq and Kuwait 5-11 December 2007," December 18, 2007, submitted as a Statement for the Record for the HASC O&I Subcommittee hearing on January 16, 2008.

a troop withdrawal could spur progress by encouraging Iraqi leaders to accelerate their own efforts, and international partners to increase their constructive involvement.[473]

One practical advantage of this option is the clarity and certainty it would provide concerning costs, timelines, and requirements. U.S. military planners could plan each step with reasonable fidelity, U.S. diplomats could work well in advance with neighboring countries on access needed to support the withdrawal, and Iraqi leaders and security forces could plan in detail how to adjust.

Some opponents of this option suggest that its deliberateness could prove advantageous to various adversaries in Iraq, who might take advantage of the predictability to target U.S. forces as they redeploy. Other adversaries, with an end to the U.S. force presence and therefore the ability to operate more freely in sight, might choose to lie low in the meantime — making them more difficult to target and leaving the bulk of the challenge for Iraqis to face on their own.

More broadly, some opponents of this option argue that its primary strategic drawback is that it consigns the Iraq mission itself to failure — that Iraqi institutions are simply not ready to assume full responsibility, and so a too-early withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq would be likely to prove destabilizing and could place Iraq's future in jeopardy.[474]

Adjustments to the Mission

A third family of options — theoretically compatible with one another — would refocus the mission in Iraq in one or more directions, while drawing down conventional forces. What is attractive for some about such options, in theory, is that they aspire to the best of all possible worlds — bringing the troops home, reducing costs, and furthering progress in Iraq by continuing, or increasing, the most important current initiatives. As a rule, those who support this option accept the theory of the case that security improvements can open space for political and economic progress, as well as the empirically-based argument that recent approaches have indeed helped improve security in Iraq.

The viability and likely results of these options depends on analysis of which factors, and in what combinations, are responsible for the changes apparent on the ground in Iraq in late 2007 and early 2008.

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[473] See for example Kevin Benson, "Shift the Debate on Iraq from 'When' to 'How'," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, August 12, 2007. Colonel Benson was the lead OIF planner for CFLCC.

[474] For a similar argument, see National Intelligence Estimate, "Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead," January 2007, available at [http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070202_release.pdf], which notes: "If Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this Estimate [12-18 months from publication], we judge t hat this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq."

Emphasize Counter-Terrorism. The first variant of the "adjust the mission" option calls for emphasizing the counter-terrorism effort with a strong SOF presence, backed by sophisticated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets. Commanders on the ground stress, however, that "you can't get Al Qaeda by just using SOF." MNF-I officials note that coalition forces tried the SOF-only approach in Ramadi for four years, but it ultimately proved insufficient. They add that SOF is most effective when it draws on conventional forces' intimate knowledge of local communities, based on the close contacts conventional forces have with ISF, SOIs, and local tribes. Then, following SOF actions, conventional forces play the essential role of "holding" the area, with a strong, visible presence.[475]

Some observers point out that Iraqi security forces, rather than U.S. conventional forces, could be the ones to partner with U.S. SOF — providing the local knowledge and "holding" areas. That suggestion — and thus the strength of this "focus on counter-terrorism" option — would depend on the ability of the ISF to function independently.

Emphasize Iraqi Security Forces Training. Another variant of the "adjust the mission" option calls for focusing on ISF training. In December 2007, for example, retired General Barry McCaffrey proposed strengthening the emphasis on ISF training, and "massively resourcing the creating of an adequate Iraqi Security Force."[476]

The strength of this variant rests in part on how effective an ISF training mission would be in the absence of a sizable U.S. conventional force in Iraq.

One consideration is the extent to which the current ISF training effort relies directly on support from conventional forces. Of course, the 20% of all Transition Teams currently "taken out of hide" rely entirely on conventional forces already serving in Iraq, so this "ISF" variant would presumably have to account for that shortfall. Further, MNSTC-I officials and commanders on the ground note that, in the standard pattern, Transition Teams do draw key resources from the BCTs to which they are attached — such as access to intelligence, logistics support, or augmentation by additional staff.

