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

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Summary

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the U.S.-led coalition military operation in Iraq, was launched on March 20, 2003, with the immediate stated goal of removing Saddam Hussein's regime and destroying its ability to use weapons of mass destruction or to make them available to terrorists. Over time, the focus of OIF shifted from regime removal to the more open-ended mission of helping the Government of Iraq (GoI) improve security, establish a system of governance, and foster economic development.

In 2009, the war in Iraq appears to be winding down, as security gains made since the height of the insurgency in 2006 and 2007 continue to be sustained, and as Iraqis increasingly seek management of their own affairs. A new U.S.-Iraqi security agreement that went into effect on January 1, 2009, which confirmed the Iraqis' responsibility for their own security, introduced a new era in OIF and in US-Iraqi bilateral relations. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called the agreement a "watershed, a firm indication that American military involvement in Iraq is winding down." U.S. military commanders on the ground have indicated that in most parts of Iraq, the focus of U.S. military efforts has shifted from counterinsurgency (COIN) to stability operations, including advising the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and supporting security, economic, and governance capacity-building. On February 27, 2009, at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, President Obama delivered a speech addressing "how the war in Iraq will end," in which he announced the drawdown of U.S. combat forces by August 2010 and the transition of the rest of the military mission to training and advising Iraq security forces, conducting counter-terrorism operations, and providing force protection for U.S. personnel.

The United States begins this transition from a position of significant commitment – including some 140,000 U.S. troops deployed in Iraq, in addition to civilian experts and U.S. contractors, who provide substantial support to their Iraqi counterparts in the fields of security, governance, and development. Senior U.S. officials, including outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, and Secretary Gates, have suggested that lasting change in Iraq will require substantially more time, and that while the U.S. military presence will diminish, U.S. engagement with Iraq is likely to continue. The Government of Iraq (GoI), for its part, still faces challenges at the operational level, in countering the lingering strands of the insurgency; and at the strategic level, in achieving a single, shared vision of the Iraqi state, and in improving its capacity to provide good governance, ensure security, and foster economic development for the Iraqi people.

Key policy issues the Obama Administration may choose to address, with oversight from the 111th Congress, include identifying how U.S. national interests and strategic objectives, in Iraq and the region, should guide further U.S. engagement; monitoring and evaluating the impact of the changes in the U.S. presence and role in Iraq; and laying the groundwork for a future, more traditional bilateral relationship.

This report is intended to provide background and analysis of current developments and options, and will be updated as events warrant.

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Background

OIF was launched on March 20, 2003. The immediate goal, as stated by the George W. Bush Administration, was to remove Saddam Hussein's regime, including destroying its ability to use

[1] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, January 27, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1337.
[2] President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq" remarks, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, February 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/.
[3] See David Ignatius, "A Farewell Warning on Iraq," *Washington Post*, January 18, 2009; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, January 27, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1337.

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."[4] 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."[5]

After the initial combat operations, the focus of OIF 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. Over time, challenges to the emerging Iraqi leadership from homegrown insurgents and some foreign fighters mounted. Sectarian violence grew, catalyzed by the February 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

In January 2007, in an attempt to reverse the escalation of violence, President Bush announced a new strategic approach, the "New Way Forward," including a "surge" of additional U.S. forces, together with additional civilian experts. The troop surge included five Army brigade combat teams (BCTs), a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and two Marine battalions. More importantly, most observers agree, Ambassador Crocker and the Commanding General of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), General David Petraeus, institutionalized counterinsurgency approaches across the force and the U.S. effort as a whole. Those approaches emphasized population security, empowering the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) through close partnership, and building GoI capacity to govern and foster economic development in order to capitalize on security gains.

Over the course of the surge, observers generally agreed, security conditions on the ground improved markedly. In August 2008, GEN Petraeus agreed that there had been "significant progress" but argued that it was "still not self-sustaining." "We're not celebrating," he commented, and there are "no victory dances in the end zone."[6]

Practitioners and observers have identified a number of factors that may have contributed to the security improvements, including the additional surge forces; new and institutionalized counter-insurgency approaches concerning population security and reconciliation; the application of high-end technological capabilities by Special Operations Forces (SOF) and closer integration between SOF and conventional forces; the accumulated experience of U.S. leaders at all levels after multiple tours in Iraq; the growing numbers and capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces; the ground-up rejection of violence and support for the coalition by many Sunni Arabs; and the ceasefire declared by Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and the abandonment of violence by many of his followers.

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

[4] 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.
[5] 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.
[6] Rod Nordland, "No Victory Dances," interview with General David Petraeus, *Newsweek*, August 21, 2008. On September 16, 2008, GEN Petraeus relinquished command of MNF-I to Army General Raymond Odierno, a former Commanding General of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the operational-level command under MNF-I whose area of responsibility includes all of Iraq. On October 31, 2008, GEN Petraeus assumed command of U.S. Central Command, to which MNF-I reports.

and more subject to qualitative interpretation. OIF appears poised to end with policy decisions by the U.S. and/or Iraqi governments, rather than with a decisive military victory on the battlefield.

Revised U.S.-Iraqi Strategic Partnership

On November 17, 2008, U.S. and Iraqi officials signed two key new agreements, designed to define the terms of their future partnership at the strategic and operational levels. On November 27, the Iraqi parliament voted its support for the two agreements, and on December 4, the Iraqi Presidency Council approved them.[7]

Strategic Framework Agreement and Security Agreement

The first document was the broad Strategic Framework Agreement, designed to provide a basis for future cooperation in multiple fields including diplomacy, culture, economics and energy, health and the environment, information technology, and law enforcement. This Agreement was based broadly on a declaration of principles, signed by President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, on November 27, 2007.[8]

The second document, the Security Agreement, was similar to a status of forces agreement (SOFA). It was the product of a contentious negotiations process that began in spring 2008. It elaborated the terms of the bilateral security partnership at the operational level, and provided the legal basis for the U.S. troop presence in Iraq. When approving the two agreements, the Iraqi parliament made the Security Agreement subject to a popular referendum, scheduled to be held by July 2009. The Agreement went into effect on January 1, 2009, at the expiration of the United Nations mandate that had provided the legal basis for the presence of the multi-national force in Iraq.[9]

Security Agreement Provisions

The Security Agreement underscored both Iraqi sovereignty and the "temporary" nature of the U.S. military presence, and it imposed a number of constraints on the presence and operations of U.S. forces. It provided for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces from Iraqi cities and towns by June 30, 2009, and for the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq by December 31, 2011.[10] This language was a stricter version of earlier drafts that reportedly had provided for time "horizons" or target dates.

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[7] In the United States, the Bush Administration carried out "consultations" with key Members of Congress on the operationally-focused draft agreement. The Administration's stated position was that the document was not a treaty and therefore did not require formal congressional approval.

[8] The formal title of the document is "Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq," and it is available at the White House website, http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SFA.pdf. See also the "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.

[9] The document, formally entitled, "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of their Activities during their Temporary Presence in Iraq," is available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SOFA.pdf. The current UN resolution, UN Security Council Resolution 1790 (2007), December 18, 2007, is available at http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/650/72/PDF/N0765072.pdf?OpenElement.

[10] "SOFA," Article 24, para.1,2.

The Security Agreement stipulated that the United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea or air as a "launching or transit point for attacks against other countries."[11] The Strategic Framework Agreement, which echoed this language, also provided that the United States shall not seek a "permanent military presence" in Iraq. The negotiations process reportedly considered various formulations regarding external threats to Iraq's sovereignty. The agreed language, in the Security Agreement, required bilateral consultations in case of such a threat, but made no other actions compulsory.[12]

The Security Agreement required that U.S. forces coordinate all military operations with Iraqi authorities.[13] It tightly constrained the role of U.S. forces in detaining Iraqis and mandated the transfer of current detainees to Iraqi custody.[14] It also granted Iraq some legal jurisdiction over U.S. servicemembers and defense civilians – specifically, in cases of "grave, premeditated felonies" committed off base and "outside duty status."[15] As senior officials on the ground have underscored, the Security Agreement acknowledged that many of its provisions would require further interpretation. To that end, it established a committee structure to provide implementation guidance.[16]

Drawdown and Transition

On February 27, 2009, at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, President Obama announced "a new strategy to end the war in Iraq through a transition to full Iraqi responsibility."[17] The setting for the speech quietly echoed its theme of transition. U.S. Marines entered Iraq at the start of OIF and helped lead both major combat and counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts. Recently, senior Marine Corps officials have argued that significantly increasing the Marine deployment to Afghanistan will require drawing down in Iraq—"during calendar year 2010."[18]

The President's policy calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces by August 31, 2010. That decision marked the culmination of a comprehensive strategic review of Iraq war efforts that

[11] "SOFA," Article 27, para.3. See also strategic framework agreement, Section 1, para.4.

[12] See "SOFA" Article 27, para 1: "In the event of any external or internal threat or aggression against Iraq that would violate its sovereignty, political independence, or territorial integrity, waters, airspace, its democratic system or its elected institutions, and upon request by the Government of Iraq, the Parties shall immediately initiate strategic deliberations and as may be mutually agreed, the United States shall take appropriate measures, including diplomatic, economic, or military measures, or any other measure, to deter such a threat."

[13] "SOFA," Article 4, para.2.

[14] "SOFA," Article 22.

[15] "SOFA," Article 12, para.1.

[16] The "SOFA" mandates the formation of a Joint Ministerial Committee tasked to address interpretation and implementation of the agreement. That body is tasked to appoint a Joint Military Operations Coordination Committee (JMOCC) to oversee military operations. It is also tasked to appoint a separate Joint Committee—which may in turn appoint Subcommittees—to oversee issues outside the competence of the JMOCC. See "SOFA" Article 23.

[17] President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq" remarks, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, February 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/.

[18] The "2010" timeline is attributed to senior logistics official at U.S. Central Command Terry Moores, in Chelsea J. Carter, "Road Map out of Iraq Takes Shape," *Seattle Times*, March 2, 2009. Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Conway stated in a January 2009 speech, before President Obama's Afghanistan troop increase announcement: "My belief is that by the middle of the year, you'll see a significant number of Marines in Afghanistan. Those must of necessity come from Iraq." See Otto Kreisher, "Marine Commandant Expects Troop Surge in Afghanistan," *National Journal*, January 15, 2009.

President Obama ordered on his first full day in office. Military commanders were reportedly asked to review alternative 16-month, 19-month, and 23-month timeline options for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces. The announced withdrawal timeline will mark 18 months from the time of the announcement, and approximately 19 months from the Inauguration—slightly longer than the 16-month timeline suggested by then-Senator Obama during the presidential campaign.

According to the new policy, after August 2010, the U.S. forces' focus in Iraq will shift to a three-pronged mission: training, equipping, and advising the Iraqi security forces (ISF); conducting targeted counter-terrorism operations; and providing force protection for both civilian and military personnel. That so-called "transitional force" will initially included between 35,000 and 50,000 troops. All remaining U.S. forces are expected to be withdrawn by the end of 2011, in accordance with the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement.

At the time of the announcement, there were approximately 140,000 U.S. troops deployed in Iraq, including 14 Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) or equivalents, as well as a significantly larger number of support forces.[19] On March 8, 2009, Administration officials announced that 12,000 U.S. troops would redeploy from Iraq without replacement by September 2009.[20] Administration officials have suggested that between 10 and 12 BCTs would remain on the ground at the time of Iraq's national elections tentatively planned for the end of 2009.

The key components of the "transitional force" are expected to be "Advise and Assist Brigades" (AABs).[21] Some officials have suggested an initial target figure of six AABs but have noted that the number could be adjusted. Officials have explained that each AAB will be built on the chassis, or foundation, of a BCT, and it will be augmented with capabilities required for the stability operations-focused mission in Iraq, including training and advisory capabilities and significant enablers. Each unit is expected to prepare and train as an organic whole before deploying. AABs are expected to work closely with U.S. civilian counterparts, including Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs); those relationships, including co-location and the degree and kind of support provided to civilian efforts, is likely to vary geographically across Iraq.

The troop withdrawal policy does not imply that no further deployments of U.S. military units to Iraq will take place. Some U.S. units schedule to redeploy from Iraq in the near term will be replaced by fresh U.S. units. In addition, some units may end up serving shorter tours in Iraq than the now-standard 12 months of "boots on the ground."

The drawdown and transition plans are expected to include a consolidation of three key military headquarters in Iraq: Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), the overall strategic-level command currently led by General Raymond Odierno; Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the operational-level command led since April 4, 2009, by Lieutenant General Charles Jacoby and Ft. Lewis-Washington-based I Corps; and Multi-National Security Transition-Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), led by Lieutenant General Frank Helmick. Some officials have suggested that the headquarters consolidation is likely to take place after the Iraqi national elections, but well before the August 2010 transition. The new entity is expected to be significantly smaller in terms of personnel. The

[19] For the purposes of rough calculation, a BCT can be said to include about 3,500 Soldiers. In Iraq, BCT headquarters have sometimes had command of additional units, giving total BCT force sizes of up to 5,000.
[20] Anthony Shadid, "12,000 U.S. Troops to Leave Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2009.
[21] Emily S. Rueb, "Gates Defends Iraq Withdrawal Plan," *New York Times*, March 2, 2009.

consolidation would reflect not only an elimination of redundancy, but also, as one official described it, discretely "choosing not to do some things."[22]

The Obama Administration's drawdown and transition policy was widely considered to reflect a compromise between two broad schools of thought—advocates, respectively, of a relatively gradual or a relatively accelerated drawdown. Many observers have suggested that the policy splits the difference by maintaining a relatively robust force on the ground through the political hurdles of 2009, which preparing to draw U.S. forces down relatively rapidly in 2010.

One school of thought, which included many military commanders, supported a relatively longer timetable.[23] Secretary of Defense Robert Gates acknowledged, "I think that, if the commanders had complete say in this matter, that they would have preferred that the combat mission not end until the end of 2010."[24] One key concern was reportedly a desire to retain a robust force through the Iraqi political hurdles of 2009 to ensure their success and their ability to serve as catalysts of further stabilization. In December 2008, U.S. military commanders reportedly had recommended beginning the drawdown slowly, by withdrawing two BCTs over the first six months of 2009.[25] Before the President's policy announcement, GEN Odierno, MNF-I Commanding General, stated, "I believe that if we can get through the next year peacefully, with incidents about what they are today or better, I think we're getting close to enduring stability, which enables us to really reduce."[26]

Proponents of a gradual approach also argued that it is important to take every remaining opportunity to train, advise, and mentor the Iraqi security forces (ISF). MNSTC-I Commanding General LTG Helmick commented in February 2009 that the ISF still had "a long way to go." He argued that if they continue to focus on logistics—their "Achilles heel"—and there are no major surprises from the enemy, then the ISF could have "a sustained ground capability to fight the insurgency" by the end of 2011.[27]

Some military commanders were also reportedly concerned that any significant drawdown would be complicated and would require substantial time and attention from U.S. military leadership on the ground. They urged delaying the bulk of the drawdown until 2010, to allow MNF-I to focus primarily on its substantive mission in 2009.

The other broad school of thought urged the adoption of a relatively accelerated timeline. Some advocates of an accelerated timeline sought simply to end the U.S. military commitment in Iraq as soon as reasonably possible. Other proponents of this school argued that the U.S. troop presence in Iraq—and the antipathy that might be generated among the Iraqi population by the presence of a de facto occupier—could be hindering further progress. Announced troop

[22] Interviews with MNF-I officials, February, March 2009.
[23] MNF-I officials, Interviews, February 2009.
[24] Remarks by Secretary Gates on *Meet the Press*, cited in Sean Lengell, "Gates: Pullout Timeline Workable," *Washington Times*, March 2, 2009.
[25] See Elisabeth Bummiller and Thom Shanker, "Generals Propose a Timetable for Iraq," *The New York Times*, December 18, 2008; and Elisabeth Bummiller and Thom Shanker, "Military Planners, in Nod to Obama, are Preparing for a Faster Iraq Withdrawal," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2009.
[26] Peter Baker and Alissa J. Rubin, "Obama Seeks Accord with Military on Iraq," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2009. GEN Odierno added, "The longer we go, if we get through the elections, we get closer and closer to not being able to backslide."
[27] Andrew England and Demetri Sevastopulo, "US General Stresses Need for Time," *Financial Times*, February 17, 2009.

withdrawal plans, it was argued, could spur progress by encouraging Iraqi leaders to accelerate their own efforts to assume more responsibility and make progress toward reconciliation, and by urging international partners to increase their constructive involvement.[28] They stressed that it would be particularly helpful to reduce the visible presence of U.S. combat forces before the rest of the political "hurdles" Iraq faces in 2009, to reduce the risk that the U.S. presence might become the target of politically-motivated rhetoric and opposition.[29]

Some accelerated timeline advocates underscored the strain that simultaneous war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed on U.S. military forces—a strain likely to grow as the United States increases troop deployments to Afghanistan in 2009.[30] The high demand for forces for the ongoing U.S. troop commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan has meant, for many servicemembers, repeated deployments, extended deployments, and/or short "dwell times" at home between tours. Military Departments, responsible in accordance with Title 10, U.S. Code, for "organizing, manning, training and equipping" the force, and some key observers, have expressed concerns about the stress these demands have placed, and may continue to place, on the force.[31] Over time, DOD has introduced a series of policies designed to manage that stress—for example, limiting active duty Army deployments to 12 months for those deploying after August 1, 2008.

Some observers from each school of thought have expressed concerns about the Obama Administration policy. At the time of the policy announcement, some Democratic Party leaders in Congress, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, questioned the need for a residual force as large as 50,000 troops.[32] Some gradualists, in turn,

[28] 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.

[29] For example, several days before the January 31, 2009, provincial elections, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki told a political rally that he believed that the timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq "will be brought forward," earlier than the deadline specified in the security agreement. See Robert H. Reid, "Iraqi Leader Predicts Faster U.S. Withdrawal," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 27, 2009.

[30] On February 17, 2009, President Obama announced approval of DOD requests to deploy approximately 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan. Those troops were scheduled to include the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), from Camp Lejeune, NC, in late spring; the 5th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from Ft. Lewis, WA, in mid-summer; and approximately 5,000 enablers. See President Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Afghanistan," The White House, February 17, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-Afghanistan/; and DOD News Releases, "DoD Announces Afghanistan Troop Deployment," February 17, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12493. Two further troop increases had previously been approved: the deployment of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, which took place in January and February 2009; and the deployment of the combat aviation brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, who began deploying in March 2009. On March 27, 2009, announcing the new U.S. Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, President Obama stated that an additional 4,000 U.S. troops would deploy to Afghanistan to train and advise the Afghan National Security Forces.

[31] In a December 2007 assessment, retired General Barry McCaffrey advocated a reduction in the U.S. deployment to Iraq – down to 12 BCTs by January 2009 – due to stress on the force. He 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.

[32] Speaker Pelosi commented, "I don't know what the justification is for …a presence of 50,000 troops in Iraq." See Emily S. Rueb, "Gates Defends Iraq Withdrawal Plan," *New York Times*, March 2, 2009. When the White House provided a pre-briefing to Congressional leaders, ahead of the public announcement of the new policy, Majority Leader Reid noted, "I am happy to listen to the Secretary of Defense, the President, but when they talk about 50,000, that's a (continued...)

urged the Administration to remain flexible about the timeline in execution, cautioning that "it cannot be carried out rigidly" and urging a readiness to "slow the pace next year if necessary."[33]

Current Strategic and Operational Dynamics

The Obama Administration announced its Iraq transition policy, and the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement came into force, against a backdrop of ongoing strategic-level challenges to the Government of Iraq, and multiple operational-level transitions in the counter-insurgency effort.

Current Strategic Dynamics: Tests and "Spoilers"

Most observers agree that the GoI faces several major tests in 2009. These began with the provincial elections held in most parts of the country on January 31, 2009, and are also scheduled to include district-level elections in June; a national referendum on the security agreement in July; and national-level elections at the end of the year. These events carry some risk of unrest, but, many observers contend, should these hurdles be cleared safely and successfully, they might serve to further catalyze the consolidation of the Iraqi state.

In addition, the GoI still faces several persistent strategic challenges – potential "spoilers" – that could disrupt not only security conditions on the ground but also progress toward a unified and stable Iraq.

One major challenge, increasingly prominent in 2009, is a portfolio of tensions and competing claims in "the north," particularly between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs. The set of related issues includes resolving the political status of the multi-ethnic and oil-rich city of Kirkuk, together with other "disputed territories" along the Green Line that divides the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) from the rest of Iraq.[34] The problems are complicated by the forced resettlement policies of Saddam's regime, which moved Kurds out of their homes and resettled Arabs in those areas; and by Kurdish efforts in the post-Saddam era to reclaim those areas. Further, the KRG and GoI continue to dispute the proper dispensation of oil revenues generated by the areas rich oil reserves. While Kirkuk city itself has been relatively calm, coalition and Iraqi officials in Kirkuk have noted with concern that outside players with strong vested interests, including ethnically based Iraqi political parties, and Turkey-based supporters of Iraqi Turkmen, sometimes use inflammatory language to stir up tensions in the city.[35] Elsewhere, violence has flared—in 2008, Iraqi security forces skirmished with KRG *peshmerga* forces in the restive town of Khanaquin, in

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little higher number than I had anticipated." See Major Garrett, "Obama Sets 2010 Timetable for Iraq Withdrawal," *Fox News*, February 26, 2009.

[33] See Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Iraq's Year of Living Dangerously," *New York Times*, February 26, 2009.

[34] In a recent interview, the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, asked about his biggest worry for the future of Iraq, stated: "If I had to choose which one keep me awake at night, it is the disputed areas, because tension between Arabs and Kurds." See Monte Morin and Tina Susman, "16 Killed in Suicide Attack in Northern Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 2009.

[35] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, and with the Governor of at Ta'amin province (of which Kirkuk is the capital), August 2008. U.S. commanders describe a summer 2008 visit to Kirkuk by the Iraqi Minister of Defense, who was reportedly surprised to discover, in contrast to information he had received, that there were not "two Kurdish *pesh merga* divisions" in Kirkuk.

Diyala province, on the GoI side of the Green Line.[36] The year 2009 is likely to prove pivotal in this ongoing set of debates. UNAMI is expected to present a comprehensive set of recommendations for resolving tensions in the north, as a basis for discussion. Provincial elections, held elsewhere on January 31, 2009, remain to be scheduled for At Ta'amin province, which includes Kirkuk.

A second major challenge concerns how effectively Sunni Arabs, are incorporated socially, economically, and politically into the Iraqi polity. Sunni Arabs, who are concentrated in western and central Iraq, were a disproportionately privileged minority under Saddam's rule but lost much of that status after regime change. The provincial elections held on January 31, 2009, marked a positive step, by increasing Sunni Arab political representation at the provincial level. A particular concern is the ongoing integration of members of the Sons of Iraq (SoI) "community watch" program. A majority of the SoIs were Sunni Arabs—including some former insurgents—and key Shiite officials in the GoI were long wary of the SoI program. On October 1, 2008, the GoI began assuming responsibility for the SoIs, including paying their salaries, and this transition was expected to be completed by April 2009.

The integration of former SoIs into the Iraqi security forces and civilian jobs has proceeded very slowly, and participants have reported serious delays in the payment of salaries. Some practitioners and observers have expressed concerns about the possible security repercussions if the GoI were to shut down the program, cease paying salaries, or fail to secure alternative employment for the SoIs.[37] More seriously still, SoIs have reported a "campaign of arrests" against their members by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), in Baghdad and Diyala provinces. In late March 2009, the detention of a key SoI leader in Baghdad by the ISF led to localized armed clashes, the detention of scores of SoIs, and the GoI decision to disband that SoI group.[38]

A third major challenge is the potential for violence in "the south," home to a long-standing and growing competition for power and resources between well-established Shiite political factions backed by militias that have sometimes used violence, and also to tribal Shi'a who may be beginning to find a public voice. Against that volatile backdrop in southern Iraq, both U.S. and Iraqi officials remain concerned about Iranian interventions—economic, social, and sometimes "military" in the form of the provision of lethal aid and sponsorship of proxies including Asa'ib al-Haq and Ketaib Hezbollah.[39] Tensions in the south have the potential to be exacerbated by elections, and also by potential drives to form multi-provincial "regions" that would enjoy special access to authorities and resources.

Current Operational Dynamics: Transitions

By the start of 2009, several major but uneven transitions were underway at the operational level in Iraq. First, the substantial security improvements achieved over the course of the "surge" had further deepened, with some fluctuations during combat operations in 2008 in specific parts of

[36] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.1.

[37] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August and October 2008, and February 2009.

[38] See Ned Parker and Caesar Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq Movement Suffers Another Blow," *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2009; and Rod Nordland, "Rebellious Sunni Council Disarmed After Clashes, Officials in Baghdad Say," *New York Times*, March 30, 2009.

[39] Interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials in Baghdad, Najaf, Diwaniyah, Basra; with UK officials in Basra; and with Iraqi officials in Najaf, Diwaniyah, Basra, 2008 and 2009.

Iraq, and some remaining insurgent activity, particularly in north central Iraq.[40] In March 2009, the outgoing Commanding General of MNC-I, LTG Austin, characterized the overall situation this way: "We are close to sustainable security but we're not there yet."[41] Concerning the restive north, LTG Austin commented that the problems in Iraq's third-largest city Mosul, in Ninewah province, could still "put us off track and cause violence to really reignite in a greater way."[42] East-central Diyala province, along the Iranian border, with its volatile mix of Kurds, and both Shi'a and Sunni Arabs, also remained a potential flashpoint. Second, accordingly, the focus of U.S. military operations shifted toward stability operations in the south and west, with greater remaining emphasis on COIN in north-central Iraq.

Third, the operational capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued to grow, reflected in—and catalyzed by—ISF operational experiences in 2008 in Basra, Sadr City, Amarah, Mosul, and Diyala. According to U.S. commanders, the March 2008 ISF operations in Basra, targeting Shiite militias, were poorly planned and required a strong rescue effort by coalition forces. The August 2008 operations in Diyala, targeting affiliates of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), were planned by the Iraqis in advance but still required coalition forces to provide enablers and to help hold areas once they were cleared.[43]

A fourth transition was a growth in 2008 in formal Government of Iraq (GoI) security responsibility, antedating the Security Agreement, as additional provinces transitioned to "provincial Iraqi control" (PIC). In practice, PIC arrangements varied from province to province but as a rule gave the GoI lead security responsibility—and practice exercising that responsibility—and mandated increased coordination of coalition operations and activities with the GoI.[44] Fifth, as the ISF's basic capabilities improved, the coalition's approaches to training and partnering with the ISF evolved substantially though unevenly across Iraq. In terms of substance, many embedded "transition teams" shifted their training focus away from basic "move, shoot, and communicate" skills, toward more advanced skills including staff functions and the use of enablers. In terms of organization, the use of various forms of unit-to-unit partnering, which allows advising by example as well as by instruction, and complements the work of transition teams, grew substantially.

Sixth, by early 2009, MNF-I was a far less "multi-national" force than in the past. By the end of 2008, most remaining coalition partner countries had brought their deployments in Iraq to a close. Major redeployments in late 2008 included the 2,000-strong Georgian contingent; the Poles, who had led Multi-National Division-Center South; and the South Koreans, who had led Multi-National Division-Northeast. Faced with the expiration of the UN mandate authorizing the multi-national force in Iraq, several coalition partners—the United Kingdom, Australia, and Romania—each signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the GoI, providing a new legal basis for the

[40] Interviews with MNF-I officials, August and September 2008, and February 2009, and "Security Incidents" slides, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, January 31, 2009.

[41] Anne Gearan, "U.S. General Says No Further Withdrawals Planned," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2009.

[42] Associated Press, "Al Qaida Stronghold of Mosul is proving a Security Nightmare," *Arizona Daily Star*, March 10, 2009.

[43] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[44] Interviews with commanders serving under MNF-I, August 2008. As of December 2008, 13 of Iraq's 18 provinces had transitioned to PIC. PIC provinces and their dates of designation included 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; Qadisiyah, July 2008; Anbar, September 2008; Babil, October 2008; Wasit, October 2008.

presence of their troops, but each of their mandates is set to expire on July 31, 2009. Seventh, the geographical focus of U.S. forces in Iraq shifted somewhat from north to south, as U.S. forces assumed some battlespaces in the south previously held by coalition partner forces.[45] On March 31, 2009, the Multi-National Division-Center absorbed UK-led Multi-National Division-Southeast, to form the new Multi-National Division-South, under U.S. command, with responsibility for nine provinces.[46]

Eighth and finally, as civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) grew, they increasingly took the lead in some efforts formerly spearheaded by the U.S. military. In some cases, including Najaf and Karbala provinces, PRTs operated without a significant nearby U.S. forces presence. Nevertheless, the military's extensive presence on the ground at district and local levels, compared with the limited number of U.S. civilian experts, meant that in practice, the military continued to play a strong "supporting" role in helping Iraqis develop civil capacity.

Diminishing U.S. Leverage

Meanwhile, U.S. practitioners in Iraq, both civilian and military, have suggested that the appetite of GoI officials to be mentored, advised, or guided by U.S. officials—and thus the leverage that the U.S. government is able to exercise – is diminishing. In 2008, as Iraqi civilian and military capacity and capabilities grew, and as Iraqi confidence in those capabilities increased, GoI officials demonstrated growing assertiveness and less inclination to consult with U.S. officials before taking action.[47] That approach was manifested, for example, in the decision by Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki to launch military operations in Basra in March 2008, and the GoI's unilateral decision to assume full responsibility for Sons of Iraq in fall 2008. Most practitioners and observers expect that U.S. leverage is likely to diminish further in 2009, under the new sovereignty regime and as the U.S. presence decreases.

Future Strategic Considerations

President Obama's drawdown and transition policy charts a new strategic course but also raises several questions about the future U.S.-Iraqi relationship. At the same time, OIF experiences as a whole raise additional strategic questions about U.S. Government preparations to undertake future complex contingencies.

Clarifying and Updating U.S. Interests and Strategic Objectives

Announcing the drawdown and transition policy, President Obama stated that the goal is "an Iraq that is sovereign, stable and self-reliant." To that end, the President added, the United States would:

- Work to promote an Iraqi government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe haven to terrorists;

[45] See Sudarsan Raghavan, "U.S. Takes Control of Basra Base," *Washington Post,"* April 1, 2009.
[46] See "MND-C, MND-SE Operating Areas Combine to Create MND-South," MNF-I press release, April 1, 2009, available at http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25981&Itemid=128.
[47] Interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials, Baghdad, August 2008.

- Help Iraq build new ties of trade and commerce with the world; and
- Forge a partnership with the people and government of Iraq that contributes to the peace and security of the region."[48]

Under that broad rubric, as the U.S. role in Iraq transitions, it might be useful to confirm key U.S. national interests regarding Iraq, and the crucial strategic objectives that, at a minimum, it is important for the United States to achieve to support those interests. Such broad objectives might address the following elements:

- U.S. interests in Iraq's domestic political arrangements. Some might argue that a democratic or broadly representative and inclusive Iraqi polity is essential as a key to Iraq's stability, while others might argue that the nature of Iraq's domestic political arrangements is much less important than simply a unified and stable Iraq.
- U.S. interests in Iraq's role in the fight against global terrorist networks. Some might argue that the most important goal is simply ensuring that Iraq does not serve as a safe haven for terrorists. Others might stress the importance of active intelligence-sharing by Iraq with the United States. Still others might argue that it is in U.S. interests that Iraq couple the counter-terrorism skills it is currently developing as part of its domestic counter-insurgency effort, with expeditionary capabilities, so that it could participate in future regional counter-terrorist activities.
- U.S. interests in the regional balance of power. Some might argue that Iraq's strength, relative to that of its neighbors, is important. Others might simply stress the importance of an absence of conflict—that is, as a long-stated U.S. goal puts it, an "Iraq at peace with its neighbors."

Furthermore, it may prove judicious to update the formulation of U.S. strategic objectives as the U.S. mission and presence in Iraq change and results of those changes are assessed. In his policy announcement, President Obama stressed that the situation in Iraq remains dynamic and challenging: "But let there be no doubt – Iraq is not yet secure, and there will be difficult days ahead. Violence will continue to be a part of life in Iraq."[49]

Applying Strategic Leverage

As the Iraqi appetite for accepting guidance and advice from international partners continues to wane, U.S. policy makers may wish to reassess how the U.S. government might most effectively apply political, economic, and security "levers" to help shape Iraq's transformation into a stable and prosperous state. One challenge is an apparent mismatch in Iraq between those who are most susceptible to leverage and those making key decisions. Iraqi warfighting commanders, as a rule, recognize the extent to which they rely on U.S. military enablers, and remain eager for a continuation of U.S. support. At the same time, Iraqi political leaders—those who make the

[48] President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq" remarks, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, February 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/.

[49] President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq" remarks, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, February 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/.

decisions—tend toward overconfidence in the capabilities of Iraqi security forces, and a less urgent sense of the need for close mil-to-mil partnership with the United States.

Shaping a Long-Term U.S. Relationship with Iraq

Another strategic consideration concerns the kind of long-term partnership the United States wants to have with Iraq, including the traditional panoply of diplomatic and economic as well as security ties, and the kind of U.S. presence in Iraq that would be required to support such a relationship. On January 27, 2009, Secretary Gates told the Senate and House Armed Services Committees that "…we should still expect to be involved in Iraq on some level for many years to come."[50] One particular challenge for both states may prove to be the cultural or psychological adjustment from an essentially paternalistic relationship to a partnership on equal footing.

In the security field, decisions about the shape of that future partnership could suggest different possible forms for a future U.S. presence. In theory, one option would be establishing permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, to support broader U.S. policy in the region, possibly on the model of those in Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Italy. Kurdish leaders have reportedly long proposed a permanent U.S. military presence in northern Iraq. However, the "permanent basing" option does not appear to enjoy support from the Obama Administration, Members of Congress, or from the Government of Iraq as a whole. A presence of U.S. forces beyond December 2011 would require revisiting and amending the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement.

Another option would be a particularly robust U.S. Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), responsible for some combination of training, advising, and mentoring Iraqi security forces, and helping build 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 Commanding General of U.S. Central Command. One possible model might be the U.S. Military Training Mission to Saudi Arabia, which operates on the basis of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and serves to train, advise, and assist the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces.

Defining U.S. Policy Toward Iranian Intervention in Iraq

According to U.S. and Iraqi officials, Iraq, particularly in the south, continues to face a potential threat from Shi'a Iraqi proxy groups trained by Iran's Quds forces, and other forms of lethal aid from Iran.[51] In March 2009, U.S. forces reportedly shot down an Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle over Iraqi territory, in eastern Diyala province.[52] Meanwhile, Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) is in the process of shifting its focus somewhat from north to south in Iraq, including relocating a Division headquarters to Basra and increasing the U.S. troop presence in southern Iraq as coalition partner troops withdraw or draw down. According to U.S. military commanders on the

[50]Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, January 27, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1337. On September 10, 2008, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, he stated that "... we should expect to be involved in Iraq for many years to come, although in changing and increasingly limited ways." See Robert M. Gates, Statement before the House Armed Services Committee, September 10, 2008.

[51] Interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials, Baghdad, August 2008, and with Iraqi civilian and military officials, August 2008.

[52] Anthony Shadid, "U.S. Downed Iranian Drone Over Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2009.

ground, the growing U.S. footprint in southern Iraq is not likely to be lost on Iran.[53] Any such Iranian concerns might be exacerbated by the growing U.S. forces presence across Iran's eastern border, in Afghanistan.

It is not clear to what extent U.S. "Iran policy" factors in current and potential Iranian activities in southern Iraq. In the context of growing potential for low-level U.S. military confrontations—"shadow-boxing"—with Iranian proxies in southern Iraq, as the U.S. force presence in that area grows, it may be important to consider scenarios in which tactical-level developments might escalate into strategic-level concerns.

Assessing the Implications of OIF Lessons for the Future of the Force

How Military Departments fulfill their Title 10 responsibilities to organize, man, train, and equip the force – how they make decisions about endstrength and capabilities required—may depend in part 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; and what closer operational integration between Special Operations Forces and conventional forces might suggest about the most effective division of labor between them.

President Obama's drawdown and transition policy for Iraq has pressed the Army, in particular, to address the question of how and whether to institutionalize key capabilities developed, often through trial and error, for use during OIF. The policy calls for the deployment to Iraq, by mid-2010, of Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs). According to DOD officials, AABs are to be built on the chassis of existing BCTs and augmented as necessary with capabilities appropriate for the new stability operations mission in Iraq.

The near-term requirement to prepare and deploy such units does not resolve a more fundamental question – how permanent should AABs be? In theory, for potential future contingencies, the Army could simply plan to use and adapt its standard force structure to meet new requirements as they arise, or it could dedicate resources to establish a standing capacity of some kind.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has underscored that "…building the security capacity of other nations through training and equipping programs has emerged as a core and enduring military requirement,"[54] suggesting the need to institutionalize such capabilities. Dr. John Nagl has proposed one possible institutional solution – creating a permanent, standing Advisory Corps of 20,000 combat advisors, which would be organized, equipped, educated and trained to develop host nation security forces.[55]

[53] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, August 2008. Furthermore, it is conceivable that the planned increase in U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan, across Iran's eastern border, may magnify the sense of uneasiness of some Iranian leaders.

[54] See Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, Washington DC, July 15, 2008, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1262.

[55] John Nagl, *Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for an Army Advisor Corps*, Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, June 2007.

Meanwhile, some officials suggest that Army leaders remain reluctant to make permanent changes to the Army's force structure, not least because such changes could mean assuming increased risk in more traditional areas of warfighting. The Army has advocated, as a substitute for "AAB," the term Brigade Enabled for Stability Operations (BESO).[56] In March 2009, the Army announced that new BESOs would deploy from Fort Bliss, TX, to Iraq and Afghanistan later in the year. BESOs, Army officials stressed, would not depart radically from the familiar BCT construct—they would "remain full-spectrum capable," and would be "…a matter of augmentation … slight modifications to gain skill sets."[57]

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. Drawing conclusions, however, is not simple. 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 (given the great variation in troop commitment and equipment over time) to use to represent the effort. Recent DOD guidance documents—including DOD Directive 3000.07 "Irregular Warfare IW" issued on December 1, 2008, which stated that "it is DoD policy to recognize that IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare"; the 2008 *National Defense Strategy*; and the 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report*—all suggested a relatively strong future DOD emphasis on capabilities required for complex contingencies like Iraq and Afghanistan.[58]

Applying OIF Lessons to Interagency Coordination

A further strategic consideration concerns how lessons are drawn from OIF regarding U.S. government coordination in complex contingencies, including decision-making, planning and execution.[59] 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 experiences concerns the decision-making process about whether to go to war and if so, how to do so. Key issues include the rigor of the inter-agency

[56] Charmingly but surely unintentionally, the word "beso" means "kiss" in Spanish.

[57] Kris Osborn, "New U.S. Army Unit Adds Stability-Ops Troops," *Defense News*, March 10, 2009.

[58] See Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf; and Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* , January 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2009/QRMFinalReport_v26Jan.pdf

[59] For an overview of the interagency reform debates, see CRS Report RL34455, *Organizing the U.S. Government for National Security: Overview of the Interagency Reform Debates*, by (name redacted), (name redacted), and (name redacted). On the role of DOD in foreign assistance activities, including security forces training and reconstruction activities, see CRS Report RL34639, *The Department of Defense Role in Foreign Assistance: Background, Major Issues, and Options for Congress*, by (name redacted) et al. On the capabilities of U.S. government civilian agencies, see CRS Report RL32862, *Peacekeeping/Stabilization and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on the Civilian Response/Reserve Corps and other Civilian Stabilization and Reconstruction Capabilities*, by (name re dacted) and (name redacted).

debates, the effectiveness of the provision of "best military advice" to key decision-makers, and the thoroughness of congressional oversight in general.[60]

Another set of questions raised by OIF concerns balancing roles, responsibilities, resources, and authorities among U.S. government agencies to support implementation of activities required in complex contingencies—such as security forces training, local governance work, and economic reconstruction.[61] In security forces training, OIF experiences included several different patterns for the distribution of responsibilities between the Departments of Defense and State. In OIF, governance and economic reconstruction work, in turn, have been carried out by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), by civilian U.S. government agencies operating separately from PRTs, and by military units—not always in close conjunction with one another.[62] Based in part on OIF experiences, many observers have concluded that the capacity of U.S. Government civilian agencies, including deployable capabilities, should be enhanced; and that the modalities for coordinating and integrating civilian and military efforts in the field should be improved.

Future Operational Considerations

The President's drawdown and transition announcement left open a number of operational issues that U.S. practitioners, policy makers, and Members of Congress may wish to consider.

How Much Help Is Enough?

The Obama Administration transition policy generally calls for a diminishing U.S. government role in Iraq, but senior U.S. civilian and military officials on the ground are likely to continue to

[60] President Obama's Presidential Policy Directive-1 (PPD-1), which describes the organization of the national security system and replaced the George W. Bush Administration's National Security Presidential Directive-1 (NSPD-1), includes several measures that apparently aim at instilling greater rigor. For example, the National Security Advisor is specifically instructed to carry out key support functions for the sessions of the National Security Council (NSC) "in a timely manner." In turn, in supporting the sessions of the NSC Deputies Committee, the Deputy National Security Advisor is tasked to ensure that all papers for discussion "fully analyze the issues, fairly and adequately set out the facts, consider a full range of views and options, and satisfactorily assess the prospects, risks, and implications of each." See Presidential Policy Directive-1, "Organization of the National Security System," February 13, 2009, available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/ppd/ppd-1.pdf.

[61] The war in Afghanistan has raised a similar set of concerns, but it has offered a different set of empirical models for consideration. In Afghanistan, U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are almost exclusively military organizations, led by an Air Force or Navy officer and reporting up a military chain of command. U.S. Government civilian agencies – particularly the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – have deployed experts to serve in key positions with both PRTs, and Division- and Brigade-sized task forces, but until 2009, the number of civilian experts was small. See CRS Report R40156, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted).

[62] The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Armed Services Committee hosted a series of hearings about PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the potential implications for future U.S. inter-agency coordination and organization. See House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, "Agency Stovepipes vs. Strategic Agility: Lessons We Need to Learn from Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, April 2008, available at http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/Reports/PRT_Report.pdf. 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, No. 07-34, September 2007. See also Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, "Evaluating Iraq's Provincial Reconstruction Teams While Drawdown Looms: a USIP Trip Report," United States Institute of Peace, December 2008.

face myriad small choices about exactly how much support to provide, in various circumstances, to their host nation partners.

During the formal occupation of Iraq, from 2003 to 2004, the coalition was responsible for all facets of Iraqi public life. In the early post-occupation days, the coalition's general approach was to do everything possible to get Iraqi institutions up and running, limited primarily by resources and personnel available to implement the efforts. As Iraqi capacity grew, the role of Iraqi civilian and military officials and institutions shifted, to various degrees, from sharing responsibilities to leading, with some support or back-up from the coalition.

By 2008, U.S. civilian and military officials in Iraq were seriously discussing a fundamental question: how much U.S. help is enough? The debates addressed both the U.S. military's relationship with the Iraqi Security Forces, and U.S. government civilian expert assistance provided through Provincial Reconstruction Teams and at the national level.

A number of U.S. officials, both civilian and military, argued that, in the words of one military commander, "it's time to take the training wheels off," that it is okay to "let the Iraqis fail." Taking a step back, they argued, is not only a key to reducing the U.S. commitment over time—it may also be the best way to reduce the risk of Iraqi dependence on U.S. help, and to encourage Iraqis to assume more responsibility and to learn to solve problems themselves. One former brigade commander in Iraq, from this school of thought, argued, "It's time to let go," and added the observation: "The coalition has a very difficult time having the restraint and discipline to refrain from intervening."[63]

Some officials countered that, given the shrinking U.S. presence as U.S. forces draw down, and the diminishing Iraqi appetite to be advised and mentored, it is important to facilitate the growth of Iraqi capacity as much as possible while the window of opportunity is still open.[64]

Further Troop Drawdowns

President Obama's drawdown and transition policy prescribes the withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of August 2010, and the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement mandates that all U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2011. Further, in March 2009, the Obama Administration announced plans to withdraw a total of 12,000 U.S. troops from Iraq by September 2009.

Within those parameters, remaining key remaining decisions include:

- When, before the end of August 2010, to transition the U.S. force presence in each geographic area of Iraq from combat troops to Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs).

[63] Colonel Dominic J. Caraccilo, who led a brigade in the Mahmudiyah area south of Baghdad, quoted in Larry Kaplow, "The Last Day of the War," *Newsweek*, January 12, 2009. See also "Marine Commander Says Iraq Pullout in 16 Months 'Doable'," National Journal, February 24, 2009, based on an interview with Marine Major General John Kelly at the completion of his tour as Multi-National Force-West Commanding General, who stressed that leaving too slowly could keep the ISF from taking control.

[64] Interviews with MNFI officials, January and February 2009.

- How large of a residual transition force, between roughly 35,000 and 50,000 troops, to leave in Iraq after August 31, 2010.
- How quickly to draw down the residual force between August 2010 and the end of 2011.
- Whether the basic parameters of the Obama policy timeline, including the August 2010, could be adjusted, should changing circumstances on the ground appear to make that advisable.

Future of the Iraqi Security Forces Training Mission

Supporting the development of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) is a critical focus of U.S. military operations in Iraq. Counterinsurgency (COIN) theory emphasizes the importance of conducting operations "by, with and through" host nation forces; and helping to build such forces when their capacity or capabilities are not adequate. From the outset, the organization and focus of the coalition's efforts to train, equip, and mentor the ISF varied across the battlespace of Iraq, depending on the conditions on the ground, the level of development of the locally based ISF, and the availability of coalition forces for training missions. A key operational consideration, looking ahead, is how to accomplish the ISF training mission as U.S. forces draw down and AABs are established.

Transition Teams

The "standard" approach to training the ISF has been the use of embedded "transition teams" that typically live and work with a host nation unit. One key point of variation over time has been the size of these teams. Transition teams working with the Iraqi Army, for example, typically included between 11 and 15 members, depending on the size of the Iraqi unit they embedded with. In practice, however, the numbers have varied—for example, in western Anbar province, Multi-National Force-West (MNF-W), led by U.S. Marines, consistently used larger teams, with between 30 and 40 members.[65] One key development over time, in the view of U.S. commanders on the ground and many experts, has been an overall improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the transition teams—in part a reflection of standardization and improvements in the training "pipelines" used by the Military Departments to produce the trainers.[66]

In 2008, as the basic operational capabilities of the ISF grew, the use of embedded transition teams shifted toward higher-level ISF headquarters, including brigades and divisions. The substantive efforts of the teams also shifted, from basic skills like patrolling to leadership and enablers. For example, teams working with the Iraqi Army increased their focus on staff functions and logistics, and teams working with the Iraqi Police increased the emphasis on specialized skills like forensics. In effect, transition teams work themselves out of a job, as their host nation partner unit improves.

[65] Interviews with MNC-I, MNSTC-I, and MNF-I subordinate commands including MNF-W, August 2008.

[66] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commands, August 2008. In the view of many experts, one issue shaping the quality of the transition teams has been individual incentive to serve on such teams, based on the degree to which promotion boards favorably regard such service. Some DOD officials note that the incentives, based on personnel rules, are improving, while some practitioners note anecdotally that training missions tend not to be as highly regarded as more traditional combat assignments.

The U.S. military may not, in every case, have the full spectrum of skills required to staff all types of embedded teams. While logistics experts in the U.S. military are well-placed to share that expertise with Iraqi Army counterparts, U.S. Military Police (MPs) generally do not have the requisite specialized policing skills and have thus relied on collaboration with civilian International Police Advisors, who have been in short supply.

Unit Partnering

In addition to transition teams, coalition forces throughout Iraq have made substantial use of various forms of "unit partnering," in which coalition maneuver units work side-by-side with Iraqi units of equal or larger size. Commanders on the ground have stressed the value of unit partnership, as a complement to the use of embedded teams, as an effective way to "show" rather than just "tell" ISF unit leaders how they might most effectively organize their headquarters, lead their troops, and manage staff functions.[67] Unit partnership has not been envisaged as a permanent arrangement – any individual unit partnership has been designed to be temporary, a catalyst to the development of that Iraqi unit.

As conditions permitted, commanders extended unit partnering beyond the Iraqi Army to Ministry of the Interior (MoI) forces, including the Iraqi Police and the Department of Border Enforcement. That outreach to the MoI was initially more common in Multi-National Division-Center, south of Baghdad, and in Multi-National Force-West in Anbar, than in Multi-National Division-North, which was still actively engaged in combat operations, together with ISF counterparts, in Diyala and Ninewah provinces, in late 2008.

Capacity-Building

Coalition forces have also provided substantial support to the "capacity-building" of the key security institutions of the Government of Iraq—the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Counter-Terrorism Bureau. This support, led by the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), part of MNF-I, has included mentoring Iraqi senior leaders in leadership and management skills, as well as providing technical assistance to ministry personnel.

Coalition officials have stressed the growing importance of maximizing such capacity-building efforts while Iraqis are still receptive to receiving such training. With appropriate leadership skills, they argued, Iraqi senior leaders in the security sector could make substantially greater and more effective contributions to the development of the ISF, gradually reducing the need for U.S. advice and support. Coalition commanders have also underscored the importance of utilizing the right U.S. and coalition personnel for the mission, including senior "mentors" with enough leadership experience and stature to carry weight with their Iraqi counterparts.[68]

[67] Interviews with MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[68] Interviews with MNF-I and MNSTC-I officials, August 2008. For example, some argue, a U.S. Army Colonel simply has not held high enough leadership positions within his own Department of Defense to be an appropriate advisor to an Iraqi Minister.

ISF Training and Advising Under Transition

The Obama transition policy for Iraq underscores the importance of the ISF training and advisory effort, naming it one of the three missions of the U.S. transition force from August 2010 forward. The increasingly smaller U.S. military footprint and the reduction in senior U.S. military leadership in Iraq could complicate that mission somewhat.

One issue may be the ability of the U.S. AABs, spaced thinly across Iraq, to continue to provide ISF counterparts with key enablers, such as logistics; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR); and the ability to call in close air support (CAS). On the other hand, over time, ISF units are expected to rely increasingly on their own capabilities for such support.

A related issue may be the ability of AABs to continue the practice of providing mentorship through close relationships with equivalent Iraqi units. For example, under MNC-I, Multi-National Divisions (MND) were often able to provide a BCT to partner full-time with an Iraqi Army (IA) Division based in the same province; and MND Commanding Generals themselves developed close relationships with their IA counterparts. One option, under the AAB footprint, might be a transition from a relationship of "partnership" to one of "liaison" with less senior U.S. officers.

Future of the U.S. Forces Footprint

The U.S.-Iraqi security agreement requires that all U.S. combat forces withdraw from Iraqi "cities, villages, and localities" no later than the time when the ISF assume security responsibility in the relevant province, and in any case no later than June 30, 2009. By early 2009, many U.S. forces had already pulled out of major urban areas, consolidating at large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and handing over to the ISF the responsibility to provide continual presence.[69] The Obama drawdown and transition policy, including the planned withdrawal without replacement of 12,000 U.S. troops by September 2009, might serve to accelerate this shift.

This dynamic marks a sharp departure from a basic premise of COIN in Iraq. Top U.S. commanders in Iraq long argued that "living where we work" is what made the counter-insurgency effort a success. This phrase refers to establishing a security presence in cities and towns, including small command outposts of U.S. forces, and Joint Security Stations that include both U.S. and various Iraqi forces. That presence, commanders have noted, allowed ongoing collaboration between U.S. and Iraqi forces, making those partnerships more effective, and it facilitated frequent interaction with the local population, building trust and confidence. In 2008, before the terms of the U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement were finalized, U.S. commanders generally favored "thinning" the ranks in cities and towns over time – that is, using a progressively lighter but still dispersed U.S. footprint, as the ISF gradually assumed responsibility for providing the "presence" in each area.

[69] For example, in December 2008, Major General Mark Hertling, then-Commanding General of Multi-National Division-North, noted that most U.S. forces in his area had already moved outside cities, with some exceptions, for example the city of Mosul, "where they have combat outposts throughout the city because there is still a significant fight against al Qaeda in that city." See Major General Mark Hertling, DOD News Briefing, December 8, 2008. See also Ernesto Londono, "U.S. Prepares to Hand Over Baghdad Base," *Washington Post*, December 25, 2008. For specific examples of FOB closures, see Richard Tomkins, "U.S. Starts to Leave Key Iraq Bases," *Washington Times*, February 23, 2009.

Looking ahead, one option is that some U.S. forces might retain a light, distributed presence in some urban areas, after the June 2009 deadline, in advisory capacities to the ISF. In December 2008, Commanding General of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), General Raymond Odierno, noted that some U.S. forces were likely to remain inside cities and towns after June 2009, in order to continue to train and mentor Iraqi security forces.[70] In March 2009, Deputy Commanding General of Multi-National Division-Baghdad, Brigadier General Fred Rudesheim, noted that somewhere under 10% of U.S. troops based in Baghdad, for example training teams that work with the Iraqi Army and National Police, might remain in the city past June 30, 2009.[71] At the end of March 2009, MNC-I Commanding General LTG Austin noted that based on joint assessments, Iraqi officials were likely to request for a continuation of some U.S. force presence in Mosul and Diyala, beyond the deadline.[72]

Coordination on Operations under the Security Agreement

The U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement required the coordination of all U.S. military operations—including ground operations, air operations, and detainee operations—with Iraqi authorities. The Agreement required the establishment of a committee structure to elaborate more detailed implementing instructions; by February 2009, such a structure of committees and sub-committees, including Iraqi and U.S. civilian and military participation, was in place and functioning.[73]

In a December 2008 letter to the force, regarding the new Agreement, GEN Odierno noted that the new environment would "require a subtle shift in how we plan, coordinate, and execute missions throughout Iraq," and that new rules of engagement would be issued.[74] In early 2009, MNF-I officials noted that the Security Agreement was the fundamental theme of current U.S. efforts in Iraq.[75] The premise for future U.S. operations, according to MNC-I, is to "figure out how to get it done through Iraqis."[76] A key issue is the further impact that the Security Agreement will have on U.S. operations.

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[70] Sudarsan Raghavan and Qais Mizher, "Troops Will Remain in Iraqi Cities After June, Odierno Says," *Washington Post*, December 14, 2008; and Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, "Generals Propose a Timetable for Iraq," *New York Times*, December 18, 2008.

[71] Brigadier General Fred Rudesheim, MNC-I Operational Update, March 15, 2009, transcript available at http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25810&Itemid=131.

[72] Jane Arraf, "U.S. General: American Forces May Not Leave Key Iraqi Cities," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 2009.

[73] Interview with MNF-I official, February 2009; and MNF-I, slide "U.S. and Iraqi Security Agreement," February 2009. Broad oversight is provided by the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC), co-chaired by the Iraqi Prime Minister, and the U.S. Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General. Underneath that body, the Joint Military Operations Coordination Committee (JMOCC), co-chaired by the Iraqi Minister of Defense and the MNF-I Commanding General, includes sub-sections, under U.S.-Iraqi co-chairmanship: Temporary Committee for Iraqi Handover; Military Operations, Training and Logistical Support; Vehicle, Vessel and Aircraft Movement; Transfer of Security Responsibility to the Provinces. Also underneath the JMC, the Joint Committee, co-chaired by the Iraqi Minister of the Interior and the US Ambassador and MNF-I Commander, includes sub-sections, under U.S.-Iraqi co-chairmanship: Detainee Affairs, Agreed Upon Facilities and Areas, Claims, Point of Entry, Imports and Exports, Jurisdiction, Frequency Management, and Surveillance and Control of Airspace.

[74] GEN Raymond Odierno, letter dated December 4 2008, available at https://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/cg_letter_on_the_security_agreement.pdf.

[75] Interview with MNF-I official, February 2009, Washington DC.

[76] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008. The counterinsurgency guidance issued by GEN Odierno on (continued...)

In practice, according to commanders on the ground, before the Security Agreement went into effect, the vast majority of U.S. operations were already closely coordinated with the GoI. Further, most of those operations were already "combined" with Iraqi forces. These transitions had been facilitated by the Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) process, in which, by decision of the GoI in consultation with MNF-I, lead security responsibility for a given province was transferred to Iraqi control, based on assessments of security conditions and local ISF capabilities. Before the Security Agreement went into effect, 13 of 18 provinces had transitioned to PIC, and PIC arrangements generally required that U.S. operations be coordinated with the GoI. Another common practice, before the Security Agreement, was that the GoI granted approval in advance for U.S. forces to carry out certain categories of activities, or to take action against certain targets. The use of warrant-based arrests—now required—was already frequently practiced in 2008.

As of early 2009, U.S. commanders on the ground, particularly those in PIC provinces, have reported a smooth transition to operations under the Security Agreement. One U.S. BCT commander, based in Qadisiyah province where the 8th Iraqi Army Division is headquartered, stated: "We do all of our operations … by, with and through the Iraqi security forces. They're all joint. Anybody that we detain, we detain with a warrant."[77]

Concerning the use of Iraqi air space, the Security Agreement stated: "Surveillance and control over Iraqi airspace shall transfer to Iraqi authority immediately upon entry into force of this Agreement". It added a caveat: "Iraq may request from the United States forces temporary support for the Iraqi authorities in the mission of surveillance and control of Iraqi air space."[78] The caveat is important because the capabilities of the Iraqi Air Force are still in the very early stages of development and training. In addition, that training has focused, first of all, on skills relevant to the ongoing counter-insurgency (COIN) fight, such as moving troops and supplies, and providing some ISR. U.S. officials have noted that Iraqi officials and commanders on the ground remain aware that they still lack key COIN capabilities such as sufficient ISR and CAS; that they acknowledge that they do not yet have the ability to defend Iraqi airspace; and that they remain eager for the support of U.S. air assets. In late 2008, U.S. officials expressed some confidence that it would be possible to reach agreements on shared use of air space.[79]

The Security Agreement did not address a parallel concern related to operational coordination: Iraqi coordination with U.S. forces concerning ISF operations. U.S. commanders on the ground report that it is increasingly common for ISF commanders to inform U.S. forces only after they have carried out local operations; some commanders add that these are positive developments in terms of growing ISF capabilities and initiative.[80] At the same time, it could be helpful for U.S. forces to know in advance about significant ISF operations, for two reasons: first, the ISF might call on U.S. forces suddenly, during such operations, to provide key enablers; second, such operations could have an impact on U.S. force protection.

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September 16, 2008, had already emphasized that as the ISF stand up, coalition forces will increasingly "enable from overwatch." See "Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance," September 16, 2008, available at http://www.mnf-iraq.com-odierno_coin_guidance.pdf.

[77] See Colonel Butch Kievenaar, Commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, DOD News Briefing, January 5, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript/aspx?trancriptid=4335.

[78] "SOFA," Article 9, para.4-5.

[79] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[80] Interviews with MNC-I and subordinate commands, August 2008.

Article 22 of the Security Agreement described provisions for detainee operations. One set of provisions placed tight constraints on the circumstances under which U.S. forces may take Iraqis into physical custody.[81] Another set of provisions, of even more concern to U.S. commanders on the ground, specified how the cases of those detainees held by coalition forces would be further adjudicated. The Security Agreement mandated that U.S. forces provide information about all detainees held, and stated that Iraqi authorities would "issue arrest warrants for persons who are wanted by them." The agreement required U.S. forces to turn over custody of all "wanted" detainees, and then to release all remaining detainees "in a safe and orderly manner."[82]

In anticipation of a more stringent new detention regime, throughout 2008, MNF-I carried out a detainee release program, releasing detainees to their homes and communities whenever possible. As of late November 2008, U.S. forces held approximately 15,800 detainees in theater internment facilities, after releasing more than 17,500 during 2008.[83]

Some U.S. military commanders expressed concerns about the remaining "legacy" population. In many cases, for the detainees it held, the coalition lacked releasable evidence with legal sufficiency in Iraqi courts. Scrupulous collection of evidence—such as photographs, diagrams, eye-witness accounts—common in civilian law enforcement, was not always an integral part of coalition combat operations in Iraq. Such legacy detainees could pose real security threats to the Iraqi population, or to the coalition, commanders warned. Some coalition officials and outside observers also expressed concerns that the GoI adjudication of legacy detainee cases, whether or not legally sufficient evidence exists, might evince a sectarian bias—in particular, a tendency to treat Shiite Arabs more leniently than Sunni Arabs.[84]

In January 2009, Iraqi and U.S. officials reached an agreement that the U.S. military would transfer 1,500 detainees per month to Iraqi authorities. At the first such transfer, Iraqi officials had warrants for 42 of the 1,500; they chose to keep about 70 others for further investigation; and they planned to release the remaining persons to their home communities at a rate of about 50 per day.[85]

Some detainees have expressed fears that they may face harm if they return to their home communities, as part of the new release process; in those cases, the GoI reportedly agreed to help them resettle elsewhere.[86] In March 2009, it was reported that six recently released detainees were abducted and killed by local police officers, in an apparent act of retaliation.[87] Some local Iraqi officials, in turn, have expressed concerns that some released detainees may return to

[81] "No detention or arrest may be carried out by the United States Forces (except with respect to detention or arrest of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component) except through an Iraqi decision issued in accordance with Iraqi law and pursuant to Article 4." If U.S. forces do detain Iraqis, "such persons much be handed over to competent Iraqi authorities within 24 hours." "SOFA," Article 22, para.1-2.

[82] "SOFA," Article 22, para.4.

[83] MNF-I press release, November 30, 2008.

[84] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[85] Interview, MNF-I official, February 2009.

[86] Interview, MNF-I official, February 2009; and see Tom A. Peter, "U.S. to Hand Its Captives to Iraqi Courts," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 29, 2009.

[87] See Rod Nordland, "With Local Control, New Troubles in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 16, 2008. The article cites the released detainees' tribal leader, Salah Rasheed al-Goud, as saying that local police from the town of Haditha, in Anbar province, hunted the men down, handcuffed them, and shot them.

violence—for example, the deputy police chief in Fallujah, Anbar province, commented, "Of course they represent a threat."[88]

Civil-Military Roles and Responsibilities

Over the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the balance of U.S. civilian and military roles and responsibilities has evolved to include a larger civilian footprint and a stronger civilian role, and integration between U.S. civilian and military efforts has increased over time. Looking ahead, as U.S. forces draw down, a key operational issue is the most effective future balance and pattern of U.S. civilian and military efforts in Iraq.

As a rule, the military has played the preponderant role in OIF, including in non-traditional fields such as governance and reconstruction. As of 2008, the U.S. military remained the *de facto* default option in many cases, though military officers were usually the first to note that they lacked the requisite expertise.[89] One key role of the U.S. military in Iraq throughout has been supporting civilian-led efforts to provide Iraqis with governance mentorship, and in particular, to build linkages among the national, regional, and local levels. As MNC-I officials noted, "Our job at Corps is to establish the connective tissue between the center and the provinces."[90] As a rule, while PRTs focused on governance at the provincial level, military units, with far more boots on the ground, worked on a daily basis to foster governance at the district and local levels, and to help link those levels to higher levels of Iraqi government.[91] Through early 2009, the U.S. military continued to provide some support for small-scale reconstruction initiatives, though unevenly across Iraq. Some commanders continued to facilitate the reopening of small businesses—and to use the number of reopened businesses as a metric of economic progress—while others decided to "give back," that is, "not spend," their Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds, in order to encourage Iraqis to budget and spend their own money.[92]

As security conditions on the ground in Iraq improved, civilian and military officials all pointed to increased opportunities for civilian assistance initiatives, particularly capacity-building at all levels. As one U.S. commander argued, "Embassy people should be out more every day now, like we are."[93] Some provincial Iraqi officials, for their part, appear eager to welcome additional U.S. civilian expertise.[94]

In theory, one option, as U.S. troops draw down, would be to increase the U.S. civilian effort in Iraq in terms of personnel and resources, taking advantage of the improved security climate to boost support for Iraqi civilian capacity-building at the national, provincial, and local levels. In 2008, some key steps were taken to amplify U.S. government civilian assistance efforts at the provincial level, including authorization to add 66 civilian subject matter experts, in technical fields including agriculture and business development, to work with the PRTs.[95] However,

[88] Anthony Shadid, "In Iraq, Chaos Feared as U.S. Closes Prison," *Washington Post*, March 22, 2009.

[89] Interviews with Multi-National Division commanders, August 2008. As one noted, "What you see is the U.S. military, but we don't have the expertise."

[90] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008.

[91] Interviews with U.S. military officials and PRT members, August 2008.

[92] Interviews with Multi-National Division commanders and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[93] Interview with Multi-National Division commander, August 2008.

[94] Interviews with the Governor of Najaf, the Governor of Basra, August 2008.

[95] Interview with the Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA), U.S. Embassy, August 2008. When PRT leaders were asked (continued...)

officials at U.S. Embassy Baghdad and at the Department of State noted that it was likely that peak PRT staffing levels in Iraq had already been reached. In 2008, the Embassy—in response to direction from Congress—began working on "PRT strategic drawdown" plans.[96]

The Obama Administration's drawdown and transition policy calls for consolidating PRT personnel at fewer locations, and for closely integrating the work of the PRTs and the AABs. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in January 2009, describing future plans, Secretary Gates noted: "The plans that General Odierno has developed in conjunction with Ambassador Crocker foresee that as we consolidate our forces, we would also consolidate our PRTs … so that the two would be stationed together and our forces would be in a position to continue to protect the civilian element."[97] Some officials have suggested that those civil-military relationships might vary geographically, including closer integration—including co-location or even full integration into a single staff structure—where security conditions remain unsettled, and looser partnerships in relatively permissive areas.

Good test cases are already available, in Najaf and Karbala provinces, for the ability of PRTs to function without a substantial co-located U.S. forces presence. In May 2008, the personnel of the PRTs for Najaf and Karbala provinces, who had been operating from a remote base in Hillah, in Babil province, relocated to their respective areas of operation. Najaf and Karbala were both PIC provinces at that time, with limited U.S. military presence. In Najaf, for example, in late 2008, the PRT, including a diverse team of civilian experts and a small U.S. military team that provided them with movement, was based at a small Forward Operating Base (FOB), together with a U.S. Army transition team that worked with the local Iraqi Army battalion and a small U.S. military "mayor's cell" that managed the installation.[98] A team of private security contractors from Triple Canopy provided static security. In early 2009, U.S. officials in both Baghdad and Washington also pointed to Najaf as a possible model for the future.[99]

Role of Contractors

Over the course of OIF, the role of contractors supporting the operation has varied in both scope and scale. According to DOD, as of the first quarter of 2009, DOD had a total of 148,050 contractors in Iraq, including 39,262 U.S. citizens; 70,875 third-country nationals; and 37,913 host country nationals.[100] A key operational issue looking ahead is the likely role of contractors supporting U.S. operations in Iraq as U.S. forces draw down.

While some substantive requirements for contractor support may diminish, others could increase. For example, one of the three pillars of the mission of Advise and Assist Brigades, after August 2010, is to provide force protection to U.S. government civilians. As of early 2009, that function was performed, in many cases, by private security contractors. At the same time, requirements

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how many subject matter experts they would like to receive, they reportedly requested a total of 170.

[96] Interviews with U.S. Embassy and Department of State officials, August and December 2008, and January 2009.

[97] See transcript, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, House Armed Services Committee, hearing on Defense Department Priorities, Washington, DC, January 27, 2009.

[98] Interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials at the Najaf FOB.

[99] Communications with U.S. military officials in Baghdad, and U.S. civilian officials in Washington, DC, January 2009.

[100] Department of Defense, *U.S.CENTCOM Contractor Census Report*, Q1 2009.

for some specialized contractor skills—for example, training and advisory support to the ISF – may increase as the U.S. force presence decreases.

Another factor shaping the role of contractors may be explicit U.S. policy decisions. On January 31, 2009, MNF-I Commanding General, GEN Odierno, issued a directive instructing subordinate commanders to begin reducing their reliance on international contractors, including both U.S. and "third-country national" contractors, by five percent per quarter. The Directive noted that commanders should seek to replace them, where possible, with Iraqi contractors, and added, "As we transition more responsibility and control to the government of Iraq, it's time to make this change."[101]

A third factor shaping the role of contractors may be decisions stemming from provisions in the U.S-Iraqi Security Agreement that mandate, "Iraq shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over United States contractors and United States contractor employees."[102] In some instances, concerns about legal jurisdiction have reportedly prompted efforts by U.S. government agencies to transition key contractors to U.S. Government "term employee" status. For example, members of Human Terrain Teams—small teams of academic social scientists who support military units by engaging with the local population and "mapping" population characteristics and trends—were employed as contractors by BAE Systems. But in early 2009, reportedly in response to concerns about jurisdiction, the jobs were shifted to term appointments under the Department of the Army.[103]

Equipment

One of the key operational issues with great potential impact on costs is the future disposition of U.S. military equipment as U.S. forces draw down. Several factors, in combination, are likely to shape equipment disposition decisions:

- Costs: In some cases, it may be more expensive to ship an item home than to leave it behind and replace it.
- Support to the ISF: Some U.S. military equipment and supplies may be required by the ISF to further develop their force—or even urgently required by the ISF to help prosecute the current COIN fight.
- Support for the war in Afghanistan: Some equipment, no longer required in Iraq, may be needed by U.S. military forces in Afghanistan. For example, U.S. Army engineering assets, urgently needed in Afghanistan, may be sent directly from one theater to the other.

[101] See Gordon Lubold, "A Drawdown of Contractors in Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 4, 2009; and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Moves to Replace Contractors in Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2009.
[102] See Article 12, paragraph 2, "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of their Activities during their Temporary Presence in Iraq," available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SOFA.pdf.
[103] Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Moves to Replace Contractors in Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2009.

- Stockpiles for future contingencies: Some equipment—particularly heavy equipment—may remain stockpiled in the CENTCOM theater, to support possible future contingencies, pending approval by host nations.[104]
- Availability of Logistical Support: Redeploying equipment requires logistical support in the form of heavy equipment transports (HETs), whether military or commercial, to provide ground transportation; air assets; sea port capacity, including Kuwait and the Iraqi port of Um Qasr; as well as diplomatic permission from all other relevant host nations for basing, access, and/or overflight.

Options Available to Congress

A number of tools are available to Congress to help shape U.S. government policy toward Iraq, and the execution of that policy.[105] One tool is limiting or prohibiting funding for certain activities. For example, the *Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009* stated that no funding appropriated pursuant to authorizations in the Act could be used "to establish any military installation or base for the purpose of providing for the permanent stationing of United States Armed Forces in Iraq," or "to exercise United States control of the oil resources of Iraq."[106]

Congress may also make some funding contingent on achievement of certain milestones. For example, in the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008* (P.L. 110-252), Congress required that funding under Chapter 4 of the Act, "Department of State and Foreign Operations," be made available for assistance to Iraq "only to the extent that the Government of Iraq matches such assistance on a dollar-for-dollar basis."[107] More broadly, in the *U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007*, Congress established 18 benchmarks for the performance of the Government of Iraq, and provided that further U.S. strategy in Iraq would be conditioned on the Iraqi government's meeting those benchmarks.[108]

Another tool is holding oversight hearings, to ask Administration officials to account for the progress to date on policy implementation. For example, on September 10, 2008, the House Armed Services Committee invited Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen to testify at a hearing entitled "Security and Stability in

[104] See Julian E. Barnes, "In Iraq Withdrawal, Equipment poses a Key Logistical Challenge," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 2009. The author interviewed U.S. Army Major General Kenneth Dowd, Director of Logistics J-4, CENTCOM J4, who explained that equipment stockpiled in the region "…will be primarily the big gear, stuff like MRAPs, tanks…so we don't have to move and lift all this heavy stuff."

[105] 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 (name redacted), (name redacted), and (name redacted). 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 (name redacted) et al.

[106] *Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009*, P.L. 110-417, October 14, 2008, §1211. This section repeated language from the FY2008 NDAA.

[107] *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008*, P.L. 110-252, June 30, 2008, §1402(e).

[108] See *U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007*, P.L. 110-28, May 25, 2007, §1314(b)(1)(A), which lists the 18 benchmarks. In §1314(c)(1), the Act specified that no funding appropriated for Iraq might be obligated or expended unless and until the President certified that Iraqi is making progress on each of the benchmarks.

Afghanistan and Iraq: Developments in U.S. Strategy and Operations and the Way Ahead." On September 23, 2008, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, with Secretary Gates and General James Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Congress may also shape policy by establishing reporting requirements. For example, in the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008* (P.L. 110-252), Congress required the Secretary of Defense to provide to Congress, every 90 days beginning not later than December 5, 2008, until the end of FY2009, a "comprehensive set of performance indicators and measures for progress toward military and political stability in Iraq." The *Act* lists detailed reporting requirements in two areas, stability and security in Iraq, and the training and performance of Iraqi security forces, and also required an assessment of "United States military requirements, including planned force rotations, through the end of calendar year 2009."[109]

Structure and Aim of the Report

This report is designed to support congressional consideration of future policy options for the war in Iraq by analyzing strategies pursued and outcomes achieved to date, by characterizing current dynamics on the ground in Iraq, and by identifying and analyzing key strategic and operational considerations going forward. The report will be updated as events warrant. Major topics addressed include the following:

- Analysis of future strategic and operational considerations.
- OIF war planning, including stated objectives, key debates in the major combat and post-major combat planning efforts, and the impact of apparent shortcomings 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 over time in strategy and approaches.
- Assessments of the results of strategy and operations to date.

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.

[109] *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008*, P.L. 110-252, June 30, 2008, §9204. DOD submitted its first report pursuant to this requirement, entitled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," in January 2009 (dated December 2008). DOD had previously submitted to Congress reports with this title, also known as "9010 reports," pursuant to a requirement in the *Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2007*, P.L. 109-289 §9010, as amended.

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 Shiite 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.[110] 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.[111] In 1998, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, authorizing support to Iraqi opposition organizations.[112] 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."[113]

[110] 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.

[111] 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.

[112] The Iraq Liberation Act, P.L. 105-338, October 31, 1998, authorized support to "Iraqi democratic opposition organizations" and included provisions concerning how to identify such organizations.

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

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.[114] 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 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.[115]

On November 8, 2002, following intensive negotiations among its "Permanent 5" members,[116] 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."[117]

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."[118]

[114] 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/.

[115] 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.

[116] 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.

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

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

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.[119] In the 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."[120]

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.[121] 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."[122]

Over time, the Administration's longer-term strategic objectives were 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."[123]

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 unified, democratic, federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the war on terror."[124]

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[119] 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 Peter Paret, eds., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

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

[121] Ibid.

[122] 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).

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

[124] "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review" slides, National Security Council, January 2007, available at (continued...)

In January 2009, in its regular quarterly update to the Congress, the Department of Defense (DOD) used almost the same language, with additional words to reflect the new security agreement: "The goal of the strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq remains a unified, democratic and federal Iraq that can govern, defend and sustain itself and is an ally in the war on terror."[125] In March 2009, in its first Iraq report issued under the Obama Administration, DOD stated: "The United States seeks an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant; an Iraqi Government that is just, representative, and accountable; neither a safe haven for, nor sponsor of, terrorism; integrated into the global economy; and a long-term partner contributing to regional peace and security."[126]

Military Objectives

To support the stated U.S. strategic objectives, CENTCOM, as it planned military operations in Iraq, 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."[127]

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.[128] Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly came into office with a vision of defense transformation, both operational and institutional.[129] A basic premise of that vision, captured in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, was that "... the threats and enemies we must confront have

(...continued)

http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/iraq-strategy011007.pdf.

[125] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, submitted in accordance with §9204, *Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008*, P.L.110-252.

[126] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, submitted in accordance with §9204, *Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008*, P.L.110-252, and also with §1508(c) of the *Department of Defense Authorization Act for 2009*, P.L. 110-417, p.iii.

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

[128] 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.

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

changed, and so must our force."[130] 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.[131]

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.[132]

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.[133]

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 2001, Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly asked for a completely new version—with fewer troops and a faster deployment timeline.[134]

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 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.[135]

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

[131] 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."

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

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

[134] 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.

[135] 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.

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.[136] But the early introduction of ground forces—rather than an extended exclusively air campaign—was apparently intended to take Iraqi forces by surprise.[137]

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.[138]

In the summer of 2002, planners developed a so-called "hybrid" version of these two plans,[139] 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 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.[140]

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 of days, rather than a couple of 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."

[136] 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.

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

[138] 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.

[139] "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.

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

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.[141]

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."[142]

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. 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."[143]

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.[144]

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

[142] 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."

[143] 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.

[144] 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.

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 helped sponsor 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.[145] At these events, Iraqi oppositionists agreed on a political statement and self-nominated a "leadership council," but the events did not directly produce U.S. policy decisions about post-war roles and responsibilities.[146]

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 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.[147] 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.[148]

The Department of Defense (DOD)—more specifically and accurately the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)—favored putting Iraqis in charge of Iraq, in some form, as soon as possible, based loosely 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.[149] As Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly told President Bush in August 2002, "We will want to get Iraqis in charge of Iraq as soon as possible."[150]

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[145] 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.

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

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

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

[149] Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi opposition umbrella group Iraqi National Congress, was one key figure with whom OSD maintained contact, and some practitioners and observers have maintained that OSD sought primarily to "crown Chalabi." However, according to OSD officials, the "theory of the case," that is, introducing a new Iraqi leadership as soon as possible, was more important part of the argument than individual personalities. Information from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and Department of State officials, 2002 and 2003.

[150] 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.

In the fall of 2002, no clear decision emerged about the role of Iraqis in immediate post-war Iraq. Discussions among senior leaders apparently focused on the concept of a U.S.-led "transitional civil administration" that would govern, or help govern, Iraq. However, no agreement was reached at that time about what authority such a body would have, what its responsibilities would be, how long it would last, or which Iraqis would be involved.[151]

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 that would give Iraqi post-Saddam political life a chance to develop organically, but it also acknowledged DOD's concern to provide a visible Iraqi leadership—though very weakly empowered—as soon as possible. The "mega-brief" process would include creating a senior-level Iraqi Consultative Council (ICC) to serve in an advisory capacity; dismissing top Iraqi leaders from the Saddam era but welcoming most lower-ranking officials to continue to serve; 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 referendum; and then holding national elections. It was envisaged that the process would take years to complete.[152]

The "mega-brief" approach—which gained currency just as U.S. 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.[153]

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

[152] Information from NSC staff, and Department of State and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, 2003 and 2008. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on February 11, 2003, then-Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, who favored "putting Iraqis in charge," describing the possible post-Saddam political process, named the key elements of the "mega-brief," including the Iraqi Consultative Council, the judicial council, the drafting of a constitution followed by a referendum, and early local elections. See Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism.* New York: Harper, 2008, p.369.

[153] During the spring of 2003, while combat operations commenced and U.S. commanders on the ground were wholly occupied with the fight, inter-agency wrangling concerning post-Saddam governance apparently continued. Former Under Secretary of Defense Doug Feith writes that in March 2003, his office, OSD (Policy), drafted a concept that called for the early appointment of an Iraqi Interim Authority (IIA) that would share leadership responsibilities with the coalition—that is, it would be less than an interim government, but more than a merely consultative body. Feith writes that the IIA concept was approved by President Bush at a session of the National Security Council on March 10, 2003. (See Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism.* New York: Harper, 2008, p.408.) During his brief tenure in Iraq, with a view to identifying Iraqis to play interim roles, Jay Garner, leader of the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) hosted two "big-tent" meetings of Iraqi expats and community leaders, on April 15, 2003, in Nasariyah, and on April 28, 2003, in Baghdad. In early May 2003, just before President Bush announced that a new Coalition Provisional Authority, led by Ambassador L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer would supersede ORHA, Garner stated publicly that a "nucleus" of a "temporary" Iraqi leadership would emerge by later that month. After his arrival, Bremer slowed the process and, in July 2003, created the Iraqi Governing Council—an interim body like both the ICC and IIA concepts, with relatively little authority. Bremer has argued that 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 L. Paul Bremer III, "Facts for Feith: CPA History," *National Review Online*, March 19, 2008. It is possible that despite some broad presidential direction, key senior practitioners failed to reach a single, shared understanding of the role that an interim Iraqi body would play and the authority it would exercise.

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.[154] 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.[155] 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."[156]

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 5, 2002, included the intentionally provocative phrase, "military administration," but no decision about post-war architecture was made at that time.[157]

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.[158]

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.[159] TFIV thus provided skilled

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

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

[156] "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.

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

[158] 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.

[159] Interviews with TFIV leaders and members, and with CFLCC staff, 2003. See also Michael R. Gordon and General (continued...)

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 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.[160]

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 of activity in post-war 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 or resourced 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.[161]

(...continued)

Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

[160] 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.

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

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.[162]

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).[163]

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.[164] 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.[165]

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").[166] 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.

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[162] 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.

[163] 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.

[164] 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.

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

[166] 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 (continued...)

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.

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.[167]

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.[168] 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.

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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.

[167] 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.

[168] 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.

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 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 in the area 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 Nassiriyah to join the fight.[169] After the defeating the resistance at Nassiriyah, 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."[170]

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.[171]

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

[169] 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.

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

[171] See Press Conference with Major General David Petraeus, May 13, 2003, at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2601. For an account from the perspective of a battalion commander in the 101st Airborne Division, see Christopher Hughes, *War on Two Fronts: An Infantry Commander's War in Iraq and the Pentagon*, Drexel Hill, PA: Casemate, 2007.

technical vehicles with .50 calibers and every kind of weapon charging tanks and Bradleys."[172] 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.[173]

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.[174]

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.[175]

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[172] 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=2180s].

[173] Information from V Corps staff, 2003.

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

[175] 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 (continued...)

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.[176]

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."[177] Looters and vandals also targeted unguarded weapons stockpiles largely abandoned by former Iraqi security forces.[178] Some observers and coalition participants suggested that the coalition simply did not have enough troops to stop all the unlawful behavior.[179]

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 Iraq's future, rather than specific decisions about Iraqi leadership roles.[180]

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distinguish them from the Taszar-trained Iraqis, the Department of Defense called them the "Free Iraqi Fighting Force."

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

[177] "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.

[178] 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 http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/ksil72.pdf.

[179] 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."

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

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."[181] 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 not been monolithic—it 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 and legal 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 the United Kingdom as "occupying powers," together with all the "authorities, responsibilities, and obligations under international law" that this designation entails.[182] 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."[183] 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

[181] "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.

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

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

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.[184]

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."[185] 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."[186]

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 U.S.-Iraqi discussions had considered the possibility that Iraqi forces might, in some cases, fall under the command of the multinational force.[187] However, the U.N. Resolution and the appended letters made clear that the 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."[188]

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."[189]

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

[185] Ibid., para. 9.

[186] Ibid., para. 10.

[187] 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.

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

[189] 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.

Security Agreement

The final U.N. authorization, issued on December 18, 2007, extended through December 31, 2008. In requesting that authorization, in a letter appended to the UN Resolution, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki made clear that it 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."[190] In November 2008, the U.S. and Iraqi governments concluded a new status of forces-like agreement – the "security agreement" – which took effect on January 1, 2009, and which defines the legal terms of the presence of U.S. military forces, and the civilians who support them, in Iraq.[191]

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.[192] 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."[193] 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.

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

[190] 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.

[191] See "Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of their Activities during their Temporary Presence in Iraq."

[192] 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.

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

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.[194] 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.[195] 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.

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

The MNF-I headquarters, located in Baghdad, is the strategic-level headquarters, currently led, as of September 16, 2008, by U.S. Army General Raymond Odierno. The position of MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG) has always been filled by a general officer from the United Kingdom—since March 2009, Lieutenant General Chris Brown has served simultaneously as MNF-I DCG and Senior British Military Representative to Iraq. The MNF-I staff is an ad hoc

[194] 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.

[195] 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.

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.[196] Its role is synchronizing coalition forces actions throughout Iraq. MNC-I is built around a U.S. Army Corps. As of April 2009, the nucleus of MNC-I is I Corps, led by Army Lieutenant General Charles Jacoby, which replaced the XVIII Airborne Corps led by Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin. In each rotation, the Army Corps staff is augmented 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; those senior positions were only gradually filled 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 responsibility have shifted somewhat over time, to accommodate both shifting security requirements and major changes in deployments by coalition partner countries.

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 in January 2007 just before surge forces began to arrive.

As of February 1, 2009, the total number of U.S. troops in Iraq was about 146,000.[197] The lower total, compared to October 2007, reflects the redeployment from Iraq without replacement of all five of the Army's "surge" brigades: the 2nd brigade combat team (BCT) of the 82nd Airborne Division; the 4th BCT of the 1st Infantry Division; the 3rd BCT of the 3rd Infantry Division; the 4th BCT of the 2nd Infantry Division; and the 2nd BCT of the 3rd Infantry Division.

In September 2008, President Bush had announced that an additional Army BCT would withdraw from Iraq, in early 2009, without replacement. In November 2008, DOD announced that that unit—the 2nd BCT of the 101st Airborne Division, based in western Baghdad—would redeploy about six weeks earlier than planned. Their departure left 14 U.S. BCTs or BCT-equivalents in Iraq, before President Obama's February 2009 announcement of his Iraq drawdown and transition policy.

[196] 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.

[197] Joint Staff information paper, "Boots on the Ground," February 1, 2009.

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 maintaining 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."[198]

Sometimes, changes in the security 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.[199] Reserve Component units would mobilize for a maximum of 12 months, including pre- and post-deployment responsibilities, rather than 12 months of "boots on the ground," with the goal of five years between deployments.[200]

In April 2008, partly in anticipation of some reduction of stress on the force from the redeployment of the surge brigades, President Bush announced that active component Army units deploying after August 1, 2008, would deploy for 12 months, rather than 15. The President also

[198] 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.

[199] 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."

[200] 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.

recommitted to "...ensur[ing] that our Army units will have at least a year at home for every year in the field."[201]

Coalition Partner Forces[202]

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.

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. After that period, some countries withdrew their forces altogether. A number of other countries, as they reduced their contributions, withdrew the bulk of their contingents, but left a few personnel in Iraq to serve in headquarters staff positions.

Past 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.

In 2008, several major contributors redeployed or significantly drew down their forces. In June, Australia withdrew its battle group of combat forces, which had been based at Tallil Air Base in Nassiriyah province, in southern Iraq, but other Australian troops continued to serve in and around Iraq, including providing maritime surveillance, intelligence assistance, and logistics operations.[203] In August, Georgia withdrew its 2,000-strong contingent, which had been deployed in Wasit province along the border with Iran, after Russian troops invaded Georgia. In October, Poland withdrew its remaining contingent of about 900 soldiers from Qadisiyah province in southern Iraq, where Poland had led the Multi-National Division Center-South. And in December, the Republic of Korea concluded its deployment in northern Iraq, focused on reconstruction, as the nucleus of Multi-National Division-North East.

As of December 2008, the largest remaining non-U.S. coalition partner was the United Kingdom, which had approximately 4,100 troops on the ground and continued to lead Multi-National Division-Southeast, headquartered in Basra. That month, however, British defense officials indicated that the UK contingent would draw down to 400 by summer 2009.[204]

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[201] White House, "Fact Sheet: The Way Forward in Iraq," April 10, 2008, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080410-4.html.

[202] For more detailed information about past foreign contributions to Iraq, including coalition forces, see CRS Report RL32105, *Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Stabilization and Reconstruction*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

[203] See "Australia withdraws troops from Iraq," Reuters, June 1, 2008; and "Australia ends combat operations in Iraq," CNN, June 2, 2008; and interviews with MNF-I officials, August 2008.

[204] Michael Evans, "British Forces to Start Leaving Iraq in March: Down to 400 by Summer," *London Times*, (continued...)

The expiration of the UN mandate as of December 31, 2008, forced all remaining coalition partners either to negotiate a bilateral status of forces agreement with the Government of Iraq, or to withdraw their forces. Most remaining partners chose to bring their deployments to a close. In December, the GoI signed agreements with the UK and Australian governments, authorizing their troops to remain in Iraq for the first six months of 2009.[205] In late January, the Governments of Iraq and Romania reached agreement on the continued deployment of approximately 350 Romanian troops.[206] Both Estonia and El Salvador reportedly sought to reach agreements with the GoI but ultimately decided to withdraw their contingents.[207]

In addition to MNF-I, foreign troops serve in two other organizations in Iraq. One of those is the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), which falls under the dual supervision of MNF-I and NATO. As of January 2009, 14 countries were contributing staff to NTM-I in theater, including: Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK, and the United States.[208] NATO reached an agreement with the GoI to allow the continuation of specific NTM-I missions until July 2009. The other is the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), to which New Zealand and Fiji contribute forces in Iraq to provide security.

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 in 2003 following major combat operations, forms of violent expression grew in variety, intensity, and frequency, hitting peaks in 2005 and 2006. By 2008, indicators of violence had tapered off to markedly lower levels. By the end of 2008, DOD assessed, "the strength of the insurgency continues to decline."[209]

Major Sources and Forms of Violence

Sunni Extremism

One major form of violence that has been practiced in post-Saddam Iraq is terrorism carried out by Sunni Arabs with stated Islamic extremist goals. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has been the most

(...continued)

December 10, 2008.

[205] See "Iraq Signs Foreign Troops Deals," *BBC News*, December 31, 2009.

[206] See "350 Romanian Soldiers Stay in Iraq to Help Country's Reconstruction," *Bucharest Herald*, January 26, 2009.

[207] See "Iraq Signs Foreign Troops Deals," *BBC News*, December 31, 2009; "El Salvador to Withdraw Troops From Iraq," *Voice of America News*, December 24, 2009; "Estonia's 34 Troops Withdrawn from Iraq," *CNN*, January 22, 2009.

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

[209] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008.

prominent named 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 have capitalized on Iraq's widespread under-employment, which can make the prospect of one-time payments appealing,[210] and general disaffection spurred by a perceived lack of opportunities in the new Iraq. The infrastructure used by AQI and its affiliates has included safe houses and lines of communication reaching, especially, through central and northern Iraq.[211]

The network has capitalized on Iraq's porous borders. In 2008, U.S. military commanders confirmed that the flow of foreign fighters continued, from Syria into Iraq.[212] In its March 2009 quarterly report to the Congress, the Department of Defense stated, "Syria remains the primary gateway for Iraq-bound foreign fighters."[213]

Over time, the AQI network demonstrated adaptability, quickly shifting its tactics and its footprint as circumstances change. Pushed out of urban areas, they typically sought refuge and an opportunity to re-group in deep rural settings. As surge operations pushed AQI and its affiliates out of Baghdad in late 2007, they 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.[214] In early 2008, some AQI elements attempted to regroup in Mosul, but coalition and Iraqi operations pushed AQI elements out of the city and deeper into rural areas.[215]

As of August 2008, U.S. commanders in Iraq assessed that AQI was in disarray but still capable of conducting spectacular attacks. AQI was making increasing use of "surgical" attacks, such as sniper attacks, and using intimidation tactics, which may require fewer resources and less coordination that large-scale catastrophic attacks. In western Anbar province, where significant security progress was achieved earlier than in the north, commanders noted—borrowing from Mao—that there's "no longer a sea for the AQI fish to swim in;" that is, popular support for AQI had so sharply diminished that they were forced to operate clandestinely.[216]

As of the end of 2008, DOD assessed that AQI retained "limited freedom of movement in rural and some urban areas," and that it had both the intent and the ability to "carry out limited high-profile attacks within key urban center."[217] Their strongest base of operations remained Ninewah province, where DOD assessed the city of Mosul to be "a logistical, financial and operational hub for AQI."[218] In January 2009, the new Commanding General of Multi-National Division-North, Major General Robert Caslen, noted that there was still "a viable insurgency" in Mosul.[219] February 2009 witnessed a series of attacks on U.S. troops in that region by men wearing Iraqi

[210] 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.

[211] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January 2008.

[212] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, January 2008.

[213] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.7.

[214] Interviews with MNF-I, MNC-I, and MND-North officials, January 2008.

[215] Interviews with MNC-I and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[216] Interviews with MNC-I and MNF-W commanders and other officials, August 2008.

[217] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008.

[218] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008.

[219] See Heath Druzin, "Commander Assesses Iraq Challenges," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, January 19, 2009.

police uniforms.[220] In March 2009, DOD assessed that AQI "retain[ed] the intent and capability to carry out spectacular attacks."[221]

Shi'a Extremism

Some Shi'a militias have been another major source of violence in post-Saddam Iraq. 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* ("JAM"). During the year of formal occupation, al-Sadr frequently delivered Friday sermons at mosques, using a hardline nationalist message to condemn the coalition and its Iraqi partners and to call for action against them. In April 2004, his followers staged coordinated, violent uprisings in cities throughout southern Iraq, which were put down by coalition forces.

While continuing to voice staunch opposition to the U.S. force presence in Iraq, in August 2007, al-Sadr declared a ceasefire to which most of JAM adhered, and he repeated the call in February 2008. By the summer of 2008, al-Sadr was making efforts to shift the focus of his base organization to social, cultural and political activities, including an umbrella movement called *al Mumahiddun*, designed to provide social services. At the end of July 2008, Sadr issued a statement pledging his support and that of his followers to the Government of Iraq, if the GoI would refrain from signing any security agreement with the United States. He also urged his followers to refrain from any actions that would harm Iraqi civilians, or disrupt the provision of government services.[222]

Meanwhile, rogue elements of JAM—known euphemistically as "special groups" or "special groups criminals," including *Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq* (AAH) – defied al-Sadr's August 2007 ceasefire call and continued to practice violence. The Office of the Martyr Sadr, insisting that JAM itself was an "army of believers," described such elements as criminal infiltrators who find it useful to have the cover of the JAM name.[223] In November 2008, however, Sadr called for members of the renegade AAH to return to the fold; and he created a new armed wing of his own movement, known as the Promised Day Brigade.

According to U.S. and Iraqi commanders on the ground, the series of Iraqi-led military operations in southern Iraq, which began in Basra in March 2008, had the effect of isolating some Shiite extremists and forcing others to flee across the border into Iran. The Iranian government has reportedly pledged to help stop the further flow of lethal aid into Iraq, but reports suggest there has been no marked diminution.[224] However, in official reports, the Department of Defense stated that as of March 2009, some Shiite extremist groups, including AAH and Ketaib Hezbollah (KH), continued to receive funding and support from Iran. DOD added that while Tehran has reduced

[220] Marc Santora, "G.I.s Attacked by Iraqis in Uniforms," *New York Times*, February 25, 2009.

[221] DOD, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.22.

[222] Interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials, August 2008. See for example Nicholas Spangler and Mohammed al Dulaimy, "Al-Sadr would back Iraqi government for a price," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 31, 2008.

[223] See Sabrina Tavernise, "A Shiite Militia in Baghdad sees its power wane," *New York Times*, July 27, 2008.

[224] Interviews with MNF-I officials, Baghdad, January and August 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.

the number of militants that it supports, it has "simultaneously improved the training and weapon systems received by the proxy militants."[225]

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 example, made that province harder to traverse and pushed traffic north and south.[226] As of August 2008, a key locus of cross-border smuggling—not only of lethal aid but also of consumer goods—was the border along Maysan province, where Marsh Arabs historically have traded goods for centuries.[227]

U.S. and Iraqi commanders have noted that Quds forces continue to train some Iraqi Shiite extremists, including former special groups members. They added that some infiltrations continued, with the apparent goal of carrying out assassinations or planting improvised explosive devices. They suggested that special groups may attempt to reassert themselves in Iraq, with help from Iran. As one Iraqi commander noted, "Sadly, our neighbors are not friendly." Some U.S. and Iraqi commanders commented that a special groups re-emergence might take the form of a streamlined, well-trained terrorist network with a cellular structure, operating under cover, rather than a mass movement with popular support.[228] In March 2009, Iraqi Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani noted that the ISF had evidence that Shiite militants were regrouping in Baghdad and some locations in southern Iraq.[229]

Meanwhile, the Iranian government apparently continues to seek influence among Iraqi Shi'a through the exercise of "soft power," for example by continuing to foster relationships with political leaders, by providing social services, and through investments including purchasing a power plant in the Shi'a-populated Sadr City section of Baghdad.[230]

Militant activities in southern Iraq and Baghdad have taken 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.[231] Other main protagonists include Prime Minister Maliki's Da'wa party, and the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI, 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

[225] In its March 2009 report, DOD stated, "Iran continues to pose a significant challenge to Iraq's long-term stability and political independence…it continues to host, train, fund, arm and guide militant groups that seek to bleed the U.S. in Iraq." See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.v and 6.

[226] Interviews with MNF-I subordinate command officials, January 2008.

[227] Interviews with MNC-I and subordinate command officials, August 2008.

[228] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, and with Iraqi commanders, August 2008. See also "US: Quds, Hezbollah training hit squads in Iran," *Associated Press*, August 16, 2008. The author, citing a "senior U.S. military intelligence officer in Iraq," writes that Iraqis are being trained in Iran in reconnaissance, the use of small arms and improvised explosive devices, assassination techniques, and terrorist cell operations and communications.

[229] Sinan Salaheddin, "Iraqi Official Seeks War Shift from Fighting to Intelligence," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 15, 2009.

[230] Interviews with MNF-I officials, January 2008. See also Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and 'Other Means,'" Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Occasional Paper Series, October 13, 2008.

[231] See for example, "Shiite 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 and August 2008.

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.

Relatively new to the power struggle are the ground-up voices of southern tribal leaders, most of whom stayed in Iraq through the Saddam period, unlike many Iraqi Shi'a political party leaders who spent years in Iran. Recognizing the largely untapped potential political power of southern tribal Shi'a, in 2008 Prime Minister Maliki sought to form consultative tribal *isnad* ("support") councils, first of all in Shi'a-populated areas including the southern provinces, which were supposed to articulate tribal needs to the provincial councils.[232] In at least one case, Babil province, the governor sought to form a competing provincial tribal council.[233] By late 2008, Maliki had expanded the effort to mixed-population provinces including Ninewah, Kirkuk, and Diyala, prompting protests from some senior officials.[234] A number of observers viewed the support councils as a blatant "get-out-the-vote" initiative.

Key political events have the potential to exacerbate the contest for political power and influence in the south. In April 2008, an 18-month moratorium expired on the implementation of a 2006 law on federalism, which included provisions for the creation of "regions" based on one or more provinces. "Regional" status could prove important because it affects the distribution of economic resources and political power. Major Shi'a groups in the south have called for various approaches to regionalization, based on their popular bases of support – for example, ISCI has advocated the creation of a nine-province in southern Iraq.[235] Iran, too, has reportedly expressed interest in how southern Iraq might be regionally grouped. In 2008, local political parties and organizations in Basra took the first steps to seek regionalization of Basra province, by organizing a petition drive, but the effort failed to secure the required 140,000 signatures.[236]

In late 2008, some Iraqi provincial political leaders and security forces commanders in southern Iraq suggested that the several rounds of elections scheduled to be held in 2009—provincial, district, and national—carried the potential for violence, in part because many incumbents recognized that they might not have enough popular support to be elected. Others have stressed the importance of those elections as a safety valve for popular opinion.[237] The results of the provincial elections held on January 31, 2009, reshuffled the balance of political power in southern provinces. Prime Minister Maliki's Da'wa party substantially increased its representation, earning pluralities in Baghdad and southern provinces, while ISCI lost significant ground, and some parties backed by al Sadr secured some support. Without clear majorities, governing will require coalition-building throughout the south.

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[232] See International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Provincial Elections: The Stakes," Middle East Report No.82, January 27, 2009, pp.25-26; and Matthew Duss and Peter Juul, "The Fractured Shi'a of Iraq: Understanding the Tensions Within Iraq's Majority," Center for American Progress, January 2009.

[233] Interviews with MNF-I subordinate officials, and PRT officials, 2008. By late 2008, the role of these councils had expanded beyond southern Iraq.

[234] President Talabani stated that he would request a ruling from the Federal Supreme Court on the question of the councils' constitutionality. See Alissa J. Rubin, "Clash in Iraq over a plan for councils intensifies," *New York Times*, Dec 4, 2008.

[235] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, August 2008.

[236] Interviews with the Governor of Basra, and with U.S. and UK military and civilian officials in Basra, August 2008. See also International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Provincial Elections: The Stakes," Middle East Report No.82, January 27, 2009, p.8.

[237] Interviews with Governors of Najaf, Basra; and Iraqi commanders in Diwaniyah and Basra, August 2008.

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.

Sectarian violence skyrocketed in February 2006, following the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines. That attack 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.[238]

The sectarian-based displacement of many Iraqis from their homes, and the resulting greater segregation in urban areas, reduced the number of fault lines somewhat.[239] Displacement and resettlement are dynamic issues—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that as of late 2008, there were nearly 2.8 million IDPs in Iraq.[240] Some GoI resettlement and restitution initiatives have been launched, but DOD reports that as of March 2009, "returnees have reported little success accessing these benefits."[241] In many instances, the usual challenges of displacement are compounded by both sectarian and class-based differences, between those who have fled, and those who have moved into the "abandoned" homes.[242]

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 groups, designated by the Department of State as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, which are largely unrelated to the rest of the fight but of deep interest to some of Iraq's neighbors. Both cases have consumed substantial time and energy from MNF-I staff in Iraq as well as senior leaders in Washington, D.C., and both have had the potential to destabilize the broader security environment.

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[238] 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.

[239] 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.

[240] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008.

[241] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.8.

[242] Interviews with Iraqi officials responsible for resettlement in parts of Baghdad, August 2008.For example, in some Baghdad neighborhoods, Shi'a extremists from the *Jaish al-Mahdi* reportedly forced affluent Sunni Arabs to flee their homes, and then offered those "empty" homes, for a very nominal rent, to much less affluent Shi'a Arabs.

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 inside 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.

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 and the PKK in principle. In the past, both the Iraqi government and MNF-I reportedly expressed concerns that military action against the PKK in Iraq could open a new northern front, taxing their already thinly stretched forces.[243]

In 2007, the Government of Turkey received a one-year Turkish parliamentary authorization to conduct cross-border actions against the PKK, and in October 2008 the Turkish parliament extended the authorization for another year.[244] In December 2007, the Turkish Air Force launched a series of air strikes, targeting presumed PKK positions in northern Iraq, followed in February 2008 by a week-long series of coordinated air and ground attacks.[245] Initially, Iraqi government officials objected, stressing the need to respect the sovereignty of its territory and air space. U.S. senior leaders, reportedly informed in advance of the February 2008 attacks about Turkish intentions, publicly called on the government of Turkey to keep the operation as short as possible.[246] In July 2008, the Turkish Air Force conducted another series of air strikes on presumed PKK positions in northern Iraq.[247] In October 2008, following a PKK attack that killed 17 Turkish soldiers, Turkish forces launched another series of air strikes into northern Iraq. In November 2008, the U.S., Iraqi and Turkish governments launched a trilateral forum to exchange information and coordinate activities regarding the PKK.[248]

In March 2009, Turkish President Abdullah Gul visited Baghdad, the first visit by a Turkish head of state in 30 years. During the visit, at a joint press conference, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani called on the PKK to lay down its arms or leave Iraq. In public statements, PKK representatives rejected that call.[249]

Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK)

During the year of formal occupation, the leadership of CJTF-7 and CPA, and senior officials in Washington, D.C., spent considerable time focused on the disposition of the Mujahedin-e Khalq

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

[244] "Turkey Extends Right to Attack," *New York Times*, October 9, 2008.

[245] See for example "Turkish jets in fresh Iraq strike," *BBC America*, December 26, 2007.

[246] 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.

[247] See "Turkey strikes PKK headquarters in Kandil," *Turkish Daily News*, July 28, 2008.

[248] See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.7.

[249] See "Iraq: Kurdish Rebels Reject Calls to Stop Fighting," Associated Press, March 24, 2009; "Turkish President Discusses Border Tensions in Baghdad," Voice of America News, March 24, 2009.

("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 reportedly have 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.[250]

This awkward policy history was magnified by awkward events on the ground during OIF major combat operations, when, on April 15, 2003, members of the U.S. Special Operations Forces signed a ceasefire agreement with MeK leaders. Subsequently, Department of Defense issued guidance through CENTCOM to forces on the ground 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 at Camp Ashraf in Diyala province. The key operational concern, in the early stages, was that MeK non-compliance could generate large-scale operational requirements, effectively opening another front. 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 efforts have faced obstacles, because some countries are reluctant to receive members of the MeK, while MeK members who are still citizens of Iran insist that they cannot return home for fear of persecution. The MeK's presence in Iraq is an irritant in Iraq's bilateral relationship with Iran.

As of fall 2008, the Government of Iraq had initiated steps to transition responsibility for control of the MeK camp from U.S. to Iraqi security forces.[251] In a public statement in September 2008, Minister of Defense Abdul Qadr noted that the sovereign government of Iraq should be responsible for any such group inside the country—"The Iraqi government is entitled to be the guard around the borders of the camp."[252] After the security agreement took effect on January 1, 2009, U.S. forces handed control over the outer perimeter around Camp Ashraf to the ISF. MeK members told the press that in March 2009, ISF blockaded Ashraf, preventing the delivery of supplies including food and water.[253]

At the political level, the GoI has underscored its intent to close the facility. In January 2009, during a visit to Tehran, National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffaq al-Rubaie stated, "The only choices open to members of this group are to return to Iran or to choose another country," and he added, "…the camp will be part of history within two months." In March 2009, Iran's supreme religious leader Ayatollah Khamenei reportedly expressed some impatience, telling visiting Iraqi

[250] Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Terror Watch: Shades of Gray," *Newsweek*, October 17, 2007.

[251] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, August 2008. Early indications of GoI intent were reportedly causing anxiety for members of the MeK.

[252] Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, Mr. Abdul Qadr al-Mufriji, Minister of Defense, and LTG Frank Helmick, Commanding General, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, September 10, 2008.

[253] See Rod Nordland, "With Local Control, New Troubles in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 16, 2009.

President Talabani, "We await the implementation of our agreement regarding the expulsion of the hypocrites."[254]

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. Given the scope and scale of the mission, and its lack of precise historical precedents, there has been ample need and opportunity for learning and adaptation.

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 early operations during formal occupation, "Fallujah II," COIN operations in Tal Afar, Operation Together Forward, the operations associated with the 2007 "New Way Forward," and surge follow-on operations in 2008. 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."[255] 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.

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."[256]

[254] Scott Peterson, "Iran Pushes Iraq to Close MKO Camp," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 2009.
[255] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, p.88.
[256] See BBC, "US faces Iraq guerrilla war," July 16, 2003, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3072899.stm.

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, he argued, in Iraq there were "five different things": "looters, criminals, remnants of the Ba'athist regime, foreign terrorists, and those influenced by Iran."[257]

In his account of that year, CJTF-7 Commanding General LTG Sanchez wrote that by July 2003, he and GEN Abizaid, his boss, had recognized that what they faced was an insurgency.[258] A UK officer serving as Special Assistant to LTG Sanchez drafted a paper outlining the concepts of insurgency and counter-insurgency and their possible application to Iraq. The paper's ideas, and its nomenclature, gained traction and helped inform the command's planning.[259]

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."[260]

Military Strategy and 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 functions.[261] 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.[262]

Accordingly, CJTF-7 built its plans around four basic lines of operation, or categories of effort—political (governance), economic, essential services, and security—which differed only slightly from the categories in use in early 2008. Those lines of operation were echoed in the plans of

[257] 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."

[258] Ricardo S. Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story*, New York: Harper, 2008, pp.231-232.

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

[260] 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.

[261] 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.

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

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."[263]

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 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.[264]

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."[265]

The security line of operation also included early partnerships with nascent Iraqi security forces, including mentoring as well as formal training. 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.[266] GEN Abizaid's theory was that the very presence of U.S. forces in Iraq was an "antibody" in Iraqi society.[267] Therefore, to remove the possibility that insurgents could leverage

[263] 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."

[264] In January 2004, when abuse allegations were brought forward, CJTF-7 issued a press 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.

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

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

[267] Ricardo S. Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story*, New York: Harper, 2008, p.232.

the presence of an occupation force to win popular support, a key goal was to move quickly to an "overwatch" posture. Doing so would require an accelerated stand-up of Iraqi security forces. That approach shared with later COIN approaches the premise that U.S. forces alone could not "win"—that success in the security sphere would require acting by, with and through Iraqis. It differed sharply from later COIN approaches, however, in terms of implications for the U.S. forces footprint, size of presence, and many activities.

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 governments, commanders helped select provincial and local councils to serve in temporary advisory capacities.[268]

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. In particular, GEN Abizaid's goal of diminishing the presence of U.S. "antibodies" in Iraq society was not realized, since highly inchoate Iraqi security forces training efforts, led by CPA, had not had time to yield results. The basic assumption of CJTF-7—that establishing security required simultaneous application of all the lines of operation—may never have been 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.[269]

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

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

[269] 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.

shuffling of responsible military units, which left little opportunity to establish local relationships or build expertise.[270] Building relationships with the population is critical in any counter-insurgency, and it may have been 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).[271]

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.[272] And some senior U.S. officials expressed concerns about the reactions of other governments in the region, and of Sunni Arabs elsewhere in Iraq.[273]

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.[274]

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

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

[272] 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.

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

[274] 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.

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 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, three Iraqi battalions, six U.S. Marine battalions and three 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.[275]

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.[276] 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.

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

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

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

concentrate primarily on Ninewah—a relatively high troops-to-population ratio. In early 2004, 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.[277] 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.[278]

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."[279]

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.[280]

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.

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[277] 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."

[278] 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.

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

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

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.[281]

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."[282] 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.[283]

"Clear, Hold, Build"

A short time later, the Administration adopted and expanded on the "clear, hold" lexicon to describe the overall strategy in Iraq.[284] 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."[285] About three weeks later, in a major Veterans Day speech, President Bush echoed Secretary Rice's "clear, hold, build" language almost verbatim.[286]

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."[287]

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

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

[283] *Ibid.*

[284] 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.

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

[286] 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.

[287] 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 (continued...)

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.[288]

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."[289]

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."[290] The Operation was predicated on basic counter-insurgency principles—"to secure the citizens' lives here in Baghdad."[291]

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.[292] 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.[293]

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,

(...continued)

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.

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

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

[290] 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.

[291] 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.

[292] 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.

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

"It's obviously a multi-pronged approach ... but those [other tracks] are mostly the government of Iraq side of the house."[294]

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 Iraqi and coalition forces were "constantly going back in and doing clearing operations again."[295]

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."[296]

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."[297] 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, some input from key observers was solicited, options were considered, and a decision was made and announced by the Administration—to pursue a "New Way Forward" in Iraq.[298]

"New Way Forward" National Strategy: Theory of the Case

While the Administration's 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.

[294] 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.

[295] 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.

[296] 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.

[297] 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.

[298] For a detailed account of theory and practice under the New Way Forward strategy, see Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2008.

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.[299] 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."[300] And 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."[301]

This thinking, though new as the premise for U.S. Iraq strategy, was not new to practitioners on the ground. As early as 2003, some U.S. practitioners in Iraq had suggested 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.[302] The New Way Forward institutionalized that view.

The 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 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."[303]

By early 2008, the basic premise had met with broad if 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."[304] Retired Marine Corps General James Jones, who led a congressionally mandated review of Iraqi Security Forces in 2007, described it differently. He 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."[305]

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 deploy additional military units to Iraq, primarily

[299] 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.

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

[301] 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.

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

[303] 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.

[304] 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.

[305] 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.

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."[306]

The surge forces would grow to 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. The number of U.S. forces in Iraq reached a peak of about 168,000 U.S. troops in October 2007.

The surge effort also included a civilian component—increasing the number of civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the size of their staffs. A White House Fact Sheet stated, "PRTs are a key element of the President's 'New Way Forward' Strategy."[307]

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.[308] 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, close to the height of the surge, 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.[309] The January 2008 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."[310]

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.

[306] 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.

[307] 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.

[308] 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."

[309] Conversations with Division Commanders, January 2008.

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

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 gated 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."[311] 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."[312]

Some initial press coverage took note of some citizens' dismay at the tighter controls that gated communities brought.[313] 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."[314]

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 until February 2008, stated, "You have to get out and live with the people."[315] 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."[316] As MNF-I Commanding General David Petraeus commented in July 2008, explaining surge approaches: "The only way to secure a population is to live with it—you can't commute to this fight."[317]

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 have stressed the critical role JSSs and COPs played during the surge. General Petraeus noted in March 2007 that they allowed the development of relationships

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

[312] 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.

[313] 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).

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

[315] 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.

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

[317] David Petraeus, Interview with Charles Gibson, *World News*, ABC, July 28, 2008.

with local populations.[318] Multi-National Division-Baghdad leaders called the creation of these outposts the "biggest change over time" in coalition operations in Iraq.[319]

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."[320] 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."[321] 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."[322]

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, Iraqi leaders had signaled that Iraqi and coalition forces would have "a green light" to enter those neighborhoods.[323]

Surge Operations in 2007

Enabled by the greater availability of U.S. and Iraqi forces in 2007, U.S. military commanders launched a series of major "combined" operations with their Iraqi security forces counterparts.

Baghdad Security Plan

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

[318] 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.

[319] Interviews with MNF-I subordinate commanders, January 2008.

[320] 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.

[321] 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.

[322] 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.

[323] 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.

defined.[324] As then-MNC-I Commander LTG Odierno put it, "The population and the government are the center of gravity."[325]

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."[326]

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.[327]

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, initially led by 3rd Infantry Division—to cover parts of Baghdad province and other provinces just south of Baghdad.[328]

"Phoenix" Series of Corps-Level Operations

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 included close coordination with U.S. Special Operations Forces as well as with Iraqi military and police forces.

The city of Baghdad was the most complex battle space 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

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

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

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

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

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

2007, focused first on clearing the city, and then on establishing a strong presence to hold each neighborhood.[329]

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, 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, focused on clearing and then holding those areas where AQI affiliates sought refuge as they were pushed out of Baghdad.[330] 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."[331] 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."[332]

In Al Anbar province to the west, the Multi-National Force-West, led by II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), working closely with Iraqi counterparts, focused its 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.[333]

Military Operations in 2008

Coalition and Iraqi military operations in 2008 have been characterized by growing ISF capabilities, and growing assertiveness of the GoI in employing the ISF. Operations have been carried out against both Al Qaeda in Iraq affiliates in north-central Iraq, and against extremist Shi'a militia members in the south and Baghdad.

The Fight Against Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) Elements in the North

By the beginning of 2008, Corps-level operations had pushed AQI out of Anbar and Baghdad to the east and north. Operations by Multi-National Division-North in January 2008, in Diyala

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

[330] 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.

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

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

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

province, pushed AQI out of Diyala's capital city Baquba and further up the Diyala River Valley. Some members of AQI sought to establish the northern city of Mosul as their last stronghold—their "center of gravity."[334]

In 2007, through the height of the surge, Ninewah province and its capital city Mosul had been an "economy of force" area for both U.S. and Iraqi forces, as additional forces were sent south to Baghdad and nearby areas.[335] Ninewah province offered AQI affiliates some geographic advantages, including land routes out to Iraq's porous western border. It also offered a volatile mixed population, including governing structures largely controlled by Kurds, a sizable Sunni Arab population that felt disenfranchised, and Christian, Yazidi, and other minority groups.

On January 25, 2008, Prime Minister Maliki announced that there would be a major new Iraqi and coalition offensive against AQI in Mosul and stated that it would be "decisive."[336] The Prime Minister established a new Ninewah Operations Command (NOC), designed to coordinate operations by all ISF. The NOC was scheduled to reach full operating capacity in May 2008, but as one senior U.S. commander noted, "they just weren't ready." Nevertheless, ISF did launch some clearing operations and took steps to secure Mosul including setting up check points and maintaining a presence at combat outposts.[337] MNC-I noted its intent, once progress in Diyala province allows, to go back and complete the effort in Mosul, to "get it set."

In October 2008, U.S. and Iraqi forces struck a major blow against AQI in Mosul by killing Abu Qaswarah, the senior AQI emir of northern Iraq. According to U.S. commanders on the ground, that successful operation was made possible by a series of actions and information-gathering by U.S. and Iraqi forces over preceding months, and his death was expected to disrupt the AQI network significantly.[338]

According to U.S. commanders, operations in Mosul in 2008 benefitted from an initiative by Multi-National Corp-Iraq (MNC-I) in the Jazeera desert, west of Mosul. MNC-I formed a task force around a military intelligence brigade headquarters, based it in the desert, and tasked it to coordinate intelligence fusion, drawing on sources from the U.S. Marines in the west, and U.S. and Iraqi SOF, in addition to its own assets. Commanders note that the approach has facilitated identifying and interdicting fighters coming across the desert toward Mosul.[339]

Meanwhile, in January 2008, operations in Diyala province, east of Baghdad, had driven AQI affiliates out of major population centers into rural areas. One U.S. military commander, emphasizing AQI's lack of cohesive structure, described them as "a bunch of gangs under the Al Qaeda rubric."[340]

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[334] Interviews with MNC-I and MND-North officials, January and August 2008.

[335] Interviews with MNC-I and MND-N officials, August 2008. See also Solomon Moore, "In Mosul, New Test of Rebuilt Iraqi Army," *New York Times*, March 20, 2008; Moore reports that at one point, the demands of the surge in Baghdad left only 750 U.S. Soldiers in Mosul, and 2,000 in Ninewah altogether.

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

[337] Interviews with MND-N officials, August 2008. See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, p.20.

[338] Information from MNF-I subordinate commanders, October 2008.

[339] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008. The Corps-level operation in this region is called Operation DAN (Defeat Al-Qaeda in the North).

[340] Interview with MNF-I subordinate commander, August 2008.

In late July 2008, ISF, supported by coalition forces, launched operations against AQI in Diyala. Before the operations began, Prime Minister Maliki publicly stated the intention to launch operations, and as a result, according to U.S. commanders, many of the "bad guys" simply ran away.[341] In the view of one U.S. commander, that approach may have "pushed the problem down the road," but on the other hand, he added, it might allow time for ISF capabilities to develop further. U.S. support to the operations included conducting blocking operations, to try to catch AQI affiliates attempting to flee,[342] as well as providing air support, some logistics, and engineering support.[343]

According to U.S. commanders, the Diyala operations were the first to include rehearsals by the ISF and joint planning with Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Iraqi officials noted that the Diyala operations more than two Iraqi Army divisions, and more than one division from the Ministry of Interior.[344] U.S. commanders add that while the Iraqi Army demonstrated some proficiency in "clearing," it has been harder for the Iraqis to figure out how to "hold" cleared areas—Iraqi planning for the "hold" portion of the operations was insufficient and hampered by a lack of Iraqi police.[345]

The Fight Against Shi'a Extremists in the South

On March 25, 2008, based on direction from Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqi security forces launched a major operation, *Sawlat al-Fursan* (Charge of the Knights) in Basra, with the stated aim of targeting criminals operating under religious or political cover.[346] 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 the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (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."[347]

Prior to the operations, by many accounts, key militias in Basra controlled local councils and much of the flow of daily life on the streets of the city.[348] In 2007, the UK-led Multi-National Division-Southeast (MND-SE), responsible for Basra, had determined that "the UK presence in Basra was a catalyst for violence." In August of that year, UK forces consolidated at the airport,

[341] See Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, Major General Mohammed al-Askari, Iraqi Ministry of Defense Spokesman, and Brigadier General David Perkins, MNF-I Spokesman, July 30, 2008.

[342] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[343] See Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, Major General Mohammed al-Askari, Iraqi Ministry of Defense Spokesman, and Brigadier General David Perkins, MNF-I Spokesman, July 30, 2008.

[344] See Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, Major General Mohammed al-Askari, Iraqi Ministry of Defense Spokesman, and Brigadier General David Perkins, MNF-I Spokesman, July 30, 2008.

[345] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[346] Maliki stated publicly that the operation was going after "criminals, terrorist forces, and outlaws." See Alexandra Zavis, "Iraqi Shiites Clash in Basra," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2008.

[347] Quoted by Alexandra Zavis, "Iraqi Shiites Clash in Basra," *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.

[348] Interviews with MNC-I subordinate commanders, and with Commanding General of the Basra Operations Command, Major General Mohammed Hameidi, August 2008.

outside the city, and assumed an overwatch posture.[349] In an apparent attempt at reconciliation, the division reportedly made an accommodation with the *Jaish al-Mahdi* (JAM), agreeing to limit its own presence in the city.[350]

The launch of the "Charge" was, by many accounts, precipitate. In March 2008, Iraqi forces in Basra, assisted by UK advisors, had been preparing a staged plan to take back Basra, including setting conditions first, and then launching operations in June. According to Iraqi civilian and military officials in Basra, and U.S. and UK military officials, the Iraqi operation was not well-planned. Some officials, who were directly involved, note that when the Prime Minister arrived in Basra in March, he had been prepared only for a "limited operation" and was surprised by the magnitude of the challenge.[351] Some observers suggest that Maliki was emboldened by progress against AQI in the north, and somewhat over-confident in the abilities of the ISF.

The ISF applied considerable forces to the effort, including 21 Iraqi Army battalions and 8 National Police battalions—reportedly some 30,000 Iraqi forces altogether, including special operations and conventional army forces, as well as police.[352] Extremists in Basra mounted fierce resistance—including simultaneous attacks on 25 Iraqi police stations by JAM-affiliated forces.[353] Iraqi Minister of Defense Abdel Qadr Jassim was quoted as saying, "We supposed that this operation would be a normal operation, but we were surprised by this resistance and have been obliged to change our plans and our tactics."[354]

U.S. military officials report that without substantial assistance from the coalition, the operation would have been in jeopardy. As one senior U.S. commander explained it, Prime Minister Maliki had staked his reputation on the operation—if the operation failed, the government might collapse, so, he added, "We made sure that it would be successful."[355] Coalition support included the advice and support of embedded transition teams, air strikes, and air lift.[356]

According to coalition officials, while many of the ISF performed competently, some—as widely reported—did not. One newly formed Iraq Army brigade, the 52nd, which had no combat experience, seemingly collapsed under the pressure. In April 2008, the GoI noted that more than 1,000 members of the ISF had laid down their weapons during the fight. Accordingly, some 500 Iraqi Army Soldiers, and 421 members of the Iraqi Police in Basra, were fired.[357]

In the aftermath of the Basra operations, coalition and Iraqi commanders reported that the security situation had improved markedly. Accordingly to MND-SE, the ISF regained freedom of

[349] Interviews with MND-SE officials, August 2008.

[350] Interviews with UK military official, August 2008.

[351] Interviews with UK and Iraqi officials, Basra, August 2008.

[352] Interviews with UK military officials, Basra, August 2008.

[353] Interview with UK military official, Basra, August 2008.

[354] See "U.S. Forces Drawn Deeper Into Iraq Crackdown," *Reuters*, March 28, 2008.

[355] Interview with MNC-I official, August 2008.

[356] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008. See also MNF-I Press Conference, Major General Kevin Bergner, March 26, 2008. In August 2008, reports emerged that UK ground forces did not enter the city during the heavy fighting, due to the prior accommodation with Moqtada al-Sadr, which provided that UK combat forces could not enter Basra without permission from the UK Minister of Defence. See Deborah Haynes and Michael Evans, "Secret Deal Kept British Army Out Of Battle for Basra," *London Times*, August 5, 2008.

[357] See Stephen Farrell and Qais Mizher, "Iraq Dismisses 1,300 After Basra Offensive," *New York Times*, April 14, 2008.

movement throughout the city.[358] According to an Iraqi Army commander, security was much better, and the main challenge now was to act against criminals and outlaws.[359]

In March 2008, as operations in Basra commenced, some JAM elements stepped up attacks targeting coalition and Iraqi forces in Baghdad. The attacks included significant targeting of the International Zone, primarily from the direction of Sadr City, a stronghold of supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Sadr family.

To quell the attacks, U.S. and Iraqi forces launched operations, first of all targeting the southern part of Sadr City where many rocket attacks were originating. According to a senior U.S. military official, the Iraqi security forces, perhaps focused on the ongoing Basra operations, were reluctant to engage—he added, "We had to drag them to the fight."[360] U.S. forces, while largely remaining outside Sadr City itself, brought to the fight air weapons teams and substantial layered ISR.[361]

After simmering for nearly two months, with continual pressure applied by coalition and Iraqi forces, the fight in Sadr City ended in May 2008 with a deal struck between Moqtada al-Sadr and the GoI. The arrangements reportedly allowed the ISF full access to the area. They called for an end to the launching of rockets and mortars from Sadr City, and for the removal of any explosives that had been laid down. They did not require the disbanding or disarming of JAM forces—and JAM affirmed that it did not possess any medium or heavy weapons.[362] In the aftermath of the fighting in Sadr City, U.S. officials confirmed that ISF freedom of movement had been restored, and local residents reportedly confirmed that the grip of control by Shi'a militias over the local economy and public services had relaxed.[363]

In June 2008, the ISF launched clearing operations in Amarah, capital city of Maysan province just north of Basra. While little resistance was encountered, ISF found a number of weapons caches, assisted by information from the local population. The ISF followed by providing humanitarian assistance in the form of hot meals, and coalition forces introduced a temporary employment program, hiring local residents to remove trash and debris from city streets. U.S. commanders noted that the Amarah operations may have been the first that the ISF carefully planned.[364]

[358] Interview with MND-SE officials, August 2008. The officials noted that the situation in Basra, post-operations, was "a lot like Cairo."

[359] Interview with Iraqi Army commander, August 2008.

[360] Interview with senior U.S. commander, August 2008.

[361] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, August 2008. See also Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, p.22.

[362] See Howard Lafranchi, "Hasty truce with Moqtada al-Sadr tests his sway in Baghdad stronghold," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 12, 2008. See also "Text of Sadr Ceasefire Agreement," posted by the Institute for the Study of War, translated by Nathaniel Rabkin, available at http://www.understandingwar.org/text-sadr-cease-fire-agreement.

[363] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, August 2008. See Sabrina Tavernise, " A Shiite Militia in Baghdad Sees its Power Wane," *New York Times*, July 27, 2008.

[364] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008. See also Department of Defense News Briefing, Colonel Charlie Flynn (USA), 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, June 26, 2008.

Counter-IED Efforts

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are the enemy's "weapon of choice" in Iraq. Usually made with technologically simple, off-the-shelf materials, they generally do not require deep expertise to construct. As of early 2008, over 78% of those detained by coalition forces were interned based on suspicion of some IED-related activity.[365] IEDs are the leading cause of coalition casualties in Iraq—and over time, they have driven changes in coalition operations, including an increased reliance on air lift for transportation of personnel and cargo.

Recognizing the threat from these asymmetric weapons, both the Department of Defense and the military command on the ground in Iraq have made countering IEDs a top priority.[366] At DOD, the Joint IED Defeat Organization, based in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and led since December 2007 by Lieutenant General Tom Metz, is mandated to facilitate the rapid development, production and fielding of new technologies and approaches.

In the field, 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."[367] More broadly, it includes mapping the relationships among emplacers, financiers, and overall strategists, including the support they receive from outside Iraq.

To help execute those efforts, Multi-National Corps-Iraq and its subordinate multi-national divisions created dedicated counter-IED cells, reinforced by experts provided by JIEDDO. Their efforts include 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, and integrating all available intelligence assets to better define—and target—the networks.[368] MNC-I also includes a task force of technical experts who collect and analyze all found IEDs.[369]

MNF-I and MNC-I officials point to a dramatic decrease in enemy IED use, from September 2007 to September 2008, from about 110 incidents per day to about 26 incidents per day. Most of those incidents involved relatively unsophisticated devices, with key exceptions. According to U.S. officials, enemy IED use seems to follow cycles of innovation.[370] In late 2007, a key IED concern was the explosively formed penetrator (EFP), able to target vehicles with a particularly powerful blast, but EFP trend lines diminished markedly after January 2008. In late 2007, another worrisome form of IED appeared, the improvised rocket-assisted mortar (IRAM)—a rocket with a propane tank and ball bearings. IRAMs take a long time to build, and they have indiscriminate and catastrophic effects. The first two IRAM incidents took place in November 2007, and a total

[365] Interviews with Task Force-134 officials, Baghdad, January 2008.

[366] Interviews with LTG Odierno, and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[367] Interview with Division Commander, January 2008.

[368] 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.

[369] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008.

[370] As one official observed, "It's like R&D," interview with MNC-I official, August 2008.

of 13 incidents had taken place by August 2008. In mid-2008, the use of "building-borne IEDs"—houses wired to explode—became more common.[371]

Carrying out IED attack requires, to some extent, the ability to operate within a local population. U.S. commanders note that the most fundamental factor in explaining the successes to date in the counter-IED effort is that "the Iraqi population has turned against the IED effort."[372]

Special Operations Forces

U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) have played an integral role throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom, including targeting key enemy leaders. MNF-I leaders note that as of 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, for targeting information, on conventional units' detailed, daily familiarity with their battle space, based on their 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.[373]

Air Power

Most press coverage of the counter-insurgency effort in Iraq 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.[374] Air power has also been an integral element of the OIF counter-insurgency (COIN) effort—providing critical Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and facilitating mobility—particularly given the lack of mass transit of troops by ground.[375] Importantly from an analytical perspective, the role of air power in Iraq has evolved over time.

One major shift over the course of OIF has been in the kinetic use of air power. Defense expert Anthony Cordesman has pointed to its "steadily more important role over time."[376] In November 2007, Major General Dave Edgington, then the MNF-I Air Component Coordination Element

[371] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008.

[372] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January and August 2008.

[373] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January and August 2008.

[374] 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 noted 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 argued 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.

[375] For a 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/.

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

(ACCE) Director, confirmed a sharp spike, once all the surge troops had arrived in Iraq, in the number of weapons dropped from fighters and bombers.[377]

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.[378]

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, he noted, was 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.[379]

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."[380]

Commanders have stressed, 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.[381] In his December 2007 assessment of the use of air power in Iraq and Afghanistan, Anthony Cordesman concludes that "considerable restraint was used in both wars."[382]

Another major shift in the use of air in OIF, according to U.S. commanders, has been the growing availability of greater air assets—for example, significantly more full-motion video assets.[383] In 2008, U.S. air assets—ISR, kinetic, and mobility—proved essential to the increasingly

[377] 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.

[378] "2004-2007 Combined Forces Air Component Commander Airpower Statistics," U.S. CENTAF Combined Air and Space Operations Center, January 3, 2008.

[379] Interview with Maj. Gen. Edgington, Baghdad, January 2008.

[380] 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.

[381] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I leaders, January 2008.

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

[383] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, August 2008.

"combined" coalition and Iraqi operations on the ground. In the Basra operations in March 2008, U.S. transition teams embedded with Iraqi units relied on ISR and some kinetic air as key enablers, and the coalition also provided some essential airlift.

U.S. and Iraqi military operations in the Sadr City section of Baghdad, in spring 2008, presented some specific challenges—a geographic area largely denied to legitimate Iraqi security forces but densely populated by civilians, serving as a launching pad for frequent attacks on Iraqi and coalition targets, in the middle of the nation's capital. In the judgment of some U.S. commanders, what helped make the U.S.-Iraqi Sadr City operations a success was pushing the control of air assets to lower levels in the U.S. chain of command.[384] Commanders on the ground had access to layered inputs from manned and unmanned sensors, and multiple options—both ground- and air-based—for taking out targets, if the decision was to "kill" rather than "follow and exploit."

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

As of the beginning of 2009, 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

[384] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

"capitulation" of Iraqi forces, and included options for using some of those forces to guard borders or perform other tasks.[385]

Instead, on May 23, 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issued CPA Order Number 2, which dissolved all Iraqi military services including the Army. 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.[386]

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. 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,[387] 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 limited 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.[388]

Meanwhile, military units throughout Iraq had recognized an immediate need for some Iraqi law enforcement presence on the ground in their areas of responsibility. To the frustration of some CPA officials,[389] military commanders launched police re-training initiatives in their areas,

[385] 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.)

[386] 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.

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

[388] 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.

[389] Personal communications from CPA officials, 2003. Also, in his Iraq memoir, Ambassador Bremer minces no (continued...)

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.[390]

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).[391] 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.[392]

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."[393] 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.

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

(...continued)

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.

[390] 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.

[391] 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.

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

[393] 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.

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.[394]

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.[395]

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.[396]

Since December 2004, in keeping with the original NSPD mandate concerning international contributions, the MNSTC-I Commanding General 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. As of August 2008, its permanent mission in Iraq included 133 personnel from 15 countries. Major initiatives have included helping the Iraqi Army build a Non-Commissioned Officer Corps; helping establish and structure Iraqi military educational institutions; and—with a strong contribution from Italy's Carabinieri—helping update the skills and training of Iraq's National Police.[397]

On October 1, 2005, MNSTC-I was given the additional responsibility of mentoring and helping build capacity in the Ministries of Defense and Interior.[398]

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 Commanding General George Casey, MNF-I initiated a more aggressive embedding strategy, and

[394] 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.

[395] 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.

[396] The first MNSTC-I Commanding General was then-LTG David Petraeus. In May 2004, CJTF-7 split into a higher, four-star headquarters, MNF-I, and a lower, three-star headquarters, MNC-I, (see above).

[397] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008. See http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Missions/NTM-I/NTM-I.htm.

[398] 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.

the effort expanded still further in scope when GEN Petraeus assumed command of MNF-I in February 2007.[399]

One thing that has changed over time is the strategic intent of the training mission. As the word "transition" in 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.[400] Accordingly, embedded teams worked 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 strategy 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, would be 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.[401]

ISF Training: Organizational Structure and Responsibilities

Under MNF-I, several key subordinate bodies share responsibilities for training and advising Iraqi Security Forces and their respective headquarters institutions.

MNSTC-I's broad mandate is to generate and replenish the ISF, improve their quality, and support the institutional capacity development of the security ministries—the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Counter-Terrorism Bureau. In practice, MNSTC-I shares some of these responsibilities with the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the three-star operational command that also reports directly to MNF-I. In working with the ISF, MNC-I's focus is operational, managing transition teams that embed with the Iraqi Army, the Department of Border Enforcement and the National Police, while MNSTC-I's focus includes both operational and institutional issues.

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" the transition teams that embed with Iraqi units, but a major change was made in

[399] 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.

[400] In his memoir, Ambassador Bremer provides a clear example of the early focus of ISF training 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.

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

mid-2007. At that time, transition teams, while still assigned to the IAG, were attached to the brigade combat teams, also under MNC-I, which were 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."[402]

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—including training Iraqi NCOs to run a new NCO training course.[403]

As a corollary to President Obama's troop drawdown and transition policy, the mission and structure of MNSTC-I are expected to transition into a large version of a typical Office of Security Cooperation, focused on mil-to-mil partnership activities, capacity-building in the security ministries, and foreign military sales. The Advise and Assist Brigades scheduled to compose the transitional force are likely to assume day-to-day responsibility for advising the Iraqi Army; MNSTC-I could retain responsibility for partnering with other ISF forces. [404]

ISF Training: Transition Teams

Transition teams have been called the "linchpin of the training and mentoring effort."[405] 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."[406] They also provide continual situational awareness to coalition forces about the status of the ISF.

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

[402] 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 has been led since June 2008 by Brigadier General Keith Walker, Assistant Deputy Commander (Operations) for the 1st Infantry Division.

[403] Interviews with IAG officials, January 2008.

[404] Interviews with MNF-I, MNSTC-I, and MNC-I officials, August 2008, March 2009.

[405] 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).

[406] Ibid.

In 2008, as ISF capabilities grew, several shifts were underway, if unevenly across Iraq, in the focus of the embedded transition teams: from basic skills to more sophisticated capabilities, from lower-level units to higher-level headquarters, and from training to advising.[407]

In general, the embedded advisory effort is highly dynamic—work with any Iraqi unit is expected to be temporary. According to U.S. military officials, as of fall 2008, the embedded training effort was far from completed—while many Iraqi units had already "graduated" from the need for embedded advisors, others Iraqi units had just entered that form of partnership, and other units were still being generated by the Government of Iraq.[408]

Interior Ministry Transition Teams

For Ministry of Interior forces, the Department of Defense reported that as of August 2008, there were 27 border transition teams (BTTs) working with about two-thirds of Department of Border Enforcement units at battalion-level or above; and 41 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 223 of 266 required Police Transition Teams (PTTs) working with Iraqi police at local, district and provincial levels.[409]

The Police Training Team mission is supported by a U.S. Military Police brigade, complemented by civilian International Police Advisors (IPAs) who provide expertise in criminal investigation and police station management. The IPA contracts are funded by DOD and managed by the Department of State. As of August 2008, MNSTC-I noted that about 400 IPAs were deployed in Iraq, at academies and with some units. 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.[410] Some U.S. military officials, while strongly supporting the IPA program, caution that some IPAs have more relevant backgrounds than others—a police officer from a relatively quiet U.S. town with a 30-member police force may not have the background to train and mentor "big city cops" preparing for a counter-insurgency fight.[411]

Approaches to police training have varied over time, and by U.S. battle space in Iraq. In Anbar province, for example, Multi-National Force-West (MNF-W), led by the Marines, decided early in the effort to triple or quadruple the normal size of the embedded PTTs. As one commander noted, "You need to be able to leave Marines at the police station while others are out on patrol." But by mid-2008, based on analysis of 109 police stations, MNF-W concluded that around-the-clock PTT presence at the level of the local station was no longer necessary.[412]

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[407] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[408] Interviews with MNF-I, MNSTC-I, and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[409] See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.42.

[410] 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.

[411] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[412] Interviews with MNF-W officials, January and August 2008.

In general, by mid-2008, the focus of the police training effort had shifted, in many locations, from basic policing to the professionalization of the force. As local police mastered basic skills such as carrying out patrols, PTTs increasingly emphasized higher-end skills, including police intelligence and forensics. To help with this new focus, for example, in summer 2008, MNF-W brought in experts from the Royal Irish Constabulary.[413]

Defense Ministry Transition Teams

For Ministry of Defense forces, the Iraqi 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 (CAFTT) provides advisory teams to the Iraqi Air Staff, Air Operations Center, and individual squadrons.

For the Iraqi Army, as of September 2008 there were 183 Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) working with Iraqi units from battalion to division level.[414] 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.[415]

The MiTTs—like the PTTs—have varied, over time and by battle space, in number and composition. MNF-W consistently chose to use larger MiTTs—with 30 to 40 people.[416] In some instances, U.S. Army MiTTs have also been augmented to form larger teams.

In 2008, one major transition in the Iraqi Army training effort was a shift of focus from basic skills to enablers. MNC-I Commanding General LTG Austin made ISF logistics a top priority. To that end, MNC-I created Logistics Transition Assistance Teams (LTATs), drawing on Corps assets, to help jumpstart the development of Iraqi Army logistics capabilities. In mid-2008, U.S. commanders also stressed the Iraqi Army's continuing need for combat enablers, such as ISR, and the ability to call forward and adjust fires.[417]

A second major transition was a shift of focus from lower-level to higher-level Iraqi headquarters. Both U.S. Army- and Marine-led multi-national divisions are shifting some of their advisory efforts to the Iraqi brigade and division level, focusing on leadership and staff organization.[418]

[413] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, and MNF-I subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[414] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.51.

[415] 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.

[416] Interviews with MNF-W officials, January and August 2008. The Marines argue that this approach to training helps explain the success to date of the "two best Iraqi Army divisions"—the 1st and the 7th, which were established in Anbar province.

[417] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[418] Interviews with MNC-I subordinate commanders, August 2008. MNF-W noted that as early as February or March 2008, based on the improved capabilities of the Iraqi Army, they wanted to "de-MiTT," that is, withdraw their teams, from the battalion and brigade level. One commander said, "It's time to take the training wheels off of everything Iraqi, to get them off of the driveway and on to the street."

A third transition was the shift, in the rhetoric of U.S. commanders, from "training" to "advising." In practice, that can mean decreasing the rank of the members of the embedded U.S. teams, and assigning them "liaison" rather than structured training functions.[419]

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 United States, 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. The program included 72 days at Ft. Riley, including 12 days 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 the Phoenix Academy at Camp Taji, Iraq. The program sent new team leaders out to the field for a brief visit, at the very beginning of their training at Ft. Riley, and it solicited "lessons learned" from Transition Team members both mid-tour and at the end of their tours in Iraq.

While the program of preparation improved markedly, the participants were still 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.[420]

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."[421] According to a senior Marine commander in Iraq, the individuals selected for the program are the "first team," with recent experience in command or in combat jobs such as battalion operations officer.[422]

The majority of MiTTs in Iraq are "external" teams—that is, they come out of the Ft. Riley and MCTAG systems. However, to help meet demand, about 20% of the MiTTs are "taken out of hide," or "internal"—that is, their members are pulled from U.S. units already serving in Iraq.[423]

The experiences with providing large-scale training to indigenous security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan prompted debates within the Department of the Army and DOD more broadly about likely future requirements to provide such training in general, and, more specifically, the best ways to continue to source the Transition Team mission in Iraq.[424]

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[419] For example, MNF-W, led by the Marines, had previously assigned Colonels to lead teams embedded with Iraqi divisions, but dropped the seniority to Lieutenant Colonel.

[420] Conversation with training official, January 2008.

[421] See Corporal Margaret Hughes, "USMC Forms MCTAG, Consolidates Reconnaissance Training," *Marine Corps News*, November 14, 2007, available at http://www.marines.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/ad983156332a819185256cb600677af3/2e2ee9165ebacf9a85257395006859a2?OpenDocument.

[422] Interview with MNF-W official, August 2008.

[423] 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." In August, in its area of responsibility, MND-B had 83 transition teams, of which 53 were external and 30 were internal.

[424] Interviews with MNF-I officials, January 2008. 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 (continued...)

ISF Training: Unit Partnering

In 2008, in addition to the work of embedded transition teams, the practice of "unit partnering"—that is, a one-to-one matching between a U.S. unit and an ISF unit of similar larger size—grew substantially. Unit partnering is an opportunity for U.S. units to provide an example of how a headquarters functions, how decisions are made, and how efforts are coordinated. The "lessons" are provided by fellow combat units that, like their Iraqi partners, practice the "curriculum" daily. Many U.S. commanders in Iraq describe unit partnering as the opportunity to "show," not just "tell."[425] In August 2008, one commander observed that there was "greater energy from partnering, than from the transition teams."[426]

While unit partnering became much more widely institutionalized in 2008, the practice had been used by some U.S. units in the past. In 2007, for example, 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."[427]

Unit partnering is most common—and the closest "fit"—with the Iraqi Army. In mid-2008, for example, both Multi-National Division-Center and Multi-National Division-North assigned a brigade to partner with each Iraqi Army division in their respective battle spaces.[428] Some brigades, in turn, such as the 1st BCT of 10th Mountain Division in Kirkuk, assigned one battalion to partner with each Iraqi Army brigade.[429] A U.S. BCT commander in Diyala reported in January 2009 that he partners with every Iraqi brigade, battalion, squad and platoon in his area of responsibility. He stated, "We take our tactics, techniques, procedures and our skill sets, and we rub up against them extremely hard. And the end result is that we rub off on them."[430]

(...continued)

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.

[425] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[426] Interview with MNC-I subordinate commander, August 2008.

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

[428] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008. For a description of a unit partnership with the Iraqi Army, see Department of Defense News Briefing, Colonel Tom James, February 22, 2008. COL James' brigade, the 4th BCT of the 3rd Infantry Division, in northern Babil province under MND-Center, established a robust partnership with the 8th Iraqi Army Division, with regular leadership contacts at brigade and division level, in addition to the work of the embedded MiTT teams.

[429] Interviews with 1st BCT/10th Mountain officials, August 2008.

[430] Colonel Burt Thompson, DOD News Briefing, January 12, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4338.

Across Iraq, some U.S. units have also partnered with units from other Iraqi security forces—a brigade in Baghdad, for example, described a growing partnership with the Iraqi police.[431] However, unit partnering is both time- and personnel-intensive, and in some cases operational requirements have not permitted U.S. forces to unit-partner with all of the ISF in their battle space.[432]

Like ISF training in general, unit partnering is a dynamic endeavor—it is designed to boost the capabilities of Iraqi units, and at some stage of improvement a unit's need for a close partnership diminishes. As of early 2009, ISF units had reached quite varied stages of development—many, in the views of U.S. commanders, were very proficient, while others had just been formed, and the Government of Iraq has stated the intention to form still others.

More so than the use of embedded teams, unit partnership requires a robust U.S. forces presence, and it may become more difficult to practice as U.S. forces in Iraq draw down. It seems that U.S. commanders, in more widely institutionalizing unit partnerships in 2008, decided to make maximum use of time and presence remaining in Iraq—whatever that might be. As one senior commander noted in August 2008, "If we partner with the Iraqis for the next six to nine months, then maybe they will be good enough."[433]

Iraqi Security Forces: The Numbers

The Department of Defense reported that as of March 2009, there were approximately 615,000 assigned members of the Iraqi Security Forces.[434] As of October 31, 2008, the following numbers of ISF, by category, had been "authorized" by the Government of Iraq, "assigned" based on payroll data, and "trained."[435]

Table 1. Iraqi Security Forces as of October 31, 2008

Component	Authorized	Assigned	Trained
Ministry of the Interior			
Police	334,739	300,156	209,100

[431] Interviews with 2nd BCT/101st Airborne Division officials, August 2008.

[432] For example, in August 2008, MND-North noted that it would be useful to extend unit partnering to forces from the Department of Border Enforcement, but that operational requirements—including ongoing combat operations in Diyala and Ninewah provinces—had so far made that difficult.

[433] Interview with U.S. commander under MNF-I, August 2008.

[434] In its March 2009 Report, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p.43, DOD reported that as of January 2009, the MoD was authorized approximately 203,000 personnel, and had almost 221,000 assigned. DOD added: "DoD previously reported on the number of Iraqi Security Forces personnel authorized and assigned by the Ministries of Defense and Interior and trained with the assistance of Coalition forces. With the expiration of the mandate of UNSCR 1790, the data is now included in the classified annex because specific military personnel strength for a sovereign nation is considered sensitive," see p.59.

[435] The chart does not include Ministry staff. The chart also does not reflect the Facilities Protection Service (FPS), an armed, uniformed service with about 100,000 members that provides critical infrastructure protection for ministries and other government organizations. An anticipated FPS Reform Law is expected to direct the consolidation of the FPS under the Interior Ministry, but according to MNSTC-I, the consolidation process was incomplete as of August 2008.

Component	Authorized	Assigned	Trained
National Police	46,580	41,044	52,513
Border Enforcement	45,550	40,328	36,673
Total MoI	426,869	381,528	298,286
Ministry of Defense			
Army	174,280	196,236	235,606
Training and Support Forces	15,583	23,452	22,930
Air Force	3,690	2,006	2,843
Navy	3,596	1,898	1,494
Total MoD	197,149	223,592	262,873
Counter-Terrorism Bureau			
Special Operations	4,733	4,160	4,564
Total ISF	628,751	609,280	565,723

Source: Department of State, "Iraq Weekly Status Report," December 3, 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." In some cases, this due to hirings at the provincial level not yet approved at the national level.

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 future. According to MNSTC-I, the GoI's target size for the ISF is between 600,000 and 650,000, by the end of 2010.[436]

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.

[436] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008. In its December 2008 report, DOD reported that the ISF was projected to grow to between 609,000 and 646,000 by 2010, see Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31.

Iraqi Security Forces as a Whole

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

One of the most comprehensive external assessments of the ISF was carried out in late 2007 by the congressionally mandated Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, led by retired Marine Corps General James Jones (the "Jones Commission").[437] 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."[438]

Later that year, retired General Barry McCaffrey concluded that the picture had improved somewhat, and that the ISF were making operational contributions. He wrote after the trip that while the Iraqi police were "a mixed bag," and "much remains to be done" in the Iraqi Army, overall, the Iraqi Security Forces were "now beginning to take a major and independent successful role in the war."[439]

By early 2008, U.S. commanders on the ground in Iraq were describing an operationally increasingly competent Iraqi force. As one leader with multiple tours in Iraq noted, improved ISF capabilities were the single biggest difference between January 2008 and several years earlier.[440] Operationally, another leader observed, "the Iraqis are holding their ground, responsible for their own turf."[441] Regularly in 2008, at the daily MNC-I Battle Update Assessments, Division Commanders described to the MNC-I Commander operations carried out unilaterally, or with coalition tactical overwatch, by Iraqi forces.

By fall 2008, U.S. commanders on the ground in Iraq were consistently praising the tactical-level capabilities of their Iraqi counterparts.[442] The Department of Defense argued in June 2008 that in operations in Basra, Mosul and Sadr City, the ISF "demonstrated their capability to conduct

[437] 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).

[438] Ibid, p. 12.

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

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

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

[442] Interviews with MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

simultaneous extensive operations in three parts of the country."[443] One senior U.S. commander noted, "They can move themselves around the battlefield."[444] In March 2009, DOD confirmed the assessment of growing ISF operational capabilities, including their increasing use of after action reviews (AARs) but added: "The ISF continue to rely on the Coalition for logistics, fire support, close air support, communications, planning assistance, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities."[445] In February 2009, Lieutenant General Frank Helmick, MNSTC-I Commanding General, stated that the ISF "are getting better every day, and they have in large measure provided much of the security posture that we have in this country right now. So they are doing okay, but we have a long way to go."[446]

Among Iraqis themselves, there appeared to be a range of views concerning the readiness of the ISF to operate independently. According to MNC-I, Iraqi operational commanders stress that they still want a close partnership with U.S. forces.[447] In August 2008, one Iraqi Army division commander asserted that the United States should maintain combat forces in Iraq for another five years, to work with Iraqi counterparts.[448] In contrast, according to some U.S. officials, the perception of some senior Iraqi civilian officials is that the ISF are ready, or very nearly ready, to maintain security independently. At a press conference in September 2008, seemingly striking a middle path, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir noted that the Government of Iraq expects to have a security force completely able to provide security to the Iraqi people on its own, by 2011 or the beginning of 2012.[449]

In the views of many coalition 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.

In early fall 2008, MNF-I and MNSTC-I officials stressed the critical importance of civilian ministerial capacity. The practical challenges of growing and developing the Iraqi force are likely to continue for many years, they noted. But if the right, able civilian leadership is in place, they will be able to make needed decisions and solve problems as they arise.[450] In March 2009, DOD flatly assessed: "Many of the Iraqi civilians working in positions inside the MoD and MoI are not yet fully trained and qualified for their positions."[451]

Current *de facto* chains of command within and among the Iraqi Security Forces reflect the exigencies of the GoI's ongoing counter-insurgency (COIN) efforts. To help coordinate the efforts of the various ISF in given geographical areas, the GoI created provincially-based operations commands that report up directly to the office of the Prime Minister.[452] For some observers, the

[443] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008.

[444] Interview with MNC-I official, August 2008.

[445] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.v.

[446] Andrew England and Demetri Sevastopulo, "U.S. General Stresses Need for Time," *Financial Times*, February 17, 2009.

[447] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008.

[448] Interview with Iraqi Army Division Commander, August 2008.

[449] Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir, Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, September 10, 2008.

[450] Interviews with MNF-I and MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[451] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.33.

[452] As a rule, the operations commands cover a single province. An exception is the Samarra Operations Command, (continued...)

Prime Minister's direct access to the operations commands has raised concerns about potential misuse of the ISF for personal or even sectarian purposes.

In some cases, the operations command arrangements have created tensions with provincial-level officials, who would ordinarily exercise greater control over some provincial-level security forces.[453] The arrangements have also created some tensions with parent ministries in Baghdad—and in particular with the Interior Ministry, which apparently views the IA-led operations commands as "MoD-centric."[454] The commands also create some practical confusion, since units still rely on their parent organizations for supplies and logistical support. For example, as of August 2008, Baghdad was divided into two area commands: "Karkh" and "Rusafa." Under each were two Iraqi Army (IA) divisions and one National Police (NP) division. Each division staff included representatives of the IA, NPs, and the Iraqi Police. Both IA and NP brigades fell under both IA and NP division headquarters. U.S. commanders working closely with these Iraqi units reported that this Iraqi experiment with jointness was working well at the tactical level, but became complicated when units turned to their respective ministries for support.[455]

Long-term force modernization planning and execution is another challenge for the ISF, in terms of both cost and strategic requirements. The current force continues to train and prepare for the ongoing counter-insurgency fight against Sunni and Shi'a extremists. Eventually, it is envisaged that the force will shift into a more typical division of labor—and train and equip themselves accordingly—in which MoD forces focus externally, and the Iraqi police, backed up by the National Police, provide domestic security.

For civilian and military leaders of the ISF, one major challenge is balancing near-term security challenges with long-term requirements. In August 2008, Iraqi ground commanders were all focused completely on the current fight, while senior civilian ministry officials were looking out toward the future division of labor.[456] At a press conference in September 2008, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir, speaking about the Iraqi police, stated that "it is their job to protect the citizen and our job to protect the frontier."[457]

By mid-2008, the Iraqi MoD had demonstrated keen interest in buying equipment for a future, outward-looking force—including tanks and fighter aircraft. DOD assessed in December 2008 that the "MoD has been overly focused on purchases for its steady-state force (2012 and beyond)

(...continued)

responsible only for the city of Samarra in Salah ad Din province, which was created in the wake of the Golden Mosque bombing.

[453] In August 2008, MNF-W officials noted that in al Anbar province, both the Governor and members of the Provincial Council were frustrated by their loss of direct influence, after the Anbar Operations Command was established. MND-N reported similar tensions with northern province Governors. Also in August 2008—after the seemingly successful operations in March of that year—the Governor of Basra expressed frustration that security control had been taken away from provincial officials. Interviews, August 2008.

[454] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008. In August 2008, MND-N, for example, noted that in practice, the Ninewah Operations Command definitely commanded Iraqi Army forces in the province, but that its relationship with MoI forces was "less clear." In Baghdad, since the establishment of the Baghdad Operations Command, which formally has command over Interior Ministry forces in Baghdad, U.S. commanders have reported tensions between the BOC and the MoI. In general, the MoI has its own chain of command, from Provincial Directors of Police up to the MoI's National Command Center.

[455] Interviews with MND-B officials, August 2008.

[456] Interviews with Iraqi Army commanders, August 2008.

[457] Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir, Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference, September 10, 2008.

rather than fundamental training, equipping, and sustaining shortfalls for its current force."[458] Senior U.S. advisors have expressed concerns about still-nascent Iraqi abilities to effectively identify, fund, and contract for future requirements. Some add that the approach of some Iraqi officials appears to be based on traditional "bazaar culture," in which the goal is getting the lowest price, with little consideration for long-term maintenance or interoperability.[459] In September 2008, the MoD signed the first letters of offer and acceptance (LOA) through the foreign military sales (FMS) program, for M1A1 tanks, armored reconnaissance helicopters, and C-130J transport aircraft.[460]

Some coalition advisors have noted that one of the greatest challenges for the ISF 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.[461]

Some Iraqi government officials, in turn, have expressed concerns about the size and scope of the ISF compared to other Iraqi government institutions. The more resources dedicated to the ISF, the more powerful the ISF will become, and the fewer resources that will be available for other government institutions. One provincial Governor added, "I fear the ISF. They are recruiting too many people. They are a big draw on the state budget and they have too much power."[462]

Iraqi Army

Both the size and the overall capabilities of the Iraqi Army (IA) continue to grow. MNC-I noted that as of December 20, 2009, the IA had 166 combat battalions (BN) conducting operations, of which 124 were in the lead for operations. A total of 208 combat BNs was planned. Altogether, at that date the IA had 213 BNs.[463] DOD reported that by January 2009, the IA had 175 combat BNs conducting operations.[464] DOD reported in March 2009 that that IA had 13 infantry divisions and one mechanized division, and 55 brigades, and 201 fully generated and trained BNs, all reporting to the Iraqi Ground Forces Command.[465]

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."[466] Nine months later, in September 2007, the Jones Commission noted more positively that the Iraqi Army was

[458] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.43.

[459] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[460] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008.

[461] Conversations with coalition advisors, January 2008. See CRS Report RS22093, *The Iraqi Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, by (name redacted).

[462] Interview with Iraqi provincial Governor, August 2008.

[463] "ISF Combat Battalion Operational Readiness Assessment" slide, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, December 20, 2009.

[464] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.34.

[465] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.47.

[466] 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.

increasingly effective at COIN, and increasingly reliable in general, but that progress among units was uneven.[467]

By the end of 2007, coalition commanders in Iraq pointed to further improvements Iraqi Army operational capabilities. In December 2007, Major General Joseph Fil, the out-going commander of Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B), commented on the status of the Baghdad Operational Command, which has responsibility for Baghdad province and the two Iraqi Army divisions then under its command. 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."[468] In January 2008, the Commanding General of Multi-National Division-North (MND-N), noted that the four different Iraqi Army divisions he partnered with were "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."[469]

By early 2008, some IA units had also developed the ability to move themselves across Iraq. 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.[470] According to MNF-I leaders, while not as attention-grabbing as combat operations, the move demonstrated a different but very important set of capabilities that Iraqi units will need to master, to operate independently in the future.[471]

In August 2008, U.S. commanders noted that most of the IA units that had participated in operations in Basra, Sadr City, Amarah, Diyala, and Mosul had performed very well at the tactical level.[472] The Commanding General of Multi-National Force-West (MNF-W), in Anbar province, using a phrase common among U.S. forces, stated that the IA was not just "Iraqi good enough"—it was "Iraqi very good."[473]

By early 2009, U.S. commanders were reporting further growth in IA capabilities and initiative. In March 2009, DOD reported that "IA brigade and division staffs continue to show steady improvement in planning and executing combined and joint operations, intelligence gathering, information operations, civil-military operations, and limited post-conflict reconstruction operations."[474] One BCT commander stated: "It is now routine for the Iraqi brigade commanders that I partner with to develop their own plans for operations, issue their orders to their battalions, and then expect and demand that those orders are carried out…Increasingly they do it

[467] *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.

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

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

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

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

[472] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[473] Interview with MNF-W, August, 2008.

[474] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.33.

independently, and they come to me on a much more reduced basis for specific help with certain enablers that they may not have yet."[475]

The list of the major developmental challenges faced by the Iraqi Army—building a strong leadership cadre, and developing key enablers such as logistics—has remained relatively consistent over time, although commanders and advisors on the ground point to specific incremental marks of progress in each area.[476]

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 IA'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.

In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group pointed out simply that the Iraqi Security Forces lacked leadership.[477] 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."[478] In congressional testimony in January 2008, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Mark Kimmitt indicated that the most important gap was in mid-level leadership[479]—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 launched several initiatives, including accelerated officer commissioning for university graduates, waivers to time-in-grade or time-in-service promotion requirements, and recruitment of former Army officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs).[480] It is possible that it will prove easier to generate leaders "on paper," than to accelerate generation of leadership qualities.

In practice, the quality of IA leadership varies somewhat. MND-N noted in August 2008 that the Commanding Generals of the four IA divisions in their area of responsibility were "very good."[481] One of the more impressive IA leaders, according to U.S. officials, is Major General Oothman, the Commanding General of the 8th IA Division, headquartered in Diwaniyah, in Qadisiyah province. In August 2008, echoing U.S. military counter-insurgency thinking—and helping institutionalize it in the IA—MG Oothman stated, "Today's fight is a 360-degree battlefield," and

[475] Colonel Todd McCaffrey, DOD News Briefing, January 26, 2009, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4344.

[476] 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...."

[477] 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.

[478] 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.

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

[480] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, p.51.

[481] Interview with MND-N, August 2008.

explained that "once you clear an area, you have to put in Iraqi Police, the Iraqi Army and coalition forces to hold it."[482]

On the other hand, MND-B officials noted that leadership selection processes varied in quality. In August 2008, the newly selected commanding general of the newly formed 17th IA division was a well-regarded, competent brigade commander—a good choice. But in some other cases, MND-B officials noted, the choices have been "terrible"—reflections not of competence but of political connections that make the selected leaders "untouchable" by their military chains of command.[483]

Another major challenge to the continued progress of the Iraqi Army is developing key enablers, ranging from intelligence to logistics—which are absolutely essential to an Army's ability to operate independently.[484]

In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group pointed out that the Iraqi Army lacked logistics and support to sustain their own operations.[485] 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."[486] 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, then-MNSTC-I Commander LTG Dubik agreed that the Army "... cannot fix, supply, arm or fuel themselves completely enough at this point."[487] As of March 2008, the Army was able to feed itself—a key component of life support. As of June 2008, the Army's maintenance backlog continued, but the backlog had been "stabilized" and the IA had better visibility than previously on what needs to be repaired.[488] As of August 2008, the IA was continuing to develop a national-level maintenance and supply system, including the new National Depot at Taji, to serve as the "centerpiece" for national supply and maintenance services. The Depot is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009—a target date that has slipped several times.[489] In February 2009, LTG Helmick echoed the words of the Jones Commission, noting: "The Achilles heel of the Iraqi military is logistics."[490]

In June 2008, MNC-I Commanding General Lieutenant General Austin confirmed that the IA still had substantial room for improvement:

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[482] Interview with MG Oothman, August 2008.

[483] Interview with MND-B officials, August 2008.

[484] 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."

[485] 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.

[486] 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.

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

[488] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, p.51.

[489] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.36.

[490] Andrew England and Demetri Sevastopulo, "U.S. General Stresses Need for Time," *Financial Times*, February 17, 2009.

> There are still some things that need to be done, and those things include developing combat enablers that will enable them to do things like call for and adjust fires and integrate those fires into their formation, support themselves logistically, use their own intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to create intelligence and then be able to use that intelligence to plan operations. So there's some work to be done yet.[491]

Iraqi counterparts agree with this assessment. In August 2008, MG Oothman stated flatly, "I see no progress in logistics." He explained that the Iraqi Army started building its forces by concentrating first on operations, not on logistics or other enablers, such as repairing HMMWVVs, or providing spare parts, or building military hospitals.[492] In February 2009, MNSTC-I Commanding General LTG Helmick assessed, "the Achilles heel of the Iraqi military is logistics."[493]

Iraqi Air Force

As of October 31, 2008, the Iraqi Air Force had 2,006 personnel on its payrolls, up from 1,300 in March 2008, out of 3,690 authorized personnel.[494] According to MNSTC-I, the plan is for the Air Force to grow to 6,000 personnel by December 2009.[495]

As of December 2008, the small Iraqi fleet included 77 aircraft, 31 fixed-wing and 46 rotary-wing: 16 UH-1HP "Huey-II" helicopters and 17 Ukrainian Mi-17 helicopters for battlefield mobility; 3 C-130E "Hercules" aircraft; 6 King Air 350's for both ISR and as light transport aircraft; 8 CH-2000 aircraft; and 10 Cessna C-172's, 5 Cessna 208 "Caravans" plus 4 ISR Caravans, 10 Bell Jet Rangers and 10 OH-58A/C's for training. The Iraqi Air Force plans to have a fleet of 123 aircraft by December 2009.[496]

By any measure, the Iraqi Air Force is still a fledgling institution in the early stages of recruiting, training, and development. The effort to develop the Iraqi Air Force in earnest began at the start of 2007, and coalition advisors note that it takes three to five years to train pilots, air traffic controllers, and maintenance personnel—longer than it takes to train ground forces.

The initial—and exclusive—focus of Iraqi Air Force training was counter-insurgency, including first of all battlefield mobility. 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."[497] By August 2008, MNSTC-I noted that Air

[491] See DOD News Briefing, LTG Austin, June 23, 2008, http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4248.

[492] Interview with MG Oothman, August 2008. MG Oothman tells a story about the consequences of the lack of military hospitals: During military operations in al Kut, against Shi'a extremist militias, a young Army Lieutenant was wounded in the fight. He was sent to the local community hospital in al Kut. But the loyalties of that hospital staff were apparently not with the national government. They picked up the Lieutenant and put him on the floor, without treating him, so that they could tend to a wounded militia member. The Lieutenant died.

[493] Andrew England and Demetri Sevastopulo, "U.S. General Stresses Need for Time," *Financial Times*, February 17, 2009.

[494] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31.

[495] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[496] Interviews with MNSTC-I, August 2008. See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.60.

[497] Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, September 6, 2007, p.9,15, available at (continued...)

Force training had expanded to include "kinetic air to ground attack capability," and ISR capabilities.[498] In early 2009, DOD reported that the Iraqi Air Force had made initial progress in COIN capabilities including ISR and airlift; capabilities still "lagging" included ground attack, airspace control, and command and control.[499]

In August 2008, the Iraqi Air Force was flying about 230 sorties per week, up from about 150 sorties per week one year earlier. The number had fallen slightly from a peak of over 300 sorties per week, in April and May of 2008, due to a combination of weather, sustainment challenges, and the grounding of Cessna 172s used for training.[500] By March 2009, the number had climbed again to over 350 operational and training sorties per week, and the Iraq Air Operations Center was providing scheduling, and command and control, for those missions.[501]

In 2008, regular Air Force training was augmented by real-world experience supporting Iraqi Army operations. During the Basra operations in March 2008, the Iraqi Air Force flew 353 missions, transporting personnel and cargo, dropping leaflets providing information to the local population, and helping provide ISR.[502]

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. In February 2008, then-Commander of the Coalition Air Force Transition Team, Air Force Major General Robert Allardice, noted that like all of Iraq's MoD forces, the Iraqi Air Force is eventually expected to turn its attention to external threats. The final stage of development would include the use of jet aircraft to defend Iraq's air space. He estimated that Iraqis could have a self-sustaining Air Force with that capability "in about the 2011 or 2012 timeframe," depending on the investments they make.[503]

Other senior U.S. officials have raised questions about the capabilities that a future, externally focused Iraqi Air Force might really need. One official suggested that air defense capabilities may be more important than fighter aircraft. One challenge, he added, is that Iraqi Air Force senior leaders are former fighter pilots eager to have a fleet of fighter aircraft.[504]

A number of senior U.S. officials point out that most senior Ministry of Defense officials have an Army background—the Minister of Defense himself is a former tanker. That background, officials argue, together with the exigencies of the ongoing COIN fight, leaves them with relatively little time and attention for guiding the long-term development of their air and maritime services.[505]

(...continued)

http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/isf.pdf.

[498] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[499] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.50.

[500] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[501] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.34, 51.

[502] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, pp.56-7.

[503] 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.

[504] Interview with MNF-I official, August 2008. The initial interest expressed by Iraqi MoD officials in F-16's, in summer 2008, seemed to reflect this perspective.

[505] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

Iraqi Navy

Like the Iraqi Air Force, the Iraqi Navy is still in the early stages of development. As of March 2009, the Iraqi Navy had approximately 2,000 assigned personnel out of 3,596 authorized, with 500 more Marine recruits due by April 2009.[506] That number included 499 former Iraqi Army soldiers, who joined the Iraqi Navy to form the 2nd Iraqi Navy Marine Battalion. 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 two battalions of Marines.[507]

The missions of the Iraqi Navy as a whole include protecting Iraq's coastline and offshore assets. One of the Marine battalions provides port security at Um Qasr and Az Zubayr. The other Marine battalion provides oil platform security and conducts vessel boarding and search and seizure. As of December 2008, the Iraqi Navy was conducting an average of 42 patrols, and 35 commercial ship boardings, per week.[508] As of August 2008, the fleet included 15 vessels—5 small, 24-meter patrol boats, and 10 seven-meter fast assault boats. The Iraqi Navy expects to acquire an additional 21 vessels in 2009-2010.[509]

In November 2008, the Iraqi Navy spearheaded an early mil-to-mil partnership with one of Iraq's neighbors—joint patrols with counterparts from Kuwait in the Khawr Abd Allah waterway.[510]

One challenge the Iraqi Navy faces, according to MNSTC-I officials, is conducting the preparations required to more than double its fleet—ensuring that the infrastructure is in place, and the proper training conducted.

A longer-term challenge for the Iraqi Navy, and the MoD, is crafting a realistic and appropriate "future force vision" for the Navy. U.S. advisors note that, like the Air Force, the Navy faces the challenge of working for a Ministry that does not see their Service as a high priority, and that may not be "sophisticated enough" to define requirements and build a Navy. Iraqi Navy officials themselves are reportedly eager to continue working with coalition advisors, and do not want to build a force that would be likely to lead them into conflict.[511]

Iraqi Special Operations Forces

Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) were an early priority for Iraqi and coalition forces leaders. As of December 31, 2008, ISOF included 4,160 assigned personnel, of 4,733 authorized.[512] As of March 2009, the single ISOF brigade included nine battalions – one counter-

[506] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.53.

[507] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.54.

[508] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.33. DOD reported that those figures still pertained as of February 2009, see Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.34.

[509] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[510] "Iraq, Kuwait on Joint Patrols," *Washington Post*, December 3, 2008.

[511] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[512] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31.

terrorism battalion, five commando battalions, and support units. Four of the commando battalions are regionally based – in Basra, Mosul, Diyala, and Al Asad.[513]

According to both U.S. commanders in Iraq and outside assessments, the ISOF are extremely competent.[514] Since ISOF's inception, the selection process has reportedly been very competitive, and training—conducted by U.S. SOF—highly demanding.[515] In September 2007, the Jones Commission reported, "The Special Operations brigade is highly capable and extremely effective."[516] In August 2008, a senior MNSTC-I official confirmed, "ISOF is very capable, and increasingly so."[517]

ISOF has its own chain of command, separate from the Ministry of Defense. It reports to the Counter-Terrorism Command (CTC), an operational-level command that reports, in turn, to the Counter-Terrorism Bureau (CTB), the ministerial-level body under the Prime Minister that sets policy. 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. Other observers have expressed concern that the ISOF, despite its several layers of headquarters, might be used by the Prime Minister for personal or political ends.

Looking ahead, the next practical challenges for the ISOF include continuing to improve its capabilities. U.S. advisors note that the ISOF is eager to have access to the assets they have seen U.S. SOF counterparts employ, including specialized rotary air assets, ISR, and signals intelligence (SIGINT). One official noted in August 2008, "They're more conscious than others of how much they need US enablers."[518]

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. The GoI's broad future vision is that the Iraqi Police (IPs) will eventually assume responsibility for providing internal security, backed up by the National Police, while the Iraqi Army turns its focus toward external security challenges.

As of October 31, 2008, 300,156 Iraqi Police (IPs) were assigned, of 334,739 authorized. Those IPs serve at approximately 1,300 police stations across Iraq.

At that date, 209,100 personnel had been trained, leaving a training backlog of over 90,000.[519] (The backlog could be greater, since not all of those trained are necessarily still serving as IPs.) The backlog has real-world implications—for example, a shortage of IPs, in August 2008, to help

[513] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.54.

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

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

[516] 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.

[517] Interview with MNSTC-I official, August 2008.

[518] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[519] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31.

"hold" areas of Diyala province that had been cleared by Iraqi and coalition forces. As one senior U.S. official noted, "We've overwhelmed the system."[520]

According to MNSTC-I, the GoI intent is to catch up on the training backlog by July 2009. One approach has been to condense required training into a shorter period—the 240 hours of IP training usually take eight weeks but have been compressed into four weeks by lengthening the training day. In addition, recruits who already have a degree in another field are offered an accelerated process.[521]

In terms of IP capabilities, in September 2007, the Jones Commission concluded that the IPs were improving at the local level, particularly when the IPs were locally recruited from relatively ethnically homogenous neighborhoods.[522] In December 2007, General McCaffrey similarly observed that "many local units are now effectively providing security and intelligence penetration of their neighborhoods."[523]

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—had 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.[524]

By early fall 2008, U.S. commanders noted that in general, the IPs were competent in basic skills—enough that the focus of embedded training and advisory efforts, and unit partnering, was shifting from basic policing skills to the professionalization of the force.[525] In Baghdad, the GoI and MND-B were in the process of handing over security responsibility, neighborhood by neighborhood, to the IPs. As one U.S. commander observed in August 2008, using common coalition parlance, the IPs are "Iraqi good enough."[526]

For their part, in early fall 2008, Iraqi Army commanders recognized the importance of the IPs as part of the total effort, but still had some doubts about their capabilities. As one IA commander observed, "Without coordination between the IA and the IPs, there would be no security. But," he added, "the soldiers are more effective than the police."[527]

One long-standing concern of practitioners and observers, still unresolved, is infiltration of the IPs. In September 2007, the Jones Commission noted that the IPs were "... incapable today of

[520] Interview with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[521] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[522] 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.

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

[524] 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.

[525] Interviews with MNF-I, MNC-I, and MNSTC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[526] Interview with MNC-I subordinate commander, August 2008.

[527] Interview with Iraqi division commander, August 2008.

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."[528] In June 2008, DOD stated that "militia and criminal intimidation and influences" were among the serious challenges still faced by the IPs.[529] In August 2008, U.S. military officials confirmed that "there's some terrorist and some nationalist infiltration" of the IPs.[530]

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, Interior Ministry is in the process of "regionalizing" the force, with the goal of establishing a presence in all provinces except those of the KRG, where they will provide backup for the IPs.[531] As of early 2009, the first two NP Divisions were based in Baghdad; the 3rd Division had established a presence in Salah ad Din with plans to expand to Diyala and Anbar; and the 4th Division had established a presence in Basra with plans to expand to Wasit, Maysan, and Dhi Qar.[532]

The Department of Defense reported in December 2008 that 18 of the 33 NP battalions were "capable of planning, executing, and sustaining operations with limited coalition support."[533] As of January 2009, there were 43,000 National Police assigned. Somewhat confusingly, 52,513 National Police had been trained—this number may include some who were removed from service or are no longer serving for other reasons.[534] DOD reports that the desired endstrength is approximately 60,000.[535]

Particularly in their early days, the NPs more consistently prompted concerns about competence, corruption, and sectarian bias, than any other Iraqi security force. In June 2007, out-going MNSTC-I Commander Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey testified to Congress that the NPs were "the single organization in Iraq with the most sectarian influence and sectarian problems."[536] 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."[537]

[528] 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.

[529] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008.

[530] Interview with MNC-I subordinate commander, August 2008.

[531] Information from MNSTC-I officials, January and August 2008.

[532] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.41.

[533] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.33.

[534] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31.

[535] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009.

[536] 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.

[537] 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.

Outside experts 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.[538] The Jones Commission recommended disbanding the NPs altogether.[539]

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.[540] The other major step was retraining—or "re-bluing"—both leaders and ranks, with the help of Italy's *Carabinieri*, under the rubric of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq. As of early 2009, the *Carabinieri* were gradually increasing their training and advisory support to the NPs, and continuing to support the NPs' professionalization efforts.

In early 2008, some U.S. commanders in Iraq confirmed that there had been serious problems with the NPs, and suggested that the leadership changes and re-education had so far produced mixed results. As one Brigade Commander noted, "The National Police have been terrible!"[541] 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.[542] One coalition leader credits Iraqi National Police Commander Major General Hussein with recognizing the challenges the NPs faced and with making this remark: "The National Police has two enemies—the insurgency, and our own reputation."[543]

In August 2008, MNSTC-I noted that the re-bluing process had been accelerated by boosting capacity from 450 to 900 students at a time. MNSTC-I added that the new NP commander is a "tremendous officer."[544] U.S. commanders in Baghdad added that the NPs were being used very much like the Iraqi Army forces. One official added that the NPs were "pretty damned good!"[545]

Looking ahead, one future challenge for the Iraqi National Police is likely to be transitioning from an Army-like counter-insurgency role to a high-end policing function.

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 extremists from some neighbor countries, as well as controlling the usual flow of cross-border traffic.

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[538] 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.

[539] 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.

[540] 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.

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

[542] Information from Division Commander, January 2008.

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

[544] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[545] Interviews with MND-B officials, August 2008.

As of October 31, 2008, the DBE had 40,328 assigned personnel, of 45,550 authorized, and of whom only 36,673 had been trained. They were organized into 13 brigades with 44 line battalions and 7 commando battalions.[546] The training gap—and the relatively low level of training in general—impinge on the DBE's effectiveness.[547] 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."[548] The Jones Commission stated it more flatly in September 2007: "Iraq's borders are porous."[549] The numbers and capabilities of the DBE do not appear to have progressed substantially since that time.

The Iraqi Government's proposed way forward, over three years, includes constructing up to 712 border forts and annexes, to establish a line-of-sight perimeter, and increasing the use of biometric scan systems and personal information databases.[550]

Some U.S. officials complain that the MoI does very little to support the DBE and that, in the words of one U.S. commander, the DBE is "grossly under-funded." For example, in al Anbar province, instead of giving the DBE fuel, the MoI provided money to buy fuel. But at the long, remote border, the only fuel available for purchase was from the black market, which cost double the market price.[551]

Both coalition advisors and outside assessments have pointed out that the DBE continues to face additional challenges from corruption. In early 2008, coalition officials in Iraq agreed with the assessments by the Jones Commission that the DBE was infiltrated by outside interests, and that some members were apparently involved in cross-border smuggling.[552] In part to address such concerns, in September 2008, the Ports of Entry Directorate, previously subordinate to the DBE, was ordered to report directly to the MoI.

Oil Police

The Iraqi Oil Police (OP) is responsible for protection oil production infrastructure. Since January 2008, the MoI has paid OP salaries and held responsibility for sustainment, while the Ministry of Oil is responsible for developing and maintaining infrastructure; some reports suggest a need to further clarify these roles and responsibilities. DOD reported that as of October 2008, the OP included 29,411 assigned personnel, organized in nine battalions. Training is highly rudimentary—a three-week course—and according to DOD, the OP "lacks the basic equipment required to perform its mission."[553]

[546] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.31, 40.

[547] Information from coalition advisors, January 2008.

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

[549] 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.

[550] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.45.

[551] Interviews with MNC-I officials, subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[552] 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.

[553] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.41.

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 June 2008: "Coalition advisors continue to report steady but uneven improvement in the MoI's ability to perform key ministry functions, such as force management, personnel management, acquisition, training, logistics and sustainment, and the development and implementation of plans and policies."[554] By December 2008, DOD reported that the MoI's ability to plan had improved somewhat, but was still "not yet directly linked to resource allocation and program management."[555]

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.[556] To address this shortcoming, the Ministry is expanding the capacity of its training base to include 12 new training centers and the expansion of 6 existing ones; and rapidly generating officers through a recall and training program for former army and police officers.[557] According to MNSTC-I, an additional pressure on the MoI training system was the absorption, in early 2008, of the "oil police," whose training to guard pipelines did not, in the words of one official, turn them into "LA cops."[558]

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."[559] In January 2008, one coalition advisor stated bluntly that the MoI is filled with "card-carrying gangsters."[560]

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.[561]

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[554] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 2008, p.40.

[555] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.36.

[556] Interviews with coalition advisors, January and August 2008.

[557] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.41.

[558] Interview with MNSTC-I official, August 2008.

[559] 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.

[560] Comment by coalition advisor, January 2008.

[561] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008. Through August 2008, DOD reported, the MoI Directorate of Internal Affairs opened 4,318 cases. Of these, it closed 4,198 cases, from which 377 employees were fired, and 297 were disciplined, see DOD, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.42.

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."[562] In December 2008, DOD noted some progress but observed that "significant challenges remain," and that "logistical and sustainment capability remain[ed] a major area of concern and…much effort must yet be directed to the sustainment and logistical support capability within the ISF at the operational and strategic levels."[563]

In early 2008, MNF-I officials suggested 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.[564]

One major future challenge for the Ministry of Defense is likely to be clarifying and rationalizing the chain of command. As the Jones Commission stated 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."[565] U.S. military officials confirmed this assessment in August 2008, and DOD noted in September 2008 that "MoD performance is hampered by ineffective coordination and unclear lines of authority, hampering unity of command."[566]

As of early fall 2008, Iraqi Army divisions reported to the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, which reported to the Joint Headquarters, which reported in turn to the MoD. However, some forces, from both the MoD and the MoI, fall under provincial Operations Commands, usually led by a General Officer from the Iraqi Army, which may report in practice directly to the office of the Prime Minister. Both ministries and uniformed operational headquarters, according to U.S. commanders in Iraq, are sometimes left out of the de facto chain of command.

Operations Commands are in theory a temporary measure, designed to closely integrate the counter-insurgency efforts by all of the ISF in a given geographical area. Commands have been established in the provinces of Baghdad, Basrah, Karbala, Anbar, Ninewah, Diyala, and (as an exception) in the city of Samarra.[567] Some U.S. and Iraqi commanders have suggested the possibility that Operations Commands might evolve into three-star Army Corps headquarters, perhaps with a geographic reach wider than a single province.[568] As of early fall 2008, no plans were in place for such a transition. Further, while the "Corps" concept might be appropriate to the

[562] 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.

[563] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.34.

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

[565] 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.

[566] Interviews with MNF-I and MNSTC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, August 2008, and Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," September 2008, p.47.

[567] Interviews with MNF-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[568] Interviews with U.S. and Iraqi military officials, August 2008. The commander of the Basra Operations Command mused that the BaOC might evolve into a Corps headquarters for the adjoining provinces of Muthanna and Maysan as well as Basra but noted that this was just an idea.

current internal counter-insurgency fight, an externally focused Army would not ordinarily "own battle space" domestically.

Another challenge for the MoD to resolve, according to MNSTC-I officials, is centralized decision-making. As of August 2008, the vast majority of decisions were channeled personally to the Minister, which hinders efficient functioning. DOD reported in March 2009 that the "Defense Minister reviews almost all procurement and maintenance funding decisions and approves most equipment purchases, and that in some cases review by the Prime Minister is required."[569] A MNSTC-I official noted that the premise seems to be, "If you don't make a decision, you can't get in trouble."[570]

One further challenge, according to MNSTC-I officials, is the MoD's difficulty in identifying requirements, budgeting for them, and obligating and spending the required funds. In 2006 and 2007, GoI spending on the ISF exceeded spending by the Iraqi Security Forces Fund, and that trend is projected to continue. The MoD remains hampered, according to MNSTC-I, by the fact that their "direct contracting capability is not fully developed."[571]

A final challenge may simply be capacity. According to DOD, as of December 2008, about 40% of civilian positions within the MoD were not filled.[572]

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 U.S. military commanders have pointed to changes in the attitudes and behavior of the Iraqi population as the most important difference between 2008 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."[573]

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.[574] The term is variously used, but in the broadest sense, it refers to a multi-lateral reconciliation among all sub-groups and members

[569] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.33.

[570] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[571] Interviews with MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[572] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.45.

[573] 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.

[574] 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.

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. 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.[575]

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.[576] 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.[577]

[575] 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 too complex, and the risks of error too great. Conversations with CPA officials, 2003.

[576] See Ricardo S. Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story*, New York: Harper, 2008, see pp.238-9. Sanchez describes joining Abizaid to meet with tribal leaders and other community leaders, province by province.

[577] 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.

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."[578] As an MNC-I senior official with considerable experience in Iraq described it in early 2008, "You reconcile with your enemy, not with your friend."[579]

In the view of some participants and observers, what may have distinguished the 2007 outreach from earlier efforts was a change in the perceptions of insurgents and would-be insurgents about their own prospects. As the MNC-I senior official added, "You can only reconcile with an enemy when he feels a sense of hopelessness."[580] As MNF-I officials described it in 2008, "At some point, fatigue sets in, and expediency brings them to the table."

By 2008, as described by senior MNF-I officials, the outreach effort included not only Sunni insurgents, the main focus, but also Shi'a extremists. The levers available to the coalition to offer included possible restoration of stipends, possible restoration of a post in the ISF, or agreements that the person agreeing to "reconcile" will not be killed. The GoI is "part of the management" of the reconciliation initiatives. One of the challenges to the effort, MNF-I officials note, is the possibility that some members of the Iraqi population will misinterpret the initiatives as signs of sectarian favoritism. Another challenge, officials report, is that coalition influence is simply diminishing—"Iraqis listen much less than in the past."[581]

Meanwhile, MND-North launched a similar but apparently separate reconciliation initiative, which started in the Sunni insurgent stronghold town of Hawija, in At Ta'amin province. The program's key targets were "economic insurgents"—those who were in it to make money, rather than ideologues. The program offers them "negotiated surrender," including being moved to a "no-target list," and participants must clear a Board that includes representatives of GoI civilian leadership, the ISF, and coalition forces. U.S. forces and PRT counterparts have used several funding sources to try to find civilian jobs for the program's "graduates." As of August 2008, the program had had over 2,100 participants across MND-North. MND-North officials have described participants as coming forward and saying effectively, "I don't want to fight anymore. I'm tired of running. I want to sleep in my own home at night."[582]

"Awakening" Movements

In the views of many practitioners and observers, "awakening" movements have powerfully reshaped the security climate as well as the political climate in many parts of Iraq. While they all

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

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

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

[581] Interviews with MNF-I officials, August 2008.

[582] Interviews with MND-N and subordinate unit officials, August 2008. See also Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference transcript, Major General Mark Hertling, Commanding General, Multi-National Division-North, July 27, 2008.

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.[583]

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.[584]

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 Operations Forces and later with the Marines.[585]

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 who initially stood up to challenge Al Qaeda, six were dead.[586] 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, and later to *Mutammar Sahwat al-Iraq*.[587]

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.[588]

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

[584] 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.

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

[586] Information from MNF-West leadership, January 2008.

[587] See William S. McCallister, "Iraqi Islamic Party, Kurds, and the Tribal Awakening," January 18, 2008, unpublished paper.

[588] Information from MNF-West leadership, January 2008.

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. Several aspects of the northern "climate" may have encouraged some Sunni Arabs to self-organize to protect their interests.

As in Al Anbar, there was 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.[589]

Sunni Arabs in northern provinces, like those in Al Anbar, already had 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 were thus under-represented on the current Provincial Council.[590]

Across the north (and unique to the region), according to Multi-National Division-North leaders, de facto Kurdish expansion has extended across the Green Line that separates the Kurdistan Regional Government from the rest of Iraq, into parts of Mosul and oil-rich Kirkuk. In Kirkuk, in particular, many Kurds have taken up residence—or returned to live—in anticipation of a popular referendum that will decide Kirkuk's political future.[591] Coalition officials judge that some Sunni Arabs in the region find this dynamic threatening.[592]

Spread of the Awakening Movements to the South

Both security conditions on the ground, and direct exposure to "awakenings" elsewhere in Iraq, helped generate nascent "awakening" movements among some tribal leaders in largely Shi'a-populated southern Iraq. These incipient initiatives shared 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.

The character of the southern movements, however, was distinctly different from those in north-central Iraq, due to a quite different political and religious backdrop, and thus quite different "targets" of frustration.[593] The most prominent feature of politics in southern Iraq remains 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,

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

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

[591] Interviews with Multi-National Division-North officials, January and August 2008, and interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, August 2008.

[592] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, January and August 2008.

[593] 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.

produced violent splinter groups—"special groups"—apparently acting independently of al-Sadr but with reported ties to Iran.[594]

MNF-I leaders suggested that the southern "awakening" movements were 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 JAM "special groups" reportedly enjoy Iranian training and support.[595]

Security Volunteers and "Sons of Iraq" (SoIs)

Military commanders in Iraq have credited the "Sons of Iraq" (SoIs)—originally known as "concerned local citizens"—with playing an essential and substantial role in the improvement of security in Iraq, beginning in late 2007.[596] One commander noted in August 2008 that the program was "a cost-effective way to buy security."[597] While terminology and specific characteristics varied geographically and over time, in general, SoIs were local residents who stepped forward, in some organized way, to help protect and defend their communities. In late 2008, the SoI program entered a major transition phase, when the Government of Iraq took the first steps toward assuming full responsibility, including the paying of salaries, for the program. As of spring 2009, the transition of responsibility had been completed, but the integration of former SoIs into permanent ISF or civilian employment had made little headway.

Composition of the "Sons of Iraq"

MNF-I noted that as of August, 2008, before the transition to Iraqi Government control began, there were 99,374 SoIs in Iraq altogether; 4,060 on 14 contracts in MNF-West's area, Al Anbar province; 29,177 on 275 contracts in MND-North's area, which includes the four provinces north and east of Baghdad; 28,754 on 182 contracts in MND-Baghdad's area; 35,381 on 267 contracts in MND-Center's area, which then included four provinces immediately south of Baghdad; 2,002 on 41 contracts in MND-Center South's area, which then included Qadisiyah province and has since been incorporated into MND-Center; and none in MND-Southeast's area, which included the four southernmost provinces.[598]

The majority of SoIs, but not all of them, were Sunni Arabs. The Department of Defense reported that as of March 2008, about 71,500 were Sunni and about 19,500 Shi'a.[599] As of January 2009, MNC-I estimated the mix at about 85% Sunni, 15% Shi'a.[600] Most groups of SoIs—who typically worked in the communities they live in—were relatively homogenous but some were mixed. For example, in January 2008, in the area of Multi-National Division-Center, a mixed

[594] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January and August 2008.

[595] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January and August 2008. MNF-I notes that before regime change, 70% of the members of the Ba'ath Party were Shi'a.

[596] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and subordinate commanders, January and August 2008.

[597] Interview with U.S. brigade commander, August 2008.

[598] Information from MNF-I staff, August 2008.

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

[600] LTC Jeffrey Kulmayer, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, DOD Bloggers Roundtable, January 8, 2009.

region south of Baghdad, 60% of the SoI groups were Sunni Arab, 20% were Shi'a Arab, and 20% were mixed.[601]

U.S. commanders readily admitted 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."[602] Other commanders noted, in early 2008, that the SoIs included not only "reformed" insurgents, but also some infiltrators currently affiliated with extremist groups.[603]

ISF commanders, too, harbored no illusions about the backgrounds of many SoIs, and they shared with their U.S. counterparts a concern about current infiltration. In August 2008, Major General Oothman, the Commanding General of the 8th Iraqi Army Division, expressed concern that AQI could corrupt the SoIs. He noted that AQI had already infiltrated the SoIs and, he added, it could be the case that some SoIs may simply be "playing both sides."[604]

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 observed that SoIs initially came forward only after Al Qaeda affiliates and other threats were eliminated from an area. Some commanders also pointed out that SoIs volunteered to serve once a coalition forces presence had been established—they had to be convinced that coalition forces would actually remain in the area and not pull back to their FOBs.[605]

The "Sons of Iraq" System

After its piecemeal beginnings, the SoI system was loosely standardized by coalition forces, in coordination with Iraqi security forces counterparts.

[601] Interviews with MND-C officials, January 2008.

[602] 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.

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

[604] Interview with MG Oothman, August 2008.

[605] 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.

Coalition forces paid the SoIs, with funding from the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), based on 90-day renewable contracts. The money was paid to a single contractor, often a tribal sheikh or other community leader, who was then responsible for paying the SoIs' salaries and providing any uniforms, vehicles or other equipment that might be required. In practice, most SoIs earned about $300 per month, roughly equivalent to about two-thirds of the total income of a member of the Iraqi Police. The GoI reportedly agreed to continue to pay roughly the same salary as it assumed responsibility for the SoIs.[606]

SoI salaries varied somewhat by region. In August 2008, for example, Multi-National Division-Center noted that SoIs in their area each earned about $240 per month. In some cases, U.S. units established pay-for-performance systems. For example, in Kirkuk, SoI performance was reviewed daily. If they performed well, they received a bonus. If they did poorly—such as the SoI team that propped up a scarecrow at a checkpoint they were supposed to be manning—their collective contract was docked by $2,000.[607]

In many locations, U.S. division and brigade commanders on the ground reinforced the message that the SoIs "worked for" the ISF, while the coalition forces paid them. In other locations, the understanding on the ground was that the SoIs worked "with" the ISF.[608] In practice, however, SoIs were intended to fill the gaps—to "thicken the ranks"—where ISF presence was limited, so they were more likely to have regular interaction with coalition forces counterparts than with the ISF.[609]

Most SoIs were hired to man check points or to protect critical infrastructure, and to provide information about suspicious activity. In August 2008, for example, Multi-National Division-Center noted that the SoIs in its area maintained 2,159 check points, and had turned in 668 IEDs between June 2007 and August 2008.[610] MNF-I leaders and commanders on the ground stressed that SoI contributions have directly saved lives and equipment—as a rule, the level of IED attacks in a given area went down after an SoI group was established there.[611] Some commanders wryly admitted that part of the reason may be that some SoIs themselves were formerly IED emplacers.

One new development in 2008 was the formation of some groups of "Daughters of Iraq." Like the SoIs, they were security volunteers from local neighborhoods. Their job, after receiving training, was to work with the ISF to screen female Iraqis, to show respect for Iraqi culture and traditions.[612] In late 2008, DOD estimated that about one-third of suicide bombers were

[606] Interviews with MNC-I officials, January, August and September 2008.

[607] Interviews with U.S. forces in Kirkuk, August 2008.

[608] U.S. military officials in Kirkuk, for example, noted that the SoIs in the area certainly did not work for the ISF. Moreover, periodic tensions had arisen between the local ISF, whose leadership is primarily Kurdish, and the largely Sunni Arab SoIs. Interviews, August 2008.

[609] Participant observation, and interviews with division and brigade commanders, January 2008.

[610] Interviews with MND-C officials, August 2008.

[611] Conversations with MNF-I, MND-Baghdad, MND-Center and MND-North leaders, January and August 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 battle space, 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."

[612] See Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference transcript, Brigadier General David Perkins, MNF-I Spokesman and MG Mohammed al Askari, MoD Spokesman, July 30, 2008.

female.[613] As of March 2009, there were more than 600 "Daughters" working under coalition control in Anbar, Diyala, and parts of Salah ad Din provinces, and about 400 more working under Iraqi control through the Baghdad Operations Command; their incorporation is a separate process from that of the SoIs.[614] In addition, in preparation for the January 2009 provincial elections, the GoI successfully recruited hundreds more temporary "Daughters" to search females.

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 were 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 received 80 hours of training from the Marines, formally became personnel of the Ministry of Interior, and the MoI pays their salaries.[615] Other local residents in Al Anbar self-organized into neighborhood watch-style organizations.[616]

Iraqi Government and Other Views of the "Sons of Iraq"

From its inception, the SoI movement raised some concerns among both Iraqis and some outside observers.

Some Iraqi Government officials, and representatives of official and unofficial groups in Iraq, who might otherwise have extraordinarily little in common, shared 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.[617]

Key Shi'a leaders of the Government of Iraq apparently had concerns 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.[618] In turn, neither supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr nor members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq—or the militias that support them—were apparently eager to face competition for influence in Shi'a-populated southern Iraq.

[613] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.18.

[614] LTC Jeffrey Kulmayer, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, DOD Bloggers Roundtable, January 8, 2009; and DOD, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.21.

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

[616] See Department of Defense News Briefing, Major General Walter Gaskin, December 10, 2007, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4103.

[617] 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.

[618] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I leaders and staff, including some who have worked personally with IFCNR, January 2008.

Meanwhile, a leading Sunni Arab political party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, reportedly viewed the SoIs and related awakening movements as potential organized competitors for support among Sunni Arab Iraqis. Some observers suggested that northern Kurds, in turn, might be reluctant to see the rise of more organized Sunni Arab constituencies, including 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.[619]

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—all publicly expressed support for the SoI program.

Meanwhile, outside observers expressed concerns that the SoI movement might create an alternative—and a potential future challenge—to the national 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."[620]

"Sons of Iraq" Integration into Permanent Jobs

From the outset, the Government of Iraq (GoI) and coalition forces shared the view that the SoI program would be temporary. The "way forward" agreed to in December 2007 included, 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 included getting the SoIs off of the CERP payroll; the initial goal was July 2008.[621] As the GoI began to assume direct responsibility for the SoIs in late 2008, the basic goal of integration remained in force.

By any measure, the transition of SoIs into permanent jobs proceeded slowly. Accurately recording the data sometimes proved difficult, since the SoI population was never static—new members were being recruited as some old members were "transitioned." MNF-I noted that between December 2, 2007, and August 16, 2008, 5,189 SoIs transitioned to the Iraqi Police, 53 SoIs transitioned into other Iraqi security forces, and 2,515 SoIs transitioned into "non-security" jobs. During that time, an additional 3,547 SoIs quit, were killed in action, went missing, or were dismissed for disciplinary reasons. Previously, in 2007 before the December 2, 2007, MCNS decision, approximately 3,900 "concerned local citizens" were hired by the Iraqi Police.[622]

[619] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[620] 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.

[621] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[622] Interviews with MNF-I officials, August 2008.

For most of the SoIs interested in joining the ISF, the top choice was the Iraqi Police, which would allow them to continue to serve in their local communities.[623] An application process was put in place for SoIs seeking to become IPs, but it was cumbersome. After the SoI declared his interest, local-level screenings were carried out by coalition forces, local civilian officials, local tribal sheikhs, and appropriate ISF representatives. The review process considered, 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 included literacy, a physical fitness test, and a medical check. Those candidates who passed through these reviews were 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 were forwarded to the Ministry of Interior for vetting, selection and—if successful—the issuing of hiring orders. Applications did not specifically state that a candidate is a SoI.[624] One major constraint on the incorporation of SoIs into the Iraqi Police was that the MoI's personnel and training systems were overloaded and could not easily absorb a large influx of new personnel. Another constraint was the reported continuing reluctance on the part of some MoI officials to bring SoIs on board.[625]

For those SoIs not incorporated into the ISF, the broad intent was to facilitate their transition into civilian jobs—ideally, jobs that are both sustainable and actually productive.[626] One major constraint was the absence of a thriving and diverse private sector, so most proposals and programs focused on potential state sector jobs.

In 2008, the Coalition worked with several Iraqi ministries to establish the Joint Technical Education and Reintegration Program (JTERP), which was launched in two pilot locations on March 23, 2008.[627] The program was designed to include vocational training, on-the-job training, and job placement, with priority to SoIs and recently released detainees.[628] In August 2008, U.S. commanders on the ground reported that little progress had been made—that the program, in the words of one commander, had "stalled."[629]

Another initiative in 2008, launched by MNC-I based on the recommendation of commanders on the ground, proposed the creation of "Civil Service Departments" (CSDs), as part of a new Civil Services Corps, modeled loosely on the New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps.[630] As planned, the CSDs would provide essential services such as electricity, sewage, and sports, to complement, not replace, those already provided by existing Iraqi government bodies. In early

[623] In June 2008, somewhat unusually, a brigade in Multi-National Division-Center reported that it was going through a "recruiting drive" to get SoIs to join the Iraqi Army, and had met with some success. See Department of Defense News Briefing, Colonel Terry Ferrell, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, June 19, 2008, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4247.

[624] Information from MNF-I, MNC-I, and commanders, January 2008.

[625] Interviews with MNF-I, MNC-I, and MNSTC-I officials, August 2008.

[626] 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.

[627] 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.

[628] See Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2008; and information from MNF-I, January and March 2008.

[629] Interviews with MNC-I officials and subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[630] Information about the CSD initiative, including the Jihad pilot, from MNC-I officials, January 2008.

2008, MNC-I launched a pilot CSD project in the Ar Rashid district of Baghdad, including 390 employees drawn in part from former SoIs, and in August 2008, a CSD with about 500 employees opened in Kirkuk.

MNC-I planned to provide some initial funding for the project with the goal of transferring full funding responsibility to the Iraqi government during calendar year 2009. The theory, explained one Brigade Commander, was "build it and they will come"—that is, once the new structure demonstrated its worth, the Iraqi government would fully embrace the initiative.[631] For its part, IFCNR expressed initial 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 provided equipment and training costs.[632]

As of August 2008, however, MNC-I officials noted that progress on establishing the CSDs was very slow. One commander on the ground stated, "Frankly, we're not getting anywhere—there's no apparent way forward for the program."[633] By late summer 2008, MNC-I officials began to consider alternatives, including a "rapid employment initiative," a temporary measure that would put people back to work—for example, cleaning the streets—and provide them with some income.[634]

GoI Assumption of Responsibility for the SoIs

In September 2008, the Government of Iraq announced that it planned to assume responsibility for the Sons of Iraq as of October 2008, far ahead of the long-standing timeline. At a press conference that month, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir explained that the Sons of Iraq were "our sons, our citizens," so it was perfectly natural for the GoI to assume responsibility for them. He noted that the SoIs had contributed to security, and the GoI would be "loyal" to them. He added, however, that all Iraqi citizens were subject to the law, and so "the government might arrest or detain some elements" of the SoIs. In that case, he noted, Iraqi ministries would be responsible for protecting the detained SoIs from attack or harassment by elements of AQI or the former ruling Ba'ath Party.[635] U.S. civilian and military officials in Iraq initially expressed concerns about the precipitate GoI initiative, including the possibility that the GoI might use the assumption of responsibility to disband the SoIs without providing adequate follow-on employment.[636]

On October 1, 2008, the GoI assumed responsibility for the approximately 54,000 SoIs in Baghdad province. Reportedly, there were no immediate mass desertions of their posts by SoIs, or a higher level than usual of detentions of SoIs by Iraqi security forces.[637] In November 2008, the GoI, through the Baghdad Operations Command, paid monthly salaries to approximately 95% of

[631] Interview with Brigade Commander, January 2008.

[632] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I, March 2008.

[633] Interviews with MNC-I officials, and MND-B official, August 2008.

[634] Interviews with MNC-I officials, August 2008.

[635] See Multi-National Force-Iraq press conference transcript, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir, September 10, 2008. One can imagine that not all Sons of Iraq would necessarily find the Minister's words reassuring.

[636] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, and MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and with subordinate commanders, August 2008.

[637] Information from MNC-I officials, October 2008.

those SoIs.[638] On January 1, 2009, the GoI assumed responsibility for SoIs in four more provinces—Diyala, Babil, Wasit, and Qadisiyah. The GoI assumed responsibility for SoIs in Anbar province on February 1, and for SoIs in Ninewah and Kirkuk Provinces on March 1, 2009. The final transition, of SoIs in Salah ad Din province, was scheduled for April 1, 2009.

As of mid-March 2009, according to MNC-I, there were 81,773 SoIs under GoI control, and approximately 10,000 SoIs remaining under coalition control.[639] The GoI's stated intent remained the integration of 20% of the former SoIs into jobs with the ISF. Since the GoI began to assume responsibility for the SoIs on October 1, 2008, approximately 5,000 SoIs had transitioned to permanent employment with the Iraqi police, and 500 to jobs with the Iraqi Army. For the rest of the SoIs, the GoI's stated intent remained to secure them civilian jobs, an effort spearheaded by IFCNR. Several GoI civilian ministries had indicated their readiness to create jobs for some former SoIs—including 10,000 positions at the Ministry of Education, and 3,000 positions at the Ministry of Health.[640]

In March 2009, Major General Michael Ferriter, MNC-I Deputy Commanding General, stated optimistically, "It'll take six to seven months to complete the job transition and I predict success." Meanwhile, a number of SoIs have reportedly expressed greater skepticism, voicing concerns about delays in the payment of salaries, the absence of prospects for permanent employment, and arrests of some former SoIs.[641]

Detainee Operations

By 2008, the broad "reconciliation" intent had extended to an additional subset of the Iraqi population—those who had been detained by coalition forces. Coalition detainee operations were adjusted substantially at the start of January 2009, as the new U.S.-Iraqi "SOFA" went into effect.

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.[642]

One important, gradual change, according to coalition officials, was 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.[643]

[638] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.iv.

[639] Multi-National Corps Iraq press release, "Sons of Iraq Transfer Nears Completion," March 11, 2009.

[640] Tim Cocks, "U.S. Hands Almost All Sunni Guards to Iraqi Control," Reuters, March 21, 2009.

[641] Rod Nordland and Alissa J. Rubin, "Sunni Fighters Say Iraq Didn't Keep Job Promises," *New York Times*, March 24, 2009.

[642] Information from CPA and CJTF-7 officials, 2003 and 2004.

[643]Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008.

"COIN Inside the Wire" Detainee Program

A second major change, introduced by MNF-I beginning in late 2007, was a set of "COIN inside the wire" practices, designed to identify and separate the true "irreconcilables" from the rest of the detainees.[644]

These approaches were 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 pervasiveness of "opportunism" as a motive seems to be corroborated by the low recidivism rate—about 9 out of 100, as of January 2008.[645]

According to coalition officials, in the past, the coalition had 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.

As part of "COIN inside the wire," the coalition isolated the hard-core cases in higher-security compounds, removing their influence. Meanwhile, the coalition cultivated the majority of the detainee population by providing detainees with voluntary literacy programs, to the grammar school level, for illiterate detainees. Vocational training programs, including wood working, sewing and masonry, and opportunities to earn a small income during detention were introduced. These included a brick factory at Camp Bucca where detainees could earn money by making bricks, which were stamped with the inscription, in Arabic, "rebuilding the nation brick by brick." Imams visit the facilities to provide detainees, on a voluntary basis, with religious education. A family visitation program allowed about 1,600 visits per week.[646] According to a senior coalition official, "Now detainees themselves point out the trouble-makers."[647]

Detainee Releases

A third initiative was a series of detainee releases, an effort given additional impetus in 2008 by negotiations over the new security agreement, which was expected to require the transfer of detainees from U.S. to Iraqi custody.

TF-134 officials noted in August 2008 that for about 9% of detainees at that time, U.S. forces had "releasable evidence with legal sufficiency in Iraqi courts." Of concern to U.S. civilian and military officials are the members of the rest of the "legacy" population" of detainees, for whom no such evidence exists, but who might pose security risks to the Iraqi population or to U.S. forces in Iraq.[648]

[644] Information from MNF-I officials, January 2008.

[645] 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.

[646] Information from MNF-I officials, January and April 2008, and see Donna Miles, "Anti-Insurgency Tactics Succeeding in Iraqi Detention Facilities," American Forces Press Service, March 12, 2008.

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

[648] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and TF-134, August 2008.

To help streamline the problem—and to further the cause of reconciliation—MNF-I, through TF-134, launched an accelerated, targeted detainee release program. Releases were based on reviews by the MNF-I Review Committee. Detainees themselves were given the opportunity to present their side of the story, and good behavior during detention was taken into consideration. TF-134 noted in August 2008 that word had apparently got back to detainees that good behavior counted, and could accelerate the parole date.

In the past, some U.S. ground commanders had expressed concerns about the practical implications of the program, wondering in particular how jobs would be found for the released detainees, and what would restrain them from low-level, opportunistic criminality if full-employment jobs were not found.[649] Partly to help allay such concerns, representatives of the "battle space owners" were included as participants in the board deliberations and decisions about releases.

The release program also made use of a guarantor system, in which tribal sheikhs and other local leaders could vouch for, and accept responsibility for, the future good conduct of detainees released back to their communities.[650] Release ceremonies were formal events, and former detainees swear an oath to Iraq.

During 2007, the detainee population grew from about 14,000 at the start of the year to a peak of 26,000 in November, due to surge operations and better incoming information from Iraqi sources. As of September 2008, there were about 19,000 detainees in coalition theater internment facilities,[651] and by November the number had dropped to about 15,800.[652]

In the event, the security agreement required U.S. forces to turn over custody of detainees to Iraqi authorities; those for whom no warrants were issued would be released "in a safe and orderly manner."[653] In January 2009, Iraqi and U.S. officials reached an agreement on a deliberate process by which the U.S. military would transfer 1,500 detainees per month to Iraqi authorities.[654] Some observers expect that some detainees held by U.S. forces may benefit, upon transfer to Iraqi custody, from the February 2008 Amnesty Law, which allowed the granting of amnesty to Iraqis accused or convicted of certain categories of crimes.

[649] Conversations with ground commanders, January 2008. One commander, asked for his views about the process, simply exclaimed, "Don't go there!"

[650] The use of a "guarantor system" for targeted detainee releases was initially applied in Iraq in 2004, Information from CJTF-7, 2004.

[651] Information from Task Force-134, Baghdad, January 2008, and from MNF-I, March and August 2008. See also Multi-National Force-Iraq Press Release 080908, "433 Detainees Released by Coalition Forces During Ramadan," September 8, 2008.

[652] MNF-I press release, November 30, 2008.

[653] "SOFA," Article 22, para.4.

[654] Interview with MNF-I official, February 2009.

Civil/Military Partnership in Governance and Economics

From the earliest days after major combat operations, civilian and military coalition leaders in Iraq 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 of operation remained essential to long-term success. The Iraqi government would have the lead role in 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 practitioners agreed 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.

The 2007 surge included a revitalization of the civilian/military Provincial Reconstruction Team effort. At the same time, as security conditions on the ground improved, in 2007 and 2008, military units turned a greater share of their own attention to governance and economic activities. Current debates include future civilian and military roles in supporting Iraqi capacity-building, as the U.S. force presence in Iraq draws down. One critical limiting factor may be the diminishing appetite of Iraqi officials and practitioners to be "mentored," as the *de facto* exercise of Iraqi sovereignty expands.

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.[655]

Under the Coalition Provisional Authority, 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," who were 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

[655] Information from CFLCC and V Corps planners, 2003.

Commanders and CPA Coordinators from Iraq's provinces to Baghdad, to share concerns and lessons learned.[656]

At the end of the formal occupation—and thus the tenure of the CPA—the new U.S. Embassy established several Regional Embassy 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 officials, with mixed civilian/military staffs. The term "PRT" was borrowed from Afghanistan, where PRTs, primarily military-staffed, take a wide variety of forms, depending in part on which coalition country leads them. As of 2008, the stated purpose of the PRTs in Iraq was as follows: "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."[657]

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."[658]

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 named 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."[659]

As of January 2009, there were 28 PRT-like structures in Iraq, with about 800 total staff. These teams "cover" all of Iraq—but that coverage is uneven. The 28 teams included 14 full PRTs, 12 U.S.-led, one led by the UK (in Basra), and one led by Italy (in Dhi Qar); 10 smaller "embedded PRTs" (ePRTs) partnered with Brigade Combat Teams; and 4 non-self-sustaining "provincial support teams" which are based with a full PRT but cover another location—that is, personnel based in Irbil cover Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk in northern Iraq, and personnel based in Dhi Qar cover Muthanna and Maysan in southern Iraq.[660]

[656] Information from CPA and CJTF-7 staff, and participant observation, 2003.

[657] Information from the Office of Provincial Affairs, U.S. Embassy Baghdad, January 2008.

[658] Cited in "Iraq PRTs" brochure, U.S. Agency for International Development, September 2007.

[659] "Memorandum of Agreement," dated February 22, 2007, signed by Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte and Deputy Secretary of Defense England.

[660] Interviews with MNC-I and Department of State officials, January 2009. As of January 2009, the ePRTs included 6 in Baghdad, 3 in Anbar, 1 in Diyala. In August 2008, MND-Center officials noted their intent, as U.S. forces (continued...)

The size and composition of the various forms of PRTs varies substantially. The embedded PRTs may be as small as a four- or six-person core staff. In August 2008, for example, full PRTs sizes ranged from the streamlined staff of 16 in Najaf, to 53 in Mosul and about 70 in Kirkuk.[661] While PRTs typically work closely with U.S. military Civil Affairs teams, those CA are not typically counted as working "for" the PRTs. Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) may also work closely with—but not for—PRTs; HTTs include highly trained social scientists recruited to help maneuver units map the cultural environment.

In January 2008, the single largest group of PRT personnel was "locally engaged staff." Of the 798 personnel then 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.[662]

By August 2008, OPA noted that about "85% of the DoD civilians" who were sent in during the "surge" in 2007 to backfill vacant PRT positions, had been replaced by "Department of State hires"—either "3161's" or outside contractors.[663] Some of those hires provided highly specialized skills. For example, the ePRT that covering the part of Baghdad that includes the zoo included an epidemiologist. The PRT in Najaf, where a new commercial airport opened in 2008, included a retired Air Force pilot who had run a commercial airport in Arizona.[664]

Also in August 2008, in addition to military individual augmentees provided by DOD, some maneuver units on the ground in Iraq had contributed personnel directly to their partner PRTs, to help shore up their efforts. MND-Baghdad officials noted that they had provided 20 personnel to the Baghdad PRT. An MNF-West official noted that, as of October 15, 2008, MNF-West itself was "getting out of the civil-military operations business," and would instead contribute 30 or 40 Marines to work directly for the PRT. "The time is right," an MNF-West official noted, "to transition the whole effort" to the PRT.[665]

As of January 2009, the total number of PRT personnel was still about 800, of whom 453 were staffed or managed by the Department of State – including personnel from State, AID and other civilian agencies, and 3161's. The remaining PRT staff included locally engaged staff, bilingual-bicultural advisors, and DOD personnel.[666]

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,

(...continued)

established more of a presence in southern Iraq, to push a full PRT out to Maysan province, to co-locate with a U.S. battalion, to replace the Dhi Qar-based PST.

[661] Interviews with OPA and PRT officials, August 2008.

[662] Interviews with OPA officials, January and August 2008.

[663] Interviews with OPA officials, August 2008.

[664] Interviews with Baghdad ePRT and Najaf PRT officials, August 2008.

[665] Interviews with MND-Baghdad officials and MNF-West official, August 2008.

[666] Department of State, "PRT" slides, January 30, 2009.

detainees, and prisons). They shared responsibility with civilian counterparts for economics and governance initiatives.[667]

Coordination Between PRTs and Military Units

Perhaps more important in terms of impact than civil/military coordination within PRTs, is civil/military coordination between PRTs and the military units they partner with. Those arrangements have varied greatly over time and by location.

Each ePRT is co-located and partnered with a Brigade Combat Team (BCT). Some ePRTs have their own transportation and force protection assets, and thus are able to operate independently. Others—including some of the smallest ePRTs in Baghdad—rely on their partner BCT to support their operations. In August 2008, the head of one particularly small ePRT noted that his usual practice is to accompany the BCT commander on his daily movements around the battle space.[668]

In August 2008, OPA confirmed that the ePRTs formally report up through their respective provincial PRTs to the Office of Provincial Affairs at the U.S. Embassy. The ePRTs have a "coordination" relationship with their partner BCTs. For example, members of one ePRT noted that when they write a cable, they show it to the BCT commander, not for "clearance" but simply for input. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases, BCT commanders request information and point out areas where ePRTs could help. In August 2008, officials at one multi-national division noted that in practice, ePRT members "take direction from the BCT commander." Some ePRTs may thus function more like a BCT staff section than a partner organization.[669]

The much-larger full PRTs typically operate much more independently. There has been great variation in the type of military units PRTs are partnered with, which has ranged 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).

U.S. military commanders on the ground typically praise their collaboration with the ePRTs. The staff of one BCT in Baghdad, pleased with their ePRT, reportedly praise them by saying, "You can't tell they're civilians!" U.S. military attitudes toward, and patterns of cooperation with, the full PRTs are more varied. In August 2008 in Kirkuk, leaders of the 1st brigade of 10th Mountain Division and its partner PRT unanimously underscored the closeness of their working relationship—their integrated organization and regular collaboration were evident in their descriptions of the shared challenges they faced and initiatives to meet those challenges. In another region in August 2008, a multi-national division official, asked about their relationship with PRT partners, replied with emphasis, "We like our *ePRTs*...."[670]

In general, military commanders in Iraq have stressed the need for far more of the PRTs' expertise and presence, particularly once the security climate began to improve. Some commanders have

[667] Information from Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008.

[668] Interviews with ePRT officials, January and August 2008.

[669] Interviews with MND, BCT and PRT officials, January and August 2008.

[670] Interviews with BCT and PRT officials, Kirkuk, and with a multi-national division official, August 2008.

asked, "Where's the civilian surge?" while some officials at MNF-I put it more bluntly: "Get State out here!"[671]

Looking ahead, one division commander noted in August 2008, "This is a window of opportunity with the lowest attack rates ever. Embassy people should be out more every day now, like we are." Another senior commander on the ground suggested that "ePRTs could become the main effort," and that even as some BCTs redeploy, their partner ePRTs could remain to continue their work.[672]

Civilian officials, however, have sought to temper such expectations. OPA officials stressed in early 2008 that the current PRT presence *was* the civilian surge.[673] In August 2008, U.S. Embassy officials noted that the current PRT footprint would likely be the "high-water mark," and that—based on congressional direction—the Embassy had already begun a "PRT strategic drawdown plan." Some Embassy officials commented that in some locations, the PRT presence might already be too heavy and cumbersome—as one official observed, with 53 people in Mosul, "it's not clear there's a full day's work for everyone." Some suggested that for the future, as the number of civilian personnel diminishes, it would be helpful to target PRT efforts on particular areas of need, such as agriculture, public health, and local governance capacity.[674]

Some OPA and PRT officials, meanwhile, have expressed 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 in early 2008: "The military needs to start transitioning governance and economics to other agencies."[675] Apparently most military commanders would agree—many have noted that they would readily transition responsibilities whenever civilians are available to receive them. As one division commander noted in August 2008, "We don't have the right expertise."[676]

Many practitioners and outside observers have noted that institutional cultural differences help shape the PRT/military relationships. One civilian official in Iraq commented, only partly tongue in cheek, that it is a case of "sit back and reflect" versus "take that hill!"[677] For example, in 2007, 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 at OPA, at U.S. Embassy Baghdad, the office to which PRTs and ePRTs report, viewed that initiative as stepping on their prerogatives.[678]

[671] Interviews with Division and BCT Commanders, and MNF-I officials, January 2008. 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.

[672] Interviews with multi-national division commanders, August 2008.

[673] Interview with OPA, January 2008.

[674] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, August 2008. The U.S. Regional Embassy Office in Basra raised similar concerns—its 200 members, based at the Basra airport, rarely leave the office compound, Interviews with U.S. Embassy and REO officials, August 2008.

[675] Interview with PRT member, January 2008.

[676] Interviews with Division and Brigade Commanders, January 2008.

[677] Interview with OPA official, January 2008.

[678] Interviews with Division staff, and with OPA and PRT officials, January 2008.

Other practitioners stress that individual personalities play the key role. As one civilian official commented in early 2008: "It's mostly about personalities—it's not something you can just fix."[679]

Some civilian and military officials have suggested that more appropriately targeted training might better prepare civilians for PRT service, particularly those scheduled to work closely with military units. In 2008, 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.[680] By 2009, predeployment training for new PRT members had expanded to include exercising with U.S. BCTs also preparing to deploy, at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California, or the Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft. Polk, Louisiana.

Some civilian officials have expressed concern that as U.S. military forces in Iraq draw down, there might not be sufficient military resources to provide movement and force protection for PRTs. In August 2008, one division commander noted that if the security climate continued to improve, it would be possible to dedicate more military assets to directly supporting the PRTs—perhaps providing each one with a full Company.[681] By January 2009, some civilian and military officials speculated that as the overall U.S. effort in Iraq shifts from counterinsurgency to stability operations, the PRTs might assume the overall lead role for capacity-building, with U.S. military forces in support.

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 of early fall 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."[682] 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.[683]

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

[679] Interview with PRT official, January 2008.

[680] Interviews with PRT officials, January and August 2008.

[681] Interview with multi-national division commander, August 2008.

[682] "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" brief, Office of Provincial Affairs, January 2008.

[683] 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.

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.[684]

In August 2008, for example, PRT and BCT officials described their division of labor: the BCT commander engages the provincial governor, battalion commanders engage the district councils, and company commanders engage sub-district councils and groups of local *mukhtars*. The PRT, in turn, focuses on the provincial government, helping tie it more closely into the national government. The PRT also mentors young military officers in governance work.[685]

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 have attested that provincial officials have no authority over—and little relationship with—the ministerially appointed representatives for their province.[686] In August 2008, one division commander explained, "Where the military can help is in building informal bridges among tribal councils, the Iraqi Security Forces, and local government—and it still needs a forcing function at the national level."[687]

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 people, and they they're linked to higher governments so that we can process, prioritize, and resource the people that need things."[688]

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 south of Baghdad, 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, 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 was then backed up by higher levels of the Captain's chain of command, on their frequent visits.[689]

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[684] Interviews with BCT commanders, BN commanders, CA personnel, and PRT officials, January and August 2008.

[685] Interviews with BCT and PRT officials, Kirkuk, August 2008.

[686] Interviews with commanders and staff in MNF-West, MND-North, MND-Baghdad, and MND-Center, January and August 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."

[687] Interview with multi-national division commander, August 2008.

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

[689] Interviews with Division, Brigade, Battalion and Company Commanders, and participant observation, January 2008.

In one area of Baghdad, a Brigade Commander and representatives of his subordinate units regularly reviewed 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 fell short, the units that regularly engaged them pointed out the concerns to them and urged improvement.[690]

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, in early 2008, "The Division needs to help the PRTs help establish governance."[691]

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. As in the field of 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 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 reopen in a neighborhood, as security improves, typically included fruit and vegetable stands, and shops selling convenience foods like bottles of soda. To facilitate that process, commanders sometimes sought a local Iraqi partner to serve as the primary contractor for reconstruction in a neighborhood, and to encourage other local entrepreneurs to come onboard.[692] By January 2008, in addition, military commanders, were tasked to keep an eye open for potential "medium-sized businesses" to support.[693]

Commanders have also been able to make available micro-grants, through a Department of Defense program, which allowed 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, in early 2008, a micro-grant enabled one man in Baghdad to buy power saws and raw wood to jumpstart his furniture-making business.[694]

In August 2008, one BCT commander noted, "We've had great success reopening small businesses!" But both civilian and military officials in Iraq note that the number of open shops may be a better gauge of the security climate in a community—how safe the local population feels—than of economic revitalization. Longer-term, sustainable development, civilian and military officials note, requires not just local shops but also production—which in turn requires

[690] Conversations with Brigade staff, January 2008.

[691] Conversation with Division staff, January 2008.

[692] 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.

[693] 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.

[694] Conversations with brigade and battalion commanders, January 2008.

sustainable and secure systems of supply and distribution, as well as a customer base. Civilian development experts in Iraq caution that this will simply take time.[695]

In August 2008, U.S. Embassy officials explained that imposing economic policy discipline in the regions—among PRTs as well as military units—is a challenge.[696] This may help explain what some called the "great poultry debate" of 2008. In mid-2008, as part of the search for sustainable economic activity, some military and PRT officials proposed supporting the development of domestic poultry and egg farming. Some argued that such a business required relatively low start-up costs, and would provide both employment and income for local families. Officials at the U.S. Embassy, and some civilian and military practitioners in the field, countered that such efforts stood little chance of being profitable—it cost $2 to buy a chicken to eat from Brazil, while a domestic Iraqi chicken would cost much more than that, given the costs of importing feed and cooling the chickens and their eggs. One BCT commander noted, "poultry farming is a big deal for us," while a senior Embassy official countered, "There's no business plan."[697]

Meanwhile, military commanders have continued 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 mid-2008, the majority of CERP funding was being used to support essential services, and other sustained initiatives such as the Sons of Iraq program. Anecdotally, in some instances, CERP may have lost some of its initial flexibility—in the accounts of several BCT commanders, who earlier had been free to spend CERP funds at their own discretion, they had recently been required to seek approval from their Division headquarters to spend CERP money.

As of August 2008, there was no formal requirement for military units to coordinate CERP spending with Iraqi officials or with PRT or ePRT counterparts, and some OPA and PRT officials have raised concerns about insufficient civil/military coordination. Division, Brigade and Battalion Commanders have 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 plans of local Iraqi councils.[698] In Kirkuk, BCT and PRT officials noted that they share all project information and coordinate with Iraqis "at stage one of any project." In Baghdad, one PRT and its ePRT partner noted that they coordinate on all projects and select the most expedient source of funding, and that they coordinate all projects with the appropriate Iraqi body—the right Ministry, district council, or neighborhood council.[699]

[695] Interviews with MNF-I, BCT and PRT officials, January and August 2008. The head of one ePRT stated bluntly, "There's no manufacturing."

[696] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, August 2008. One official noted: "It's hard enough to keep the Embassy on the same page, on economic policy, but it's really hard to impose that on PRTs...and then the Divisions!"

[697] Interviews with U.S. Embassy officials, BCT officials, PRT officials, August 2008. One can imagine that market forces may eventually resolved this "great debate."

[698] Interviews with Brigade and Battalion Commanders, January and August 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.

[699] Interviews with BCT and PRT officials, August 2008.

In 2008, some Members of Congress expressed frustration with the extensive use of CERP on projects either that might not be necessary, or that the Iraqis might be able to pay for themselves. Some civilian officials in Baghdad shared the concern about the use of CERP. Too-liberal use of CERP funding, some have argued, could counteract the broad policy goal of encouraging Iraqis to solve as many problems as possible by themselves. As an example, one official, pointing to a summer 2008 proposal by one division to spend $62 million on an electrification project, noted, "We're getting out of that kind of business." The big problem, one official observed in August 2008, is that "we're not giving Iraqis the freedom to fail." Some military commanders on the ground shared that concern—one noted in August 2008, "We've wasted a lot of CERP money in the past."[700] In September 10, 2008, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman noted that DOD was in the process of reviewing and refining the criteria for the use of CERP.[701]

Meanwhile, in 2008, some transitions in the use of CERP were underway, due in part to the GoI's introduction of Iraqi CERP (I-CERP)—GoI funds that U.S. forces may help Iraqi counterparts spend. Multi-National Force-West officials noted in August 2008 that they were "giving CERP money back," a conscious decision to help make the Iraqi system work. Instead of CERP, the Marines were spending I-CERP. MND-Baghdad officials suggested, meanwhile, that using I-CERP might be "teaching the Iraqis bad habits," that is, that when civilian channels are not fast enough, the military takes charge.[702]

Assessing Security Trends

Strategically based decision-making about the United States' next steps in Iraq and its future relations with that country requires a clear assessment of trends to date in security conditions, and a clear evaluation of the factors that produced those changes.

Security Situation by the 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, as of early 2009, the metrics suggested that security gains achieved in 2008 had been maintained.

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.

According to MNF-I, overall attacks grew from a low point in early 2004, when records begin, to a peak of over 1,500 weekly attacks in June and July 2007, just as the final surge units arrived in

[700] Interviews with U.S. Embassy, military, OPA and PRT officials, January and August 2008.

[701] Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, September 10, 2008.

[702] Interviews with MNF-W and MND-B officials, August 2008.

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. After July 2007, the overall level of attacks declined sharply, punctuated by a spike during Iraqi and coalition operations in Basra and Sadr City, in March 2008. By late 2008, the level of attacks had fallen to well under 200 per week – levels last witnessed at the beginning of 2004 – and those gains held through February 2009.[703]

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, in late 2007—was being used as a sanctuary.[704] 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.[705]

Iraqi Civilian Deaths

Another key metric tracked by MNF-I is the number of Iraqi civilian deaths due to the actions of extremists.[706] The number of monthly deaths peaked in late 2006—at just over 1,500 per month according to coalition data, and about 3,750 per month according to combined Iraqi and coalition data. MNF-I reports that beginning in July and August 2007, after all the "surge" forces had arrived in Iraq, the level of civilian deaths fell sharply and then continued to decline through January 2008, a decline of over 72%. Iraqi sources record a spike in civilian deaths in late March 2008, during the military operations in Basra and Sadr City. Coalition data, and combined Iraqi and coalition data, both indicate a continued reduction to between 200 and 300 by January 2009.[707]

Weapons Caches

A further metric regularly recorded and tracked is the number of weapons caches found and cleared. That number skyrocketed from 1,884 in 2004 (the first year of full, available records), to 6,957 in 2007, and 9,154 in 2008, with 503 caches found and cleared in January 2009.[708]

The cache numbers alone, however, tell an incomplete story, first of all because the size and contents of the caches are not indicated. In addition, there is no way to confirm the 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

[703] Multi-National Force-Iraq summary slides, "Security Incidents," provided by MNF-I, January 31, 2009.

[704] Observation from MND-C, January 2008.

[705] MNF-I and MNC-I observations, January and August 2008.

[706] 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 on accounts received by coalition or Iraqi personnel—and may not be comprehensive.

[707] Multi-National Force-Iraq summary slides, "Civilian Deaths," provided by MNF-I, January 31, 2009.

[708] Multi-National Force-Iraq summary slides, "Caches Found and Cleared," provided by MNF-I, January 31, 2009.

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 2007. 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.[709] After a gradual rise during the first two months of 2008, high-profile attacks spiked in March, during military operations in Basra and Sadr City. By the end of January 2009, the number had fallen considerably, to well below 20.[710]

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 number of IED explosions spiked in October 2006 during Ramadan; remained high until July 2007, just before the start of a series of surge-based Corps-level offensives; and fell sharply until October 2007. The number of total IED incidents followed a similar trajectory over that time period.[711] The incidence of IED explosions, relatively level at the beginning of 2008, spiked in late spring during the offensive operation in Basra and Sadr City, and again in late summer during operations in Diyala and Ninewah provinces. By December 2008 the level of IED explosions had fallen to levels last seen at the beginning of 2004, of less than 50 per month.[712]

IED use can also be evaluated qualitatively, as well as quantitatively. In late 2007, one of the deadliest forms of IEDs in use was the explosively formed penetrator (EFP), supplied as a rule from Iran. EFP use declined in late 2007 but experienced a brief upsurge in early 2008, before declining again through early 2009.[713] In November 2007, a new and very deadly threat appeared—improvised rocket-assisted mortars (IRAMs). Built from a rocket, a propane tank, and ball bearings, IRAMs are indiscriminate and powerful in their effects. In August 2008, MNC-I reported that 13 IRAM attacks had taken place altogether, most recently in July 2008.

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 August 2008, the most

[709] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, January 2008.

[710] Multi-National Force-Iraq summary slides, "High Profile Attacks (Explosions)," provided by MNF-I, January 31, 2009.

[711] Information from MNF-I and MNC-I staff, January 2008.

[712] Multi-National Force-Iraq summary slides, "IED Explosions Incidence," provided by MNF-I, January 31, 2009.

[713] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," December 2008, p.21.

recent IED "innovation" was the use of building-borne IEDs, that is, buildings wired to explode, and the use of female suicide bombers increased markedly.[714] Late 2008 saw the rise of "sticky IEDs"—small bombs attached magnetically to the under-sides of vehicles, and set off by remote control or timer.[715] By early 2009, as security measures designed to prevent vehicle-borne attacks improved, the use of person-borne IEDs (PBIEDs) increased.[716]

Explaining the Security Gains

In 2008, as consensus grew that security gains had been achieved on the ground in Iraq, some debates developed concerning which factors, or combination of factors, had contributed, or contributed most, to those improvements. From a social science perspective, the results are "un-testable"—the "experiment" cannot be repeated holding one or more variables constant.

MNF-I leaders and commanders on the ground attributed the improvements in the security situation not just to one or two key factors, but to a compendium of factors. Moreover, commanders noted, those factors were made particularly effective by their interaction effects—for example, coalition personnel with previous service in Iraq, making use of more sophisticated technologies.

The most fundamental factor may have been what former MNF-I Commanding General, General David Petraeus, has called a shift in the "intellectual construct" from an emphasis on transition—a quick hand-over to Iraqis—to a counter-insurgency (COIN) focus on achieving population security. Another key COIN component of that intellectual construct was recognizing the need to separate the irreconcilables from the reconcilables—as GEN Petraeus observed, "You're not going to kill your way out of an insurgency."[717]

Additional key factors frequently cited by commanders in Iraq 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; the rejection of extremists by the "awakening" movements; efforts by the Sons of Iraq and other security volunteers, and Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire and separation from the violent "special groups" wings of his organization.[718]

In addition, according to commanders, in recent years, far more intelligence assets became available in-country, and at lower levels of command, greatly improving commanders' ability to make decisions and respond in a timely way. New technologies—particularly rapidly fielded

[714] Interviews with MNC-I officials, January and August 2008. See also Thom Shanker, "New Lessons for the Army on Iraq Duty," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009.

[715] "Sticky IEDs" were initially used primarily to target Iraqi officials. In late November 2008, one was placed on the vehicle belong to National Public Radio journalists. See Ernest Londono, "Use of Sticky IEDs Rising in Iraq," *Washington Post*, Oct 9, 2008, and "NPR Journalist Narrowly Escapes Iraq Car Bomb," *Reuters*, December 1, 2008.

[716] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," March 2009, p.22.

[717] See Rob Norland, "No Victory Dances," interview with General David Petraeus, *Newsweek*, August 21, 2008. See also Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2008. Also, personal communications from GEN Petraeus, 2008.

[718] Interviews with MNF-I leaders, MNC-I leaders, and Division Commanders, January and August 2008.

counter-IED equipment and approaches—helped coalition forces against the adversaries' deadliest weapons and saved lives.[719]

Not only did various components of force contribute to the fight, their efforts were far better integrated than they were several years ago, and that integration also helps explain security improvements to date. For example, commanders note that the air component increased the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets available to ground commanders, to support and inform their operations. The greater ground forces presence, and the better information from Iraqis that it generated, in turn, made possible the more frequent and more effective use of air strikes.

Commanders on the ground have noted that the increasingly sophisticated technologies available to SOF have strengthened their efforts to kill or capture high-value targets. Commanders have stressed, however, that "you can't get Al Qaeda by just using SOF." MNF-I officials have noted 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.[720]

Finally, as many practitioners on the ground have pointed out, by the time of the surge, force leaders, staff, commanders, and troops in the field typically brought significant previous Iraq 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.[721] 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.[722]

Additional CRS Reports

For further information about Iraq-related issues, see CRS Report RL33110, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, by (name redacted); CRS Report RL34064, *Iraq: Oil and Gas Legislation, Revenue Sharing, and U.S. Policy*, by (name redacted); CRS Report RL33834, *Defense Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan: Issues and Options for Congress*, by (name redacted); CRS Report R40011, *U.S.–Iraq Withdrawal/Status of Forces Agreement: Issues for Congressional Oversight*, by (name red acted); CRS Report RL31339, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, by (name re dacted); CRS Report RL31833, *Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance*, by (name redacted); and CRS Report RL34568, *U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework and Status of Forces Agreement: Congressional Response*, by (name redacted).

[719] Interviews with MNF-I and MNC-I officials, and Division and Brigade Commanders, January and August 2008.

[720] Conversations with MNF-I leaders and staff, January 2008.

[721] Participant observation 2003 and 2004, and conversations with coalition leaders, staff, and commanders, 2008.

[722] FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, December 2006, available at http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf.

Figure 1.Map of Iraq

Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS.

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