A second consideration is the extent to which the ISF training effort relies indirectly on the work of conventional forces. Commanders on the ground in Iraq stress the impact that the presence of conventional forces in local communities has made, in terms of both information-gathering and discouraging potential perpetrators of violence. As out-going MND-Baghdad Commander Major General Joseph Fil commented concerning Baghdad: "There's no question that although the incidents of violence are down significantly here, they're down because we have a force

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[475] Conversations with MNF-I leaders and staff, January 2008.

[476] See General Barry R. McCaffrey, "After Action Report, Visit Iraq and Kuwait 5-11 December 2007," December 18, 2007, submitted as a Statement for the Record for the HASC O&I Subcommittee hearing on January 16, 2008.

presence that is almost throughout the city."[477] By their presence, as well as their operations, conventional forces have been providing the ISF with "space" to focus on developing their own capabilities. A withdrawal of U.S. conventional forces could significantly increase the ISF's near-term requirements to conduct operations and provide presence even while they continue to develop.

Emphasize Civilian-Led Governance and Economic Rehabilitation. A third variant of the "adjust the mission" option stresses a strengthened focus on governance and economics — led by civilian agencies and experts, with remaining U.S. forces in a supporting role. In practice, military units in many areas are already playing strong supporting roles in governance and economics (see above, "Military Role in Governance and Economics"). Some observers and commanders on the ground in Iraq underscore the magnitude of the tasks — particularly at the provincial and local levels — and urge a more robust civilian role, particularly as U.S. forces draw down.[478]

The Office of Provincial Affairs suggests that there are no current plans by the Department of State to increase the scope of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) effort inversely as U.S. forces draw down.[479] However, OPA is reportedly considering plans to establish "satellite PRTs" in additional major cities of key provinces, to help push PRT presence down to the municipal as well as the provincial level.[480]

The primary constraint on this "civilian surge" variant is a lack of capacity at the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other civilian agencies.

Another key consideration is whether PRTs could operate in Iraq without a substantial co-located or nearby coalition military presence. The Italian-led PRT in Dhi Qar, which moved to the "provincial Iraqi control" ("PIC", see above, "Provincial Iraqi Control") designation in September 2006, could be one model. The proposed relocation of two PRTs from their "remote" location in Babil province to their "homes" in Karbala and Najaf, both PIC provinces where the coalition force presence is very limited, could also serve as useful test cases.[481]

To assess that question, one general factor to consider is the security situation in a given area — a security force presence may be necessary to "hold" a location for some time after it has been "cleared," to allow space for political and economic work. Even in areas where combat operations are no longer necessary, the mere presence

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[477] Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Joseph Fil, December 17, 2007, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4107].

[478] As one Division Commander put it, as U.S. forces draw down, there will be a need for "increasing enablers," not fewer. Conversation with Division Commander, January 2008.

[479] Conversation with OPA official, January 2008.

[480] Information from PRT officials, February 2008.

[481] Najaf and Karbala, in the MND-Center area of responsibility, are "PIC" — Provincial Iraqi Control — provinces (see above).

of large numbers of forces may continue to play a role for some time in containing potential violence or encouraging steps toward reconciliation. Over time, Iraqi Security Forces may increasingly be able to perform this "hold" function, in place of coalition forces. Another factor is resourcing — including the extent to which the PRTs' higher headquarters, OPA, would be able to support and sustain them in every sense, from transportation and force protection to basic life support.

Additional CRS Reports

For further information about Iraq-related issues, see CRS Report RL31339, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, by Kenneth Katzman; CRS Report RL32105, *Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Stabilization and Reconstruction*, by Christopher Blanchard and Catherine Dale; CRS Report RL31833, *Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance*, by Curt Tarnoff; CRS Report RL33110, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11*, by Amy Belasco; CRS Report RL34278, *FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations for Global War on Terror Military Operations, International Affairs, and Other Purposes*, by Stephen Daggett et. al.; CRS Report RL34362, *Congressional Oversight and Related Issues Concerning the Prospective Security Agreement Between the United States and Iraq*, by Michael John Garcia and R. Chuck Mason; and CRS Report RS22449, *U.S. Forces in Iraq*, by JoAnne O'Bryant and Michael Waterhouse.

Figure 1. Map of Iraq

Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS.