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Iraq's Evolving Insurgency

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the Iraqi insurgency from its inception in the spring of 2003 through the fall of 2005. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section examines the immediate post-war aftermath and the development of a violent insurgency in the spring and summer of 2003. The second part of the paper looks at the insurgency through mid-2004 and discusses both tactical and logistical aspects related to the insurgency. The third and final section of the paper explores the role of foreign jihadists and Iraq's neighbors in the Iraqi insurgency, the changing composition of the insurgency movement, and the increasing prevalence of Shiite-Sunni violence in the summer and fall of 2005. The updated report includes information about ongoing major Coalition Operations in western Iraq as well as the state of the insurgency in the summer and fall of 2005.

The Pace of Combat: Who is Winning and Losing:

The frequency and intensity of attacks has continued to fluctuate, with no evidence the insurgency is getting significantly better or worse. US and Iraqi officials continue to make claims that the offensives in the West have had a major impact on the insurgency, but the data on attack numbers and casualties do not reflect any clear trends. Both US and Iraqi forces have taken the insurgency seriously enough to launch major new campaigns, and to plan for a new surge of attacks in the run-up to the December 2005 elections.

- The insurgency remains concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces: Baghdad, Al Anbar, Ninewah, and Salah ad Din. These four provinces have less than 42% of the country's population but account for 85% of the violence. Al Anbar has become the center of the insurgent operations. As Coalition forces have succeeded in routing the insurgency elsewhere, the insurgency has increasingly been driven westward. US officials believe the insurgents have found their last foothold in the area along the border with Syria.
- Despite predictions of major violence, there were relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital's 1,200 polling stations were attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty. Violence returned in late October, and shows no sign of leveling off before the December elections.
- There are strong signs that Sunni participation in the December 16 elections will be high. Sunni turnout in the October referendum was higher than anticipated. Most political parties are divided along sectarian and ethnic lines.
- According to CENTCOM, 90 percent of the insurgency is Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower.ⁱ While relatively small, this foreign element is recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.
- Insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces began to increase dramatically during the final months of 2004. This trend continued into 2005, when, following the January 30 elections, insurgents began to go after softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than the well trained and well equipped US forces.
- Coinciding with an increase in attacks on Iraqi security forces was an increase in attacks on infrastructure targets. Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attacks in recent months. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005.

- Targeted political assassinations also appeared to be increasing during the summer and fall of 2005. Popular targets include local political and religious leaders, the heads of local police forces and ministry officials from Baghdad. These attacks intensified in the weeks leading up to December 15 elections.
- In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. There appeared to be an up-turn in these assassinations in late summer and early fall 2005. The number of insurgent attacks against mosques and religious gatherings also increased during this period.
- As has happened in the past before elections, the upsurge in violence in late November was a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the Iraqi political process, specifically the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections. But the escalation of sectarian violence was also in response to the November 13 discovery of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry building in Baghdad. The US discovery of a secret torture center administered by Shiite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.
- Attacks against foreigners in Iraq are on the rise. Insurgents resumed their kidnappings of foreigners in the fall of 2005, after almost a year of calm. During October and November, insurgents kidnapped at least seven foreigners (2 Moroccans; 2 Canadians; 1 Brit; 1 American; and 1 German). The tactic appears to have peaked in late 2004 however.
- Attacks against US allies are also intensifying. The recent triple bombings in Amman, along with attacks on diplomats from Arab and Muslim countries in Iraq, suggest insurgents are determined to turn US allies against America and isolate US forces.

At the same time, there is a dangerous trend towards Shi'ite revenge killings and efforts to intimidate Sunnis. There is no easy way to quantify the scale of Shi'ite attacks and abuses but they seem to have increased significantly since the spring of 2005. This marks a partial success for the insurgents, but it also serves as a reminder that a Shi'ite-dominated Iraq is in many ways as much a problem as one paralyzed by a Sunni insurgency, and that the division of the country into hostile factions remains a possibility.

One other point is worth noting. There is no evidence as yet that Iraq is somehow a unique "magnet" for global terrorist activity. It certainly has a powerful political and ideological impact, and is a key source of Arab and Islamic anger. The number of foreign volunteers remains so limited, however, that Iraq must be regarded as just one of several areas of Islamic extremist activity – others include Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Chechnya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, and Yemen.

Insurgent Tactics and Goals

The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated moves with well-organized cells. It is extremely difficult to attack and defeat because it does not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy within the larger movements. The larger movements seem to have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or even small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.

- The insurgency has effectively found a form of low technology "swarm" tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a counter. It can move slowly, in cycles, and episodically, and concentrate on highly vulnerable targets at the time of its choosing. Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can "swarm" slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their

intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to "swarm" against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.

- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against. It takes advantage of substantial popular support in Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.
- The insurgency attacks above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are also designed paralyze the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

The Shi'ite and Kurdish side of the insurgency is far more indirect, but presents a serious problem. Shi'ite elements of the local police and Ministry of the Interior are attacking Sunnis and committing serious abuses. The Kurds are exploiting their control of the three provinces that made up the Kurdish enclave under Saddam Hussein in ways that give them advantages over other ethnic groups in the region, and present the threat of soft ethnic cleansing in the area of Kirkuk. The inclusiveness of the national government is at risk, as is the effort to create truly nation Iraqi forces.

Probable Outcomes

The insurgency so far lacks any major foreign support other than limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign supporters. It does not have the support of most Shi'ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population. If Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, if the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and if the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

There is, however, a serious risk of civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi'ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi'ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi'ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the

government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

In short, the odds of insurgent success remain roughly even -- at least to the point where Iraq remains divided and/or unstable for some years to come. Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitution referendum and need for act on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will mutate into warring Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions. The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi'ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Shi'ites, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk

As for the lessons of the Iraqi insurgency to date, one is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about "lessons," as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. "Oil spots," "hearts and minds," "Special Forces," walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalitions' side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid "Phase IV" and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the "waste" of US troops on "low priority" missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated," and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency were it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall Saddam's regimes, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, fail to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency has legitimate causes, and choose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi'ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to be preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

The Limits of "Oil Spots"

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is very useful if it means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical.

But, "oil spots" are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

Even with limited resources, neither option can really be chosen exclusively over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country -- where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethnic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot.

The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea, particularly when the insurgency is far more "humancentric" than netcentric. For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practice, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia chose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated by modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.ⁱⁱ

The same is true of the British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different targets at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "counterinsurgency," "small wars," "a modular army," and "pacification" come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning that in

many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

The “Undrainable Swamp”

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents incentives to join civil society. In short, to “drain the swamp.”

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In Iraq's case, in Vietnam, and in many other cases, the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, “crusader,” or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from the US. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can also take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power-set of local political movements drives the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems

that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.

The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are "simple, quick and wrong." History shows all too clearly that this "simple, quick and wrong" approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, "a triumph of hope over experience." The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a "worst case" or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed or because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unattended Consequences"

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the "fog of war" evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by the "law of unintended consequences." Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis based on what we think we know going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond

the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges and in think tanks and universities during Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play, the Counterinsurgency Game

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all.

It is far easier to blunder than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency, mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said "USA Water," while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the "Investor's Journal" in Vietnamese and English. This

was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?

This raises another lesson the Iraqi insurgency that the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to play it. Robert Osgood made the point a long time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself whether if they had known when the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms. Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are and less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that give both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer in future crises may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, *and alternative means* honestly and in depth.

Counterinsurgency Does Not Always Mean Winning

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in

limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point in "staying the course" through a major Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn't a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose. You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you can't lose, having no limits, and then losing. And this should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.

If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency. If the US must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, risks that will require more forces and resources; or it must otherwise set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them -- regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. And to some extent, will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can't figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must do far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can't deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now spent or committed its way through nearly \$20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can't protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post-March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" has been illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is irrelevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don't win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

Honestly Winning the Support of the American People

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush Administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda lose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and its allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn't a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US "spins" each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don't end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President's term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executors, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

Lessons for Warfighting

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lessons about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn't matter how well the war went last month; it doesn't matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don't know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority.** It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19th century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Madhi's victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn't a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don't win. Technology doesn't win.

- **Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it.** The character of America's political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think *they* can win an ideological

struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth, although the US does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with “toys.”** Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: those twin IR sensors, the shaped charges, the radio-controlled devices, the foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.
- **Fifth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner.** If it is true that the US can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it doesn't mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior or the ministry of finance, just doesn't work.

In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. And, incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices

- **Sixth, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on “democracy.” In most of the world, “legitimacy” has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But, bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don't win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

- **Seventh, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaffs the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn't require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to "civilianize" some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier who is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, humancentric warfare does not mean "supersoldiers" or superrintelligence officers. This is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn't important? Of course it doesn't; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.

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I. Introduction

The rising insurgency in Iraq since March 2003 has become a “war after the war.” It dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq and the Gulf Region, and has produced nearly ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq’s army. The Coalition must take much of the blame for the way the insurgency has unfolded but the fall of Saddam Hussein would have exposed deep fracture lines in an impoverished Iraq, almost regardless of how it occurred.

One key legacy of the British “divide and rule” tactics that formed the Iraqi state was minority Arab Sunni rule over a state that had come to have an Arab Shi’ite majority of some 60% of the population, and Kurdish, Turcoman, and other minorities that made up another 20%. Iraq’s violent politics had further compounded these problems by bringing a leader to power who never tolerated political dissent, and began the bloody purging and suppression of all organized political resistance when he took full power in 1979.

Saddam Hussein’s “Powder keg”

Iraq came to be ruled by a small, largely rural Sunni Arab elite that used the Ba’ath Party and the state to maintain itself in power. Its economy remained relatively undeveloped, agriculture was never modernized or made productive, inefficient state-industries undercut development as did a rigid state-controlled financial sector and mix of barriers to trade and outside investment. Worse, the economy effectively became a command kleptocracy where Saddam Hussein used the nation’s wealth to secure power and support his ambitions, and his ruling elite exploited their positions for their own personal benefit.

The nation was impoverished and driven into massive debt in the early 1980s by Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Iran and effort to seize its oil-rich territory in the southwest of Iran. Eight years of war crippled the development of the nation’s infrastructure, education, and efforts to properly develop its oil wealth. In 1990, Saddam Hussein’s efforts to solve his economic problems by invading Kuwait led to a massive military defeat, a new massive burden of reparations for the war, and then to more than a decade of UN and international sanctions further crippling every aspect of the nations development.

The politics of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980-1988, were essentially the politics of ruthless repression. Political dissent of any kind became even more dangerous. Kurdish efforts to exploit the war and achieve some degree of autonomy or independence were met with murder, the use of poison gas, and “ethnic cleansing.” Hundreds of thousands of Arab Shi’ites were driven out of the country, and many formed an armed opposition with Iranian support. While most of the remaining Arab Shi’ites remained loyal, their secular and religious leaders were kept under constant surveillance and sometimes imprisoned and killed. The marsh areas along the Iranian border were a key center of the fighting between Iran and Iraq, but still became a sanctuary for deserters and Shi’ite opposition elements.

Iraq’s defeat in the Gulf War in 1991, following its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, did more than further impoverish the country. Uprisings in the Shi’ite areas in the

south were suppressed with all of the regime's customary violence and then followed by a mix of repression and low-level civil war that lasted until Saddam was driven from power. While this conflict received only limited attention from the outside world, it often involved significant local clashes between Iraqi government forces and those of Shi'ite opposition movements based in, and backed by, Iran. The post-Iraq War discovery of mass graves of Shi'ite fighters and civilians are a grim testimony to how serious this "quiet" fighting could be. This further divided Shi'ite and Sunni, but also left a lasting legacy of anger against the US and Britain for not supporting the uprisings against Saddam and protecting the Shi'ites.

A similar set of uprisings in the Kurdish north created a flood of refugees into Turkey following the defeat of the Kurds, and forced the US to use airpower to protect the Kurds, and create an international aid effort to support them. This gave the Kurds a level of protection the Arab Shi'ites lacked, but left them in a kind of limbo where they had de facto autonomy, but lived with nearly one-third of Iraq's military forces deployed on the edge of their "security zone." Divisions between the two main Kurdish factions led to low-level fighting and even to one faction supporting an attack by Saddam on the other. The end result, however, was to further increase the Kurdish desire for independence, while keeping many dispossessed Kurds out of their original homes in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul.ⁱⁱⁱ

From 1991 until the Coalition invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein created further problems by encouraging tribal divisions and favoring those tribes and clans that supported his rule and regime. He exploited religion by increasingly publicly embracing Islam, and privately favoring Sunni factions and religious leaders that supported him while penalizing Shi'ite religious leaders and centers he saw as a threat. At the same time, funds were poured into Sunni areas in the West, government and security jobs were given to Sunnis, and scarce resources went into military industries that heavily favored Sunni employment. The result was to distort the economy and urban structure of Iraq in ways that favored Sunni towns and cities in areas like Tikrit, Samarra, Fallujah, Ramadi and other largely loyalist Sunni towns.

Saddam Hussein's regime manipulated rationing, control of imports, state funds, and the UN oil for food program for his own benefit, further undercutting economic development. The funding of education, medical services, and infrastructure was used as a political weapon in an effort to exploit the suffering of the Iraqi people to break out of UN sanctions. It also was used selectively to favor key power centers like Baghdad, and major potential centers of urban unrest, while leaving other areas with limited or no essential services like water, power, and sewers. Rather than seek to restore and develop the nation's oil and gas wealth, existing fields were overproduced, funds were redirected for the use of the regime, and exports were manipulated to obtain kickbacks and get political support from nations like Syria. These efforts were cloaked by a propaganda campaign blaming the US, UN, outside powers, and UN sanctions for all of the mistakes of the regime.

By comparison, Tito's regime in the former Yugoslavia was both progressive and benign. At the time the US-led coalition invaded, Iraq was divided by far greater pressures, and had far less capability for political leadership. It was a time bomb waiting to explode, fueled by both its original heritage of ethnic and sectarian division and by over twenty years of direct misrule by Saddam Hussein.

America's Strategic Mistakes

The United States made major strategic mistakes in preparing to deal with this situation. It did demonstrate that it could fight the war it planned to fight: a conventional regional war with remarkable efficiency, at low cost, and very quickly. The problem was that it failed to realistically plan and execute the next phases of war: conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building. The US chose a strategy whose post-conflict goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and failed to plan for the real nature of "peace" that was certain to follow.

Its most obvious mistake was its basic rationale for going to war: A threat based on intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that the US later found did not exist. At a grand strategic level, however, the Bush Administration and the senior leadership of the US military made the far more serious mistake of wishing away virtually all of the real world problems in stability operations and nation building, and making massive policy and military errors that created much of the climate of insurgency in Iraq.

The full chronology of what happened is still far from clear, and its far easier to accuse US leaders than it is to understand what really happened or assign responsibility with full credibility. It is clear, however, that many of the key decisions involved were made in ways that bypassed the interagency process within the US government, ignored the warnings of US area and intelligence experts, ignored prior military war and stability planning by the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), and ignored the warnings of policy makers and experts in other key coalition states like the United Kingdom.

At the same time, it is also clear that too much credence was given to ideologues and true believers in the ease with which such a war could be fought and in effective nation building. These included leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized "think tanks." The same was true of various Iraqi exile groups that grossly exaggerated the level of Iraqi popular support for a "liberating" invasion and the ease with which Saddam Hussein's regime could be replaced, and underestimated both the scale of Iraqi's ethnic and sectarian divisions and economic problems.

These problems were compounded by leadership within the Office of the Secretary of Defense that put intense pressure on the US military to plan for the lowest possible level of US military deployment, and then for delays in that deployment because of the political need to avoid appearing precipitous to the UN. At the same time, the leadership of the US military actively resisted planning

for, and involvement in, large-scale and enduring stability and nation building activity, and failed to plan and deploy for the risk of a significant insurgency.

The fact the US failed to plan for meaningful stability operations and nation building was the most serious strategic mistake that led to the insurgency and crime that are the focus of this analysis, but these mistakes were compounded by other problems:

- A failure to accurately assess the nature of Iraqi nationalism, the true level of culture differences, and the scale of Iraq's problems. This failure of strategic assessment included the failure to see the scale of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian differences, its economic weaknesses and problems, the difficulty of modernizing an infrastructure sized more to 16-17 million than the current population of 25-26 million, unrealistic estimates of "oil wealth," the probable hardcore support for the former regime in Sunni areas, secular versus theocratic tensions, the impact of tribalism, the impact of demographics in a society so young and with so many employment problems, and a host of other real-world problems that became US and Coalition problems the moment Coalition forces crossed the border.
- The failure to plan and execute effective broader information operations before, during and after the invasion to win the "hearts and minds of Iraqis," persuade them that the Coalition came as liberators that would leave rather than occupiers who would stay and exploit Iraq, and that the Coalition would provide aid and support to a truly independent government and state. A secondary failure to anticipate and defuse the flood of conspiracy theories certain to follow Coalition military action.
- The failure to create and provide anything approaching the kind and number of civilian elements in the US government, necessary for nation building and stability operations. These problems were particularly serious in the State Department and other civilian agencies, and much of the civilian capability the US did have was not recruited or willing to take risks in the field.
- The failure to plan and execute efforts to maintain the process of governance at the local, provincial, and central level; to anticipate the risk the structure of government would collapse and the risk of looting, and to create a plan for restructuring the military, police, and security forces -- all of which needed to be proclaimed and publicized before, during, and immediately after the initial invasion to win the support of Iraqi officials and officers who were not linked to active support of Saddam Hussein and past abuses, and to preserving the core of governance that could lead to the rapid creation of both a legitimate government and security.
- Broad failures by what a leading officer involved in planning operations in Iraq called "quiescent US military and Intelligence community leaders who observed the distortion/cherry picking of data that lead to erroneous conclusions and poor planning," but failed to press their case or force the issue.
- Over-reliance on exile groups with limited credibility and influence in Iraq.
- Failure to anticipate and prepare for Iraqi expectations after the collapse of Saddam's regime, and for the fact that many Iraqis would oppose the invasion and see any sustained US and coalition presence as a hostile occupation.
- Miscalculations about UN support, NATO & coalitions, and transit through Turkey.
- Failing to provide the personnel and skills necessary to secure Iraqi rear areas and urban areas as the Coalition advanced, and to prevent the massive looting of government offices and facilities, military bases, and arms depots during and after the fighting: A process that effectively destroyed the existing structure of governance and security without making

any initial effort to replace it. It was not until May 2003, roughly two months after the fall of Baghdad, that a 4,000 man US military police effort was authorized for deployment to Baghdad, and it then took time to arrive. No serious effort to rebuild Iraqi police forces took place until June 2004, in spite of mass desertions right after the fighting^{iv} and the turmoil caused by disbanding the Ba'ath Party and military and security forces.

- The creation of a small cadre of civilians and military in the Office of Reconstruction and Assistance (ORHA), many initially recruited for only three-month tours. ORHA planned to operate in an Iraq where all ministries and functions of government remained intact. It was charged with a largely perfunctory nation building task, given negligible human and financial resources, not allowed meaningful liaison with regional powers, and not integrated with the military command. Effective civil military coordination never took place between ORHA and the US command during or after the war, and its mission was given so little initial priority that it was did not even come to Baghdad until April 21, 2003 -- twelve days after US forces -- on the grounds it did not have suitable security.
- Failing not only to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, but also to deploy elements of US forces capable of dealing with counterinsurgency, civil-military operations, and nation building as US forces advanced and in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the regime. Creating regional commands based on administrative convenience, rather than need, and leaving most of the initial tasks of stability operations and nation building up to improvisation by individual local commanders who had minimal or no expert civilian support.
- Replacing ORHA after the fall of Saddam Hussein with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and suddenly improvising a vast nation building and stability effort, recruiting and funding such an operation with little time for planning, and then attempting to carry out the resulting mission along heavily ideological lines that attempt to impose American methods and values on Iraq.
- Placing the CPA and US commands in separate areas, creating large, secure zones that isolated the US effort from Iraqis, and carrying out only limited coordination with other Coalition allies.
- Staffing the CPA largely with people recruited for short tours, and often chosen on the basis of political and ideological vetting, rather than experience and competence.
- This failure was compounded by a lack of language and area skills and training on the part of most US military forces, and intelligence capabilities designed to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT), technical collection, analytic capabilities, and "fusion" centers necessary for stability, counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations.
- A failure to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous.
- Planning for premature US military withdrawals from Iraq before the situation was clear or secure, with major reductions initially planned to begin some three months after the fall of Saddam's regime, rather than planning, training, and equipping for a sustained period of stability operations.
- A failure to react to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces -- a failure that placed a major and avoidable burden on US and other coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile forces.
- Planning for several years of occupation, once the CPA was created, and for a situation where a US-led coalition could improve its own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years -- rather

than expedite the transfer of sovereignty back to Iraq as quickly as possible. The record is mixed, but the CPA only seems to have decided to expedite the transfer of sovereignty in October 2003, after the insurgency had already become serious, and its choice of June 2004 for doing so was largely arbitrary. Even then, it failed to make its plans sufficiently convincing to most of the Iraqi people.

It is true that foresight is far more difficult than “20-20 hindsight.” Many, if not most, of these problems however, were brought to the attention of the President, National Security Council, State Department, Department of Defense, and intelligence community in the summer and fall of 2002, and in interagency forums. No one accurately prophesized all of the future, but many inside and outside government warned what it might be. The problem was not that the “system” did not work in providing many key elements of an accurate assessment, it was that the most senior political and military decision makers ignored what they felt was negative advice out of a combination of sincere belief, ideological conviction, and political and bureaucratic convenience.

Over time, these failures have pushed the US to the limit of the ground forces it can easily deploy. They have helped cause the death of over 2,000 Americans and other coalition forces after the fall of Saddam, and have led to well over 16,000 wounded. They also helped to kill and wound tens of thousands of Iraqis. It is also important to note that they laid the groundwork for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces.

No one can claim that all of these failures were avoidable. The fact remains, however, that every failure listed was ultimately a failure at the highest levels of US policy and the direct responsibility of the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and service chiefs.

II. The Growth and Character of the Insurgent Threat

The mistakes the Coalition made before and during the effort to drive Saddam Hussein from power were compounded by the mistakes it made as the insurgency unfolded. The US-led Coalition initially tried to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force geared to defend Iraq's borders against external aggression. It did not try to create police forces with the capability to deal with serious insurgency and security challenges. As time went on, it ignored or did not give proper priority to the warnings from US military advisory teams about the problems in organizing and training Iraqi forces, and in giving them the necessary equipment and facilities.

The US failed to treat the Iraqis as partners in the counterinsurgency effort for over a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and did not attempt to seriously train and equip Iraqi forces for proactive security and counterinsurgency missions until April 2004 – nearly a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein and two-thirds of a year after a major insurgency problem began to emerge.^v

Denial as a Method of Counter-Insurgency Warfare

Both US policymakers and the US military initially lived in a state of near-denial about the rise of terrorism and insurgency. The US assumed for much of the first year after the fall of Saddam Hussein that it was dealing with a limited number of insurgents that Coalition forces would defeat well before the election. It did not see the threat level that would emerge if it did not provide jobs or pensions for Iraqi career officers, or co-opt them into the nation building effort. It was slow to see that some form of transition payments were necessary for the young Iraqi soldiers that faced massive, nation-wide unemployment. The US still failed to acknowledge the true scale of the insurgent threat and the extent to which popular resentment of Coalition forces would rise if it did not act immediately to rebuild a convincing mix of Iraqi military and security forces.

The US failed to establish the proper political conditions to reduce Iraqi popular resentment of the Coalition forces and create a political climate that would ease the task of replacing them with effective Iraqi forces. It failed to make it clear to the Iraqi people that the US and Britain had no economic ambitions in Iraq and would not establish permanent bases, or keep Iraqi forces weak to ensure their control. In fact, Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, the first American Administrator in Iraq, suggested in early 2004 that US forces might remain in Iraq for “the next few decades,” adding that securing basing rights for the US should be a top priority.^{vi}

Failing to Admit the Scope of the Problem though Mid-2004

As a result, the US failed to come to grips with the Iraqi insurgency during the first year of US occupation in virtually every important dimension. It was slow to react to the growth of the insurgency in Iraq, to admit it was largely domestic in

character, and to admit it had significant popular support. The US military and intelligence effort in the field did begin to understand that the terrorist and insurgent threat was serious and growing by the fall of 2003.

For all of 2003, and most of the first half of 2004, senior US officials and officers did not act on this plan or respond effectively to the growing insurgency. They kept referring to the attackers as “terrorists”, kept issuing estimates that they could not number more than 5,000, and claimed they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists (FRLs) that had little popular support. The US largely ignored the previous warnings provided by Iraqi opinion polls, and claimed that its political, economic, and security efforts were either successful or would soon become so. In short, the US failed to honestly assess the facts on the ground in a manner reminiscent of Vietnam.

As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush Administration still seemed to live in a fantasyland in terms of their public announcements, perception of the growing Iraqi hostility to the use of Coalition forces, and the size of the threat. Its spokesmen were still talking about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many Coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as comprised of at least 12,000-16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi’ite tension, and growing ethnic tension in the north.

Such US estimates of the core structure of the Iraqi insurgency ignored the true nature of the insurgency. The US was dealing with a mixture of Iraqi nationalism, Sunni resentment and anger, popular opposition to any form of Western occupation, and a slowly growing number of foreign and Iraqi neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists. It also faced a lesser but still significant threat from Iraqi Shi’ite Islamist “activists.” The problem was broad support, not a small group of “bitter ends.” From the start, there were many part-time insurgents and criminals who worked with insurgents. In some areas, volunteers could be quickly recruited and trained, both for street fighting and terrorist and sabotage missions.

As in most insurgencies, “sympathizers” within the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces, as well as the Iraqis working for the Coalition, media, and NGOs, often provided excellent human intelligence without violently taking part in the insurgency. Saboteurs can readily operate within the government and every aspect of the Iraqi economy.

From the start, Iraqi and foreign journalists provided an inadvertent (and sometimes deliberate) propaganda arm, and media coverage of insurgent activity and attacks provided a de facto command and communications net to insurgents. This informal “net” provides warning, tells insurgents what attacks do and do not work, and allows them to coordinate their attacks to reinforce those of other insurgent cells and groups. As in all insurgencies, a race developed between the insurgents and the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government forces to see whose strength could grow faster and who best learns from their enemies.

Evolving Threat Tactics and Pressure on Government Forces

During the summer and fall of 2003, Iraqi insurgents emerged as a serious threat with significant popular support in Arab Sunni areas, and developed a steadily more sophisticated mix of tactics. In the process, a native and foreign Islamist extremist threat also developed which deliberately tried to divide Iraq's Sunni Arabs from its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities. By the fall of the 2004, this had some elements of a low-level civil war, and by June 2005, it threatened to escalate into a far more serious civil conflict.

There are no reliable unclassified counts of insurgent attacks and incidents, or of the casualties on both sides. The US only publicly reported on its own casualties, and the Iraqi government stopped making its own estimates public. Moreover, in many cases of individual killings, disappearances, and kidnappings there often is no record or the record does not provide any basis for identifying who was responsible or whether insurgent action was involved, Shi'ites and Kurds were taking reprisals, or the attack was simply a revenge killing or crime. Estimates of insurgent casualties are tenuous at best, and in all cases involving Iraqis the data that are available tend to focus on deaths and not wounded -- particularly if the wound did not require hospitalization.

The NGO Coordinating Committee on Iraq did, however, make useful rough estimates of the patterns of attack between September 2003 and October 2004. These patterns seem broadly correct and both illustrate key patterns in the fighting, and the need for competent and combat-capable Iraqi government military, security, and police forces:

- From September 2003 through October 2004, there was a rough balance between the three primary methods of attack, namely improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire, and indirect fire, with a consistent but much smaller number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). Numbers of attacks varied significantly by month. There was a slow decline from well over 400 attacks each by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire weapons, and indirect fire weapons to around 300. There was also, however, a slow increase in attacks using VBIEDs.
- Attack distribution also varies, with a steadily rising number of attacks in the area of Mosul in the north. Baghdad, however, has been the scene of roughly twice as many attacks and incidents as the other governorates, with 300-400 a month on average. Al Anbar, Salah-al-din, and Ninewah have had roughly one-third to one half as many. Babil and Diyala average around 100 per month, lower levels of attack have taken place in Tamin and Basra.
- Since the Shi'ite fighting with Sadr has ceased, the peak of insurgent activity in the south has declined. There have been relatively low levels of attack in the Karbala, Thi-Qar, Wassit, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Qaddisyaa governorates.
- Irbil, Dahok, and Sulaymaniyah are northern governorates administrated by the two Kurdish Regional Governments (KRGs) and have long been relatively peaceful.
- Attacks fit a broad pattern during the day, although 60% of the attacks reported are unspecified. Of those that do have a specific time reported, 10% are in the morning, 11% are in the afternoon, and 19% are at night.

A rough estimate of targets and casualties from September 2004 to October 2004 is shown in Figure II.1 below, and helps illustrate the continuing diversity of the attacks and that far more than American casualties were involved from the start of the conflict:

Figure II. 1: Illustrative Patterns in Targeting and Casualties: September 2003-October 2004

Target	Number of Attacks/Incidents		Killed
Wounded			
Coalition Forces	3227	451	1002
Coalition Air Convoy	49	55	32
CPA/US Officials/Green Zone	32	60	206
Diplomatic Mission	11	7	9
Local Authority	31	56	81
Contractor	113	210	203
Civilian	180	1981	3467
Criminal & Suspect	49	31	972
ICDC	58	191	310
Kurds Army	31	25	8
Police	209	480	1012
UN	67	2	3
IO	1	2	0
NGO	5	5	11
Journalist	8	27	38
Interpreter	7	17	6
Public Property	182	5	15
Unspecified	43	1	1

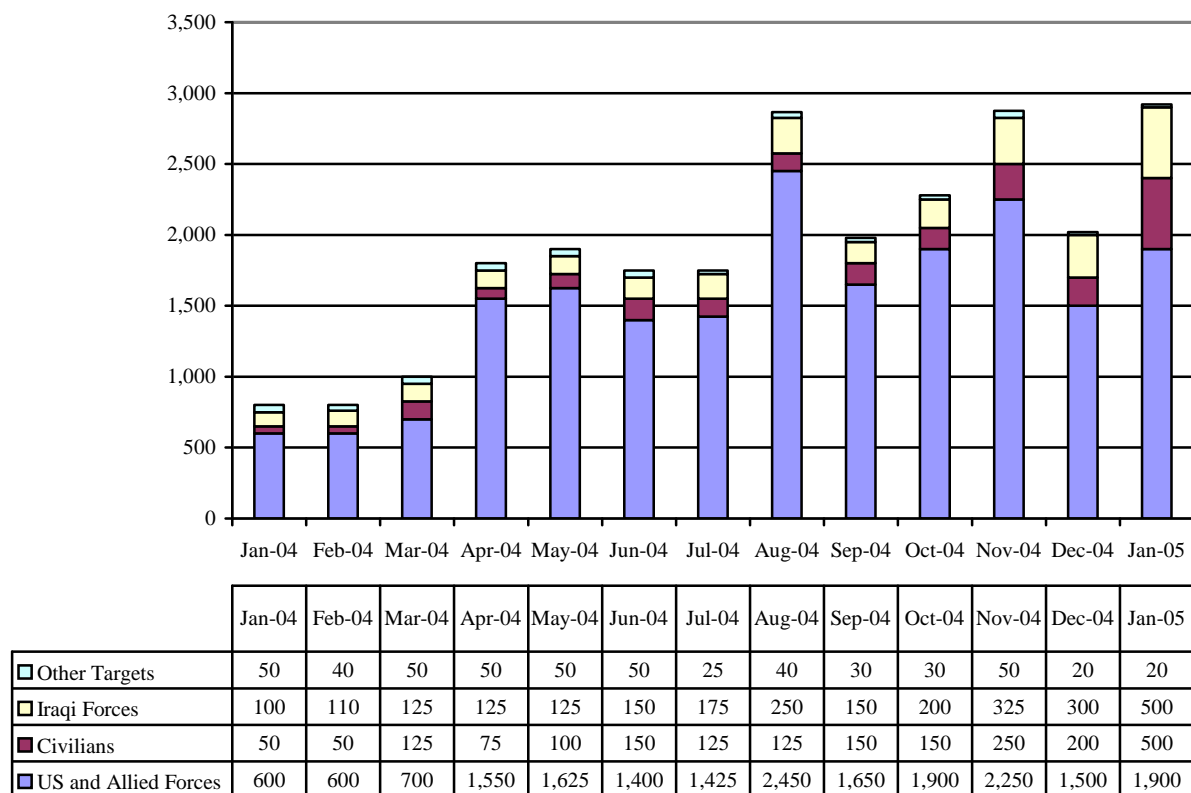
Figure II.2 shows how the war intensified from 2004 through 2005. As shown, insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces increased dramatically during the final months of 2004. This trend continued into early 2005, although insurgents began to focus on softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than well-trained and well-equipped US forces after the January 30, 2004 elections. One Iraqi official described the new insurgent tactic in the following way: “In the past, they were targeting the American forces because they were in charge of security...After the new Iraqi army and police were established...they shifted their attacks.”^{vii}

The short-term effect of this shift was to decrease the number of insurgent attacks against US forces by more than 25 per cent during the early months of 2005. The number of US fatalities also decreased during this period, from 107 in January 2005 to 58 in February 2005 and 36 in March 2005. But the shift away from targeting US forces in favor of Iraqi forces appears to have been short-lived. US fatalities climbed to 52 in April and 80 in May 2005.^{viii} The number of daily attacks also climbed during this period, from 45 in March to more than 60 in April and stayed there. Since then, the daily number of insurgent attacks has increased steadily, averaging around 100 in October 2005.^{ix}

Although insurgents refocused their efforts in attacking Coalition troops, their attacks against Iraqi security forces did not level off. On June 27, 2005, insurgents launched a wave of attacks against Iraqi police and security forces in the northern town of Mosul. In the span of 16 hours, four suicide bombs went off, killing at least 37 Iraqi policemen and soldiers. In one of the deadliest attacks, a suicide bomber exploded a truck with 1,000 pounds of explosives outside a police station, killing ten policemen and ripping the station apart. Later in the day, a suicide bomber struck Al Kasik, an army base west of Mosul, killing 16.^x

At the same time, an increase took place in attacks on infrastructure targets. As discussed below, the frequency of these attacks increased in the summer and fall 2005.

Figure II.2: Illustrative Patterns in Targeting: January 2004-January 2005



Note: Figures are rough estimates based on graphical data presented in the [New York Times](#).

Source: "A Report Card on Iraqi Security," [New York Times](#), April 11, 2005.

Political, Psychological, and Information Warfare Lessons

The goals and methods of the strategy and tactics the various insurgent groups have used evolved steadily after the summer and fall of 2003. Almost from the beginning, however, Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, and extremists exploited the fact that the media tends to focus on dramatic incidents with high casualties, gives them high publicity, and spends little time analyzing the patterns in the

insurgency. The fact that there were different groups of insurgents and terrorists also led the patterns of insurgent activity to evolve in ways that included a steadily wider range of tactics that each group of actors exploited whenever it found them to be convenient, and which all groups of attackers could refine with time.

While various insurgent elements evolved different approaches to warfare, they came to exploit a mix of the following methods and tactics relating to political, psychological, and information warfare:

- **Attack the structures of governance and security by ideological, political, and violent means:** Use ideological and political means to attack the legitimacy of the government and nation building process. Intimidate and subvert the military and security forces. Intimidate and attack government officials and institutions at the national, regional, and local levels. Strike at infrastructure, utilities, and services in ways that appear to show the government cannot provide essential economic services or personal security. A July 2005 letter to Zarqawi from Ayman al-Zawahiri admonished the Al Qaida in Iraq leader for focusing too much on military attacks and not enough on political actions. In the letter, Zawahiri said freeing the country from Americans “does not depend on force alone” and urged Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action.”^{xi}
- **Create alliances of convenience and informal networks with other groups to attack the US, various elements of the Iraqi Interim Government and elected government, and efforts at nation building:** The informal common fronts operate on the principal that the “enemy of my enemy” is my temporary friend. At the same time, movements “franchise” to create individual cells and independent units, creating diverse mixes of enemies that are difficult to attack.
- **Attack Iraqi elites and ethnic and sectarian fault lines; use them to prevent nation building and governance by provoking civil war:** As the US and Coalition phased down its role, and a sovereign Iraqi government increased its influence and power, insurgents increasingly shifted their focus of their attacks to Iraqi government targets, as well as Iraqi military, police, and security forces. At the same time, they stepped up attacks designed to prevent Sunnis from participating in the new government, and to cause growing tension and conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite, and Arab and Kurd.

There are no clear lines of division between insurgents, but the Iraqi Sunni insurgents focused heavily on attacking the emerging Iraqi process of governance, while Islamist extremist movements used suicide bombing attacks and other bombings to cause large casualties among the Shi’ite and Kurdish populations – sometimes linking them to religious festivals or holidays and sometimes to attacks on Iraqi forces or their recruiting efforts. They also focused their attacks to strike at leading Shi’ite and Kurdish political officials, commanders, and clergy.

Targeting other groups like Shi’ites and Kurds, using car bombings for mass killings, hitting shrines and festivals forces the dispersal of security forces, makes the areas involved seem insecure, undermines efforts at governance, and offers the possibility of using civil war as a way to defeat the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government’s efforts at nation building.

For example, a step up in Sunni attacks on Shi’ite targets after the January 30, 2005 election, led some Shi’ites to talk about “Sunni ethnic cleansing. This effect was compounded by bloody suicide bombings, many of which had some form of government target, but killed large numbers of Shi’ite civilians.^{xii} These attacks included the discovery of 58 corpses dumped in the Tigris, and 19 largely Shi’ite National Guardsmen bodies in

a soccer stadium in Haditha. They also included a bombing in Hilla on March 1, 2005 that killed 136 – mostly Shi'ite police and army recruits.^{xiii}

Similar attacks were carried against the Kurds. While the Kurds maintained notably better security over their areas in the north than existed in the rest of the country, two suicide bombers still penetrated a political gathering in Irbil on February 1, 2004, killing at least 105. On March 10, 2005, a suicide bomber killed 53 Kurds in Kirkuk. On May 3, 2005, another suicide bomber – this time openly identified with the Sunni extremist group Ansar al-Sunna blew himself up outside a recruiting station in Irbil, killing 60 and wounding more than 150 others.^{xiv} At the same time, other attacks systematically targeted Kurdish leaders and Kurdish elements in Iraqi forces.

By May 2005, Shi'ites had begun to retaliate, in spite of efforts to avoid this by Shi'ite leaders, contributing further to the problems in establishing a legitimate government and national forces. Sunni bodies were discovered in unmarked graves, as well as Shi'ite ones, and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.^{xv}

In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. There appeared to be an up-turn in these assassinations in late summer and early fall 2005:

- July 19, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Sheikh Ahmad al-Juburi, the imam at Al-Taqla Mosque in Al-Dawrah in southern Baghdad.
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- September 1, 2005: Gunmen kill Sheikh Salim Nusayyif Jasim al-Tamimi, the imam of Al-Mustafa Mosque in Baghdad and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars.
- September 15, 2005: A bomb exploded at Rawdat al-Wadi mosque in Mosul killing Sheikh Hikmat Husayn Ali, the imam of the mosque.
- September 16, 2005: Insurgents kill Fadhl Amshani, a Shiite cleric and follower of Moqtada al Sadr.
- October 2, 2005: Gunmen in southeast Baghdad killed Salah Hassan Ayash, a Sunni imam.
- November 14, 2005: Insurgents kill the administrator of Al-Hamid Mosque in the Al-Saydiyah neighborhood of Baghdad.
- November 23, 2005: Gunmen wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In Basra, Iraqi police discover the body of Sheikh Nadir Karim, the imam of a Sunni Mosque. Karim had been abducted from his home the previous night.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen kidnapped Shihab Abdul-Hussein, a member of the Badr Organization, in Baghdad.
- November 29, 2005: In Fallujah, armed men kill Sheikh Hamza Abbas Issawi, a Sunni cleric who had called for Sunni participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

According to some reports, more than 60 Sunni imams have been killed since the start of the insurgency.^{xvi} Insurgent attacks on mosques and religious gatherings also intensified in the run up to the December 15 elections:

- October 29, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a small marketplace near a Shi'ite mosque in Huweder, six miles north of Baquba, killing at least 25 and wounding 45.
- November 3, 2005: A suicide bomber driving a minibus detonated his explosives outside a Shi'ite mosque in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, killing 20 and wounding 64. The mosque was the site of a previous explosion in July, when a suicide bomber blew up a fuel tanker nearby, killing 54 people.
- November 9, 2005: Two car bombs exploded near a Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, killing six people.
- November 18, 2005: Suicide bombers struck two mosques in the largely Kurdish town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border. The attacks, against the Sheik Murad and Khanaqin Grand mosques killed at least 80 Shi'ite worshippers and wounding more than 100. A third would-be suicide bomber was arrested shortly after the attacks.
- November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a crowd of Shi'ite mourners in the village of Abu Saida, near Baquba, killing at least 36 people. More than 120 Shi'ites have been killed in the last 48 hours.
- November 28, 2005: In Dora, a neighborhood in southwest Baghdad, insurgents ambushed a bus carrying British Muslims to Shi'ite shrines, killing two and wounding four.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen kill nine Shi'ite laborers near Baquba.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent Shi'ite politician.

Although the upsurge in violence in late November was a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections, the largely sectarian nature of the violence was also partly due to the November 13 US discovery of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry prison in Baghdad. The discovery of the secret torture center run by Shiite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.

- **Link asymmetric warfare to crime and looting; exploit poverty and economic desperation:** Use criminals to support attacks on infrastructure and nation building activity, raise funds, and undermine security. Exploit unemployment to strengthen dedicated insurgent and terrorist cells. Blur the lines between threat forces, criminal elements, and part-time forces.

Attack petroleum and oil facilities, electric power, water, and other critical infrastructure: Attacks on power and water facilities have been used to both offset the impact of US aid and cause Iraqi anger against the government. Al Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups have found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets. The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages in others. It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend \$1.0 billion of \$4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and \$261 million out of \$1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.^{xvii}

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005, and some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates.

- **Strike at US and other aid projects to undermine Iraqi acceptance of the MNSTC-I and the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government.** It is unclear just how systematic such attacks have been, but a report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq

Reconstruction indicates that at least 276 civilians working on US aid projects had been killed by March 31, 2005, and at least 2,582 had been wounded. The number of contractors killed also rose by 19% (to 44) in the first quarter of 2005. The cost impact is also high. The report indicates that the security costs of USAID funded aid projects were only 4.2% of the total cost from March 2003 to February 2004, but rose to 22% during the final nine months of 2004.^{xviii} Other reports indicated that contractors had filed 2,919 death and injury claims for US and foreign workers between the beginning of the war on March 19, 2003, and May 10, 2003, with 303 killed.^{xix}

- **Focus on Large US Installations:** As the insurgents became better organized, they moved from hit and run firings at US installations to much larger and better organized raids that could capture major media attention even when these largely failed. The major Zarqawi organization raid on Abu Ghraib prison in early April 2005 was an example of such a raid.^{xx} Other examples are the suicide bombing and infiltration attacks on the "Green Zone" in Baghdad and other major US military facilities in areas like Mosul. The use of Iraqi uniforms, security and army vehicles, false IDs, and intelligence gained from infiltrators also became more sophisticated.
- **Exploit Arab satellite television as well as traditional media:** Islamist movements and other insurgents learned how to capture maximum exposure in regional media, use the Internet, and above all, exploit the new Arab satellite news channels. Insurgents and terrorist also pay close attention to media reactions, and tailor their attacks to high profile targets that make such attacks "weapons of mass media." Al Qaeda has repeatedly demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the role the media plays in advancing or weakening their organization. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's No.2, has described the conflict as taking place "in the battlefield of the media" and has admitted that the organization is engaged "in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of [Muslims]" with the West.^{xxi}

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Iraq group took their attempted manipulation of the news media to new heights in June 2005. In an Internet statement, the organization severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had "sided" with the US over Iraq.

In recent months, however, there has been some evidence to suggest that the jihadists might be losing the media battle. In what may be a new trend, Zarqawi has begun to issue "retractions" or "clarifications" after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of "total war" on Shiites in the summer of 2005 received a very cool response from the larger jihadi community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman. The backlash from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may be on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.

In what may prove to be a harbinger of future tactics, insurgents have begun to attack the media directly. On July 14, 2005, gunmen attacked a television crew in Baghdad, wounding three men. In October 2005, unknown gunmen attacked a broadcasting and television compound in Mosul in October.^{xxii}

- **Exploit the internet as well as traditional media; a tool for propaganda as well as communication and exchange of tactical methods and techniques:** More and more web sties appear from extremist movements and terrorist groups that publicize the actions of such groups or make false or exaggerated claims. Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned the media and analysts regularly monitor such sites and they furnish a low-cost source of publicity. According to one report, the number of Iraqi insurgent websites increased from 145 to 825 between January and December 2005.^{xxiii} At the same time, the flood of web stie activity makes it difficult to know when sites are

being used for communications, and terrorist and insurgent organizations from all over the world have established the equivalent of an informal tactical net in which they exchanges techniques for carrying out attacks, technical data on weapons, etc.

- **Use the media to target and develop the equivalent of swarming techniques:** Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned that media reporting on the results of their attacks provides a powerful indicator of their success and what kind of attack to strike at in the future. While many attacks are planned long in advance or use “targeting” based on infiltration and simple observation, others are linked to media reporting on events, movements, etc. The end result is that insurgents can “swarm” around given types of targets, striking at vulnerable points where the target and method of attack is known to have success.
- **Maintain a strategy of constant attrition, but strike hard according to a calendar of turning points and/or at targets with high political, social, and economic impact:** Insurgents and Islamists learned the importance of a constant low-level body count and the creation of a steady climate of violence. This forces the US into a constant, large-scale security effort; makes it difficult for Iraqi forces to take hold; puts constant pressure on US and Iraqi forces to disperse; and ensures constant media coverage.

At the same time, insurgents and Islamists showed a steadily more sophisticated capability to exploit holidays, elections and other political events, and sensitive targets both inside the countries that are the scene of their primary operations and in the US and the West. Attacks on Kurdish and Shi'ite religious festivals are cases in point.

So was an attack on Abu Ghraib prison, the site of many media reports on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners on April 2, 2005. The prison still held some 3,446 detainees and the insurgent attack was conducted by 40-60 insurgents, lasted nearly 40 minutes, and was large and well organized enough to wound 20 US troops.^{xxiv}

- **Push “hot buttons:” Try to find forms of attack that provoke disproportionate fear and “terror” to force the US Iraqi forces into costly, drastic, and sometimes provocative responses:** Terrorists and insurgents have found that attacks planned for maximum political and psychological effects often have the additional benefit of provoking over-reaction. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad exploited such tactics throughout the peace process.

One example of such attacks that put constant pressure on Americans, demonstrated insurgent “strength,” and got high profile media attention was the long series of attacks on the secure areas in the “Green Zone” in Baghdad and along the road from that zone to the Baghdad airport.

Attacking the airport road was an almost perfect way of keeping up constant psychological and political pressure. It passed through a hostile Sunni area, was almost impossible to secure from IEDs, VBIEDs, rocket and mortar attacks, and sniping without pinning down large numbers of troops. This helps explain why there were well over 100 attacks on targets moving along the road during January 30 through May 4, 2005.^{xxv}

- **Game Regional, Western, and other outside media:** Use interview access, tapes, journalist hostage takings and killings, politically-led and motivated crowds, drivers and assistants to journalists, and timed and targeted attacks to attempt to manipulate Western and outside media. Manipulate US official briefings with planted questions.
- **Use Americans and other foreigners as proxies:** There is nothing new about using Americans and other foreigners as proxies for local regimes, or attacking them to win support for ideological positions and causes. There has, however, been steadily growing sophistication in the timing and nature of such attacks, and in exploiting softer targets such as American businessmen in the country of operations, in striking at US and allied

targets in other countries, or in striking at targets in the US. It is also clear that such attacks receive maximum political and media attention in the US.

- **Attack UN, NGO, embassies, aid personnel, and foreign contractor business operations:** Attacking such targets greatly reduces the ability to carry out nation building and stability operations to win hearts and minds. Attacking the “innocent,” and curtailing their operations or driving organizations out of the country has become an important focus of insurgents and Islamist extremist attacks. Iraqi insurgents have pursued this tactic since the first days of the insurgency.

In November of 2005, Al Qaida divulged new details about the April 19, 2003 bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, one of the first major attacks of the Iraqi insurgency and the first to intentionally target foreigners. The 2003 bombing killed 23 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers, and injured more than 150. In a statement posted on an Islamic radical website, Al Qaida said the attack had been planned by Thamir Mubarak Atrouz, a Sunni Arab from the town of Khaldiya in Anbar province. Atrouz, a former officer in Saddam Hussein's army had fled to Saudi Arabia but returned to Iraq before the US-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 in order to fight Americans. He was killed by US forces in Fallujah in April 2004.^{xxvi} The 2003 bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, although the most famous attack on diplomatic offices in Baghdad, is hardly the only such incident since the insurgency began, however. Insurgents have also periodically fired mortars against US facilities inside the Green Zone.

Insurgents stepped up their attacks against foreign diplomats in the summer and fall of 2005. In July, Al Qaida in Mesopotamia killed two Algerian diplomats and one Egyptian. The group also attempted to kidnap Bahraini and Pakistani embassy staff, though the former escaped with light wounds and the latter was unharmed. Insurgent attacks against diplomats in the fall of 2005 included:

- October 10, 2005: Gunmen ambushed a convoy of Arab League diplomats in Baghdad, wounding two Iraqi policemen.
- October 20, 2005: Two Moroccan embassy employees were kidnapped on the highway from Amman to Baghdad. On November 3, Al Qaida in Mesopotamia posted a statement on a website saying Abdelkrim el-Mohsfidi, a Moroccan diplomat, and Abderrahim Boualem, his driver, would be executed. The group said the executions were meant as "an example for others who are still thinking to challenge the mujahedeen and dare to come to the land of the two rivers."
- November 7, 2005: A Sudanese diplomat, Taha Mohammed Ahmed, is hit by a stray bullet while walking in the garden of the Sudanese Embassy in Baghdad.
- November 9, 2005: Hammouda Ahmed Adam, a Sudanese Embassy employee was killed by unknown gunmen while driving in the Mansour district of Baghdad.
- November 12, 2005: Insurgents attacked the Omani Embassy in Baghdad, killing an Iraqi police officer and an embassy employee.

As is evident from the examples listed above, insurgents have repeatedly singled out envoys from Arab and Muslim countries in their attacks. Al Qaida in Mesopotamia's strategy appears to be aimed at driving representatives of these countries from Iraq in order to weaken the new Iraqi government and to divide US allies.

In a statement released on November 3, the organization called on diplomats in Baghdad to “pack their bags and leave” or face certain death.^{xxvii} The statement, signed by the military wing of Al Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers, read: “We are renewing our threat to those so-called diplomatic missions who have insisted on staying in Baghdad and have not yet realized the repercussions of such a challenge to the will of the mujahedeen.”^{xxviii}

Al Qaida's strategy has, however, had some success. The Philippine Embassy in Baghdad relocated its staff to Jordan after the July 2005 attacks on Algerian and Egyptian diplomats. The previous summer, the Philippine government granted insurgent's demands and withdrew its peacekeeping contingent from Iraq in order to secure the safe release of a Filipino hostage. The kidnapping of Angelo de la Cruz in July 2004 led Manila to issue a ban on its citizens working in Iraq. The government re-issued the ban in November 2005, after two Filipino contract workers were killed in Iraq.^{xxix}

While there were as many as 40 diplomatic missions in Iraq as of late 2005, several countries have been hesitant to send ambassadors to Baghdad. At least two of Iraq's neighbors, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have postponed doing so until the security situation in the country improves.^{xxx}

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate women and cadres of foreign workers:** Killing and kidnapping women, particularly those working in NGOs and aid projects gets great media attention and leads some organizations to leave the country. Kidnapping or killing groups of foreign workers puts political pressure on their governments, gets high local and regional media attention, and sometimes leads governments to stop their workers from going to Iraq.

Counts of kidnappings in Iraq, and analyses of responsibility, are necessarily uncertain and sharply undercount the number of kidnappings of Iraqis – many of which are never reported. An analysis of kidnappings from April 1, 2004 to January 31, 2005 showed, however, that there were 264 foreign civilian kidnappings. Some 47 were killed, 56 remained missing, 150 were released, five escaped, and a total of six were rescued. Given the fact there were some 100,000 expatriates in Iraq at the time, this meant a roughly 1 in 380 chance of being kidnapped, and roughly 20% of the foreigners kidnapped were killed or beheaded.^{xxxi}

In November of 2005, the New York Times reported that of the more than 200 foreigners who had been abducted since the start of the war, several dozen had been killed and at least twenty were still missing. The tactic appears to have peaked in late 2004 however. When US troops entered Fallujah in November of 2004 they discovered bunkers where captives had been held and tortured. After Fallujah, however, the number of foreign kidnappings dropped significantly.^{xxxii}

The kidnapping of foreigners by insurgents returned in the fall of 2005. In late October, two Moroccans were kidnapped by insurgents and held hostage. The following month, four aid workers, two Canadians, a Briton and an American, were also kidnapped. A group calling itself "Swords of Truth" issued a claim of responsibility, saying the four were "spies of the occupying forces."^{xxxiii} Also in November, two Filipino contract workers were killed in a bombing of their convoy and a German archaeologist was kidnapped.

- **Expand the fighting outside Iraq:** In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that Al Qaida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt—against foreigners and Americans. Jabr also claimed that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. A few days later, US Army Maj. Gen. William Webster, whose 3rd Infantry Division is responsible for security in Baghdad, said he believed it "a distinct possibility" that insurgents were training in Iraq for attacks for other countries.^{xxxiv}

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq, and when actual attempts began. Zarqawi is a Jordanian and began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. In late 1999, he organized attacks on the Radisson SAS hotel in Amman and Jewish and Christian religious targets. In October

2002, his followers killed Laurence Foley, as US diplomat assigned to the US Embassy in Amman. He seems to have played a role in the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad in August 2003.

There are some indications that Zarqawi's group began planning and attempting such attacks in late 2003. Jordan also reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004.

Some sources say Jordan halted further attack attempts after that time, including a rocket attack on a US warship in Aqaba earlier in 2005. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005.^{xxxv}

Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, however, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Some experts believe the July 23, 2005 Sharm el-Sheik bombings signaled the expansion of Zarqawi's network beyond Iraq. But the bombings at the Red Sea resort, which killed at least 88 and wounded more than 150, appear to have been the work of Egyptian radical Islamists. Three groups-the "Abdullah Azzam Brigades"; "Tawhid and Jihad Group in Egypt" and the "Holy Warriors of Egypt"- claimed responsibility for the bombings. But although all three are believed to have ties to Al Qaida, there is no evidence to suggest Zarqawi was directly involved in the attack.

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi's operation in Iraq carried out three suicide bombings of US owned hotels in Amman. The attackers specifically targeted Jordanians -- including a large wedding party -- and killed at least 60 people from some six different countries and wounded more than 100. Only a few Americans were killed or hurt in the attacks on the Radisson, Grand Hyatt and Days Inn, but the casualties also included four Palestinian officials, one of who was Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security.

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate professionals, Iraqi media and intelligentsia, "mystery killings:"** Steady killing and intimidation of individual professionals, media figures, and intelligentsia in threatened areas offers a series of soft targets that cannot be defended, but where a cumulative pattern of killing and intimidation makes governance difficult, creates major problems for security and police forces, weakens the economy, and exacerbates the general feeling of insecurity to the point where people lose faith in the Iraqi government, Coalition, and political process. According to the head of Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Shihab al-Tamimi, kidnappings and assassinations targeting Iraqi journalists surged in the weeks leading up to the January 30 election.^{xxxvi}

The US State Department report on Human Rights for 2004 states that the Ministry of Human Rights claimed that at least 80 professors and 50 physicians were assassinated during 2004. Reporters Without Borders noted that 31 journalists and media assistants were killed during the year. Universities also suffered from a wave of kidnappings. Researchers, professors, administrators, and students were all victims, including some who disappeared without a trace.^{xxxvii} According to the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Mashriq*, more than 3000 Iraqi doctors have left the country in order to save their lives since the start of the insurgency.^{xxxviii}

In September 2005, a local Iraqi newspaper reported that after doctors and university professors, bakers had become the most popular target among insurgents in Iraq. In one 48-hour period, insurgents killed ten bakers in Baghdad alone. A number of bakeries were forced to close after receiving threats from insurgents.^{xxxix}

Beginning in the fall of 2005, there were signs that insurgents had selected a new target: teachers. Up until that time, teachers had largely been spared the violence inflicted upon other occupations. In late September Sunni insurgents dressed as Iraqi police officers stormed the Jazeera primary school in Muwelha, a Sunni suburb of Iskandariya, killing five teachers and their driver.^{xi} The attack raised fears among many Iraqis that insurgents would now begin to target Iraqi schools. A few days later, on September 29, gunmen opened fire on a mini-bus transporting teachers in the Al-Mansuriyah district of Baquba, killing one and wounding several.^{xii}

On October 9, gunmen entered a school in Samarra and executed a teacher in front of students and other teachers.^{xiii} In all of the incidents, the teachers were Shiites, leaving many to believe that the attacks were motivated by sectarian violence rather than insurgent hostility toward their profession. A number of schools, many in Shiite neighborhoods, have responded to the wave of attacks by erecting security barriers and hiring guards.^{xiii} On October 20, a mortar hit a public school in the al-Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad, killing one student and wounding four others.^{xiv} Attacks on schools, however, are still relatively rare. University professors have also become popular targets for insurgents. In a five-day period in late November 2005 five university professors were killed, three of them in greater Baghdad area.^{xv}

Targeted political assassinations also appeared to be on the rise in the summer and fall of 2005. Popular targets include local political and religious leaders, the heads of local police forces and ministry officials from Baghdad. For the month of August, these attacks included:^{xvi}

- August 1, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen storm the house of Haider Mohammed Ali al-Dujaili, an aide to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, and kill him.
- August 3, 2005: Gunmen kill General Abdel Salam Rauf Saleh, the head of the Interior Ministry's commando unit. Also in Baghdad, gunmen kill a police colonel and two finance ministry employees.
- August 4, 2005: In Diyala, gunmen kill the director of planning for the region.
- August 8, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen assassinate two officials from the Oil Ministry and wound two others.
- August 9, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Abbas Ibrahim Mohammed, an Iraqi Cabinet employee, in Baghdad.
- August 10, 2005: Gunmen kidnap Brig. General Khudayer Abbas, head of administrative affairs for the Ministry of the Interior.
- August 14, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnap Husam Kazim Juwayid, general manager of the central bank.
- August 15, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Muhammad Husayn, a member of the municipal council of Al-Khalis. A failed assassination attempt is carried out on Iraqi Vice-President Adil Ab-al-Mahdi in Al-Azim.
- August 16, 2005: Gunmen attack and wound several bodyguards of former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- August 18, 2005: Unknown gunmen assassinate Jasim Waheeb, a Baghdad judge.
- August 19, 2005: Insurgents in Mosul gun down three members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country's largest Sunni party. Gunmen kill Aswad al-Ali, an Arab member of a local council near Kirkuk.

- August 22, 2005: 11 Pakistani construction workers kidnapped near Nasiriya in early August are released.
- August 25, 2005: Insurgents attack the convoy of Iraqi president Jalal Talabani south of Tuz Khormato killing two bodyguards and wounding three others
- August 26, 2005: In Mosul, gunmen kill Jiyam Huseein, the leader of the local Reform Party. Gunmen assassinate an Iraqi police officer in northeast Baghdad
- August 27, 2005: Insurgents kill Lt. Col. Mohammed Salih in Kirkuk. Also in Kirkuk, gunmen kill Lt. Col. Muhammad Fakhri Abdullah.
- August 29, 2005: Gunmen kill Brig. Gen. Numan Salman Faris, director of the rapid response team for Baghdad's Azamiyah district.

Periods of relative calm could be followed by sudden escalations. For example, in one twenty-four hour period in late September 2005, insurgents assassinated Colonel Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, the head of Diyala's Police Command; killed four workers from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Baghdad; and, carried out other assassinations in Baquba, Ramadi, Latifiyah and Mosul.^{xlvii} On October 30, gunmen assassinated Ghalib Abdul Mahdi, adviser to the cabinet of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and brother of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. Madhi was being driven to work in Baghdad by his driver when the two were ambushed and killed. Gunmen struck again later in the day, wounding the deputy trade minister, Qais Dawood al-Hassan.^{xlviii} Such attacks, attempts by the insurgents to weaken the new government, are becoming more frequent.

In what appears to be a new twist in political assassinations, gunmen have begun to target those involved in the trial of former regime officials like Saddam Hussein. On October 20, one day after the start of the trial in Baghdad, gunmen assassinated Saadon al-Janabi. Al-Janabi had been defending Awad al-Bandar, a former Ba'ath Party official. Two weeks later, on November 8, gunmen killed Adel al-Zubeidi, the lawyer for former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan. Al-Zubeidi was riding in his car in the Sunni neighborhood of Adil in western Baghdad when insurgents sprayed the car with bullets, injuring another attorney, Thamir al-Khuzai in the process.

In response to the attacks, more than 1,100 Iraqi lawyers withdrew from Saddam Hussein's defense team on November 12. The attorneys had earlier said they would not return to court until security was stepped up and reaffirmed their intention not to return to court on November 28 when the trial was scheduled to resume. In the statement they released, the attorneys said they withdrew because "there was no response from the Iraqi government, US forces and international organizations to our demands for providing protection to the lawyers and their families."^{xlix} Many of the lawyers have rejected the Interior Ministry's offer to supply them with bodyguards, claiming the Shiite-led police and security forces are behind many of the political assassinations.ⁱ

Iraqi police arrested eight Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk on November 26, two days before Saddam's trial was scheduled to resume in Baghdad. The men were accused of plotting to assassinate Raed Juhi, one of the judges who prepared the case against Saddam. When told of the threat on his life, Juhi said: "As an Iraqi citizen and a judge, I am vulnerable to assassination attempts...If I thought about this danger, then I would not be able to perform my job...I will practice my profession in a way that serves my country and satisfies my conscience."ⁱⁱ

- **"Horror" attacks, atrocities, and alienation:** Whether or not the tactics were initially deliberate, insurgents in Iraq found that atrocities like desecrating corpses and beheadings are effective political and psychological weapons for those Islamist extremists whose goal is to divide the West from the Islamic world, and create an unbridgeable "clash of civilizations."

Experts have long pointed out that one of the key differences between Islamist extremist terrorism and previous forms of terrorism is that they are not seeking to negotiate with those they terrorize, but rather to create conditions that can drive the West away, undermine secular and moderate regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and create the conditions under which they can create “Islamic” states according to their own ideas of “Puritanism.”

This is why it serves the purposes of Islamist extremists, as well as some of the more focused opponents of the US and the West, to create mass casualties and carry out major strikes, or carry out executions and beheadings, even if the result is to provoke hostility and anger. The goal of Bin Laden and those like him is not to persuade the US or the West, it is rather to so alienate them from the Islamic and Arab world that the forces of secularism in the region will be sharply undermined, and Western secular influence can be controlled or eliminated. The goal of most Iraqi insurgents is narrower – drive the US and its allies out of Iraq – but involves many of the same methods.

Seen in this context, the more horrifying the attack, or incident, the better, even if it involves Iraqi military, security, and police forces. Simple casualties do not receive the same media attention. They are a reality of war. Killing (or sometimes releasing) innocent hostages does grab the attention of the world media. Large bombs in crowds do the same, as does picking targets whose innocence or media impact grabs headlines. Desecrating corpses, beheading people, and similar acts of violence get even more media attention – at least for a while.

Such actions also breed anger and alienation in the US and the West and provoke excessive political and media reactions, more stringent security measures, violent responses, and all of the other actions that help instigate a “clash of civilizations.” The US and the West are often provoked into playing into the hands of such attackers.

At the same time, any attack or incident that garners massive media coverage and political reactions appears to be a “victory” to those who support Islamist extremism or those who are truly angry at the US – even though the actual body count is often low, and victory does not mean creating stronger forces or winning political control. Each such incident can be used to damage the US and Western view of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Two incidents in particular, both involving the murder and mutilation of US contractors, deserve special mention. On March 31, 2004, insurgents in Fallujah attacked two SUVs carrying four civilian contractors charged with providing security for food convoys in the area. The insurgents attacked the vehicles with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire before pulling the bodies from the burning vehicles and dragging them through the street. Several of the bodies were mutilated and two were strung up on a nearby bridge while local crowds chanted “Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans.” Footage of the burned and mutilated corpses was broadcast around the world.ⁱⁱⁱ

The brutality of the attack drew comparisons to a similar incident in Mogadishu a decade earlier when American soldiers were dragged through the streets by angry mobs.ⁱⁱⁱ Experts like John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org said the comparison to the 1993 attack was spot-on and suggested the Mogadishu attack probably served as an inspiration for the Fallujah attack: “They knew how to stage that. They are trying to frighten Americans. They want to frighten us out of Iraq...It was premeditated, planned, skillfully staged terrorism. They know the degree of dread it will inflict in American family members.”^{iv} In July, after a three-week siege of Fallujah by US Marines, a militant group calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.^{iv}

A similar incident occurred on September 20, 2005, when insurgents attacked a convoy of US contractors north of Baghdad. The convoy, which included US military guards, came under attack after making a wrong turn in the largely Sunni city of Duluiyah, 45 miles north of Baghdad. Insurgents opened gunfire on the convoy, killing four and wounding two.^{vi} The British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* broke the story more than a

month later, with a grisly account of the attack. The paper described how the insurgents dragged two contractors from their truck and forced them to kneel, “[k]illing one of the men with a rifle round fired into the back of his head, they doused the other with petrol and set him alight. Barefoot children, yelping in delight, piled straw on the screaming man’s body to stoke the flames.” Afterwards, a crowd dragged the corpses through the street, chanting anti-US slogans.^{lvii} The military did not confirm the attack (in fact, no mention of it seems to have appeared before the *Telegraph* account,) until October 22, and said only it was investigating the incident.

- **“Body dumps” became a variation on this theme:** The bodies of Iraqi forces and other Iraqis have been dumped in rivers, soccer stadiums, and other public places where they were found without any clear picture as to who had killed them or why. In mid March 2005, for example, some 80 bodies were found in four dumps in Iraq, many of who were police officers and soldiers.^{lviii} Other notable discoveries in late 2005 included:^{lix}
 - April 20, 2005: 100 bodies were retrieved from the Tigris River, near the town of Madain.
 - April 22, 2005: The bodies of 19 Iraqi soldiers were found near Beiji.
 - May 15, 2005: The bodies of 38 men shot execution-style were discovered at an abandoned chicken farm, west of Baghdad.
 - May 28, 2005: The mutilated bodies of 10 Iraqi Shia Muslim pilgrims were found in the desert near the town of Qaim.
 - June 10, 2005: The bodies of 16 people were discovered in western Iraq.
 - June 12, 2005: Police discover 28 bodies in and around Baghdad.
 - August 14, 2005: Captured insurgents lead Iraqi police to a grave containing 30 bodies in southern Baghdad.
 - August 25, 2005: Iraqi police discover 36 bodies in southeastern Baghdad.
 - September 3, 2005: Police discover three bodies in the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
 - September 5, 2005: The bodies of three local politicians were found in Tal Afar.
 - September 8, 2005: Police discover 14 bodies near Mahmoudiyah.
 - September 9, 2005: The bodies of 10 decapitated Iraqis were found.
 - September 12, 2005: Police in Baghdad discover the bodies of 10 Iraqi men.
 - September 17, 2005: A total of 11 bodies, handcuffed and blindfolded, were found around the country.
 - September 18, 2005: 20 bodies were pulled from the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
 - September 22, 2005: The bodies of 10 Iraqis were discovered in Mosul.
 - September 28, 2005: The bodies of seven Sunni men from Hurriya were found in Shula.
 - October 3, 2005: Three bodies were found in Baghdad.
 - October 7, 2005: The bodies of 22 executed Sunnis are discovered in Badra, near the border with Iran.
 - October 11, 2005: A US Army patrol in Tikrit discovers three bodies with multiple gunshot wounds.
 - October 26, 2005: The bodies of nine Iraqi border guards are found in Karbala.
 - October 27, 2005: The bodies of 17 Sunnis are found in Al-Nasiriyah Governorate.

- October 30, 2005: Iraqi police discover 14 bodies near Tal Afar. The victims appeared to have been killed between one and three months ago.
- November 10, 2005: Iraqi soldiers discover the bodies of 27 executed civilians near the border with Iran.
- November 14, 2005: Four bodies are discovered in northern Baghdad.

As the list shows, most of the body dumps have been found in the greater Baghdad area. According to the Associated Press, at least 204 of the 566 bodies that have been found since the interim government was formed on April 28 were discovered in Baghdad. Although the identities of most victims are unknown, the Associated Press has identified 116 Sunnis, 43 Shiites and one Kurd among the victims.^{ix} The frequency of these discoveries appeared to increase in the run-up to the October election, though they did not appear to subside in the weeks thereafter.

- **Deprive the central, regional, and local governments' efforts to expand legitimacy. Attack nation-building and stability targets:** There is nothing new about attacking key economic targets, infrastructure, and aspects of governance critical to the functioning of the state in an effort to disrupt its economy, undermine law enforcement and security, and encourage instability. Iraqi insurgent and Islamist attacks on aid workers and projects, and their role in encouraging looting, sabotage and theft did, however, demonstrate a growing sophistication in targeting stability efforts and tangible progress in aid and governance. These tactics also interact synergistically with the above tactics.
- **Confuse the identity of the attacker; exploit conspiracy theories:** Insurgents and Islamists learned that a mix of silence, multiple claims to be the attacker, new names for attacking organizations, and uncertain levels of affiliation made it harder for the US to respond. They also produced more media coverage and speculation.

As of yet, the number of false flag operations has been limited. However, in Iraq and elsewhere, attacks have often been accompanied by what seem to be deliberate efforts to advance conspiracy theories to confuse the identity of the attacker or to find ways to blame defenders of the US for being attacked. In addition, conspiracy theories charging the US with deliberately or carelessly failing to provide an adequate defense have been particularly effective.

- **Seek to create sanctuaries like Fallujah and the river areas in Al Anbar, Ninevah, and Mosul Provinces; and to take shelter in mosques, shrines, and high value targets, and targets with high cultural impact:** Again, exploiting facilities of religious, cultural, and political sensitivity is not a new tactic. However, as operations against Sadr and in Fallujah have shown, the tactics raise the media profile, create a defensive deterrent, and can be exploited to make the US seem anti-Islamic or to be attacking a culture and not a movement.

In a different case, driving insurgent cells out of Iraq's cities in 2004 led them to move into Al Anbar Province in the West, and to shelter in towns along the route from the Syrian border along the Euphrates, and through Qaim, Rawa, Haithah, and Fallujah to Baghdad. Insurgents have also taken refuge in the largely Sunni towns and cities along the Tigris from Mosul to Baghdad. The areas along the rivers gave the insurgents a population to hide in and disperse among. Unlike the flat desert areas, there were also hills, tree cover, and numerous built up areas, with many potential ambush sites and predictable lines of communication where IEDs could be implanted. While Coalition forces could always enter such areas, they could rarely stop the insurgents from dispersing, and could then regroup – at least in those cases where no permanent garrison and defense force was deployed and the Iraqi government did not provide effective governance.^{lxi}

- **Exploit, exaggerate, and falsify US attacks that cause civilian casualties, collateral damage, friendly fire against local allies, and incidents where the US can be blamed for being anti-Arab and anti-Islam:** Terrorists and insurgents have found they can use the media, rumor, and conspiracy theories to exploit the fact that the US often fights a military battle without proper regard for the fact it is also fighting a political, ideological, and psychological war.

Real incidents of US misconduct such as the harsh treatment of detainees and prisoners, and the excessive security measures are cases in point. So too are careless political and media rhetoric by US officials and military officers.

Bin Laden, the Iraqi insurgents, etc., all benefit from every Western action that unnecessarily angers or frustrates the Arab and Islamic worlds. They are not fighting to influence Western or world opinion; they are fighting a political and psychological war to dominate Iraq and the Arab and Islamic worlds.

- **Kidnap, kill, and attack official envoys and diplomats from Muslim countries seeking to engage the Jafari government.** As discussed above, insurgents have singled out diplomats from Sudan, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan for attack. This limits the ability of the elected government to establish international legitimacy and credibility. Governments whose personnel suffer an attack may not have the will to continue to pursue relations in the face of domestic discontent over any casualties and the Iraq war in general, as was the case with the Philippines. Such attacks can make the Iraqi government look powerless.
- **Kill members of the constitutional committee** either to discourage participation, or in the case of the Sunni delegation, deprive the committee of the necessary numbers of Sunni participants to move forward. Proceeding without the requisite numbers of Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds would thus bring the committee's legitimacy into question.

After weeks of protesting their lack of representation on the constitutional committee, Sunni Arab groups reached a compromise with senior members of the Shi'ite dominated body on June 16, 2005. Under the deal, 15 Sunni Arabs representatives joined the committee. As a result, the committee grew in size from 55 to 70. An additional 10 Sunni Arabs were given special advisory roles, serving as consultants in the constitutional process. US officials strongly supported the changes, in the hopes that it would lead to greater Sunni participation in the upcoming constitutional referendum.

Insurgents did not take long to strike, however. On July 19, gunmen assassinated Mijbil Issa, one of the newly appointed Sunni delegates working on the constitution. His bodyguard and one of the Sunni consultants, Dhamin Hussein al-Obeidi, were also killed. The three men were leaving a Baghdad restaurant when three gunmen inside a minibus opened gunfire on the car carrying them. For many of Iraq's Sunnis, the violence showed the consequences of participating in Iraq's new political process.

On July 20, the 12 remaining members of the Sunni Arab delegation -two had earlier resigned after being threatened by insurgents-suspended their membership in protest over the murder. Five days later, the delegation ended its boycott and returned to the committee.

- **Kidnap, kill and attack candidates running in the December 15 parliamentary elections** as well as local election officials in order to disrupt the political process. Members of the Iraqi National Assembly were frequent targets of attacks by insurgents in 2005. Although many believed Sunnis members of the Assembly were being singled out for attacks, a list of some of those killed shows that both Shi'ites and Kurds were among the victims as well:
 - April 27, 2005: Insurgents in Baghdad gun down Lamia Abed Khadouri Sakri. She was elected in January as part of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi List Party,

which received 40 seats in the new cabinet. Sakri is the first member of the Iraqi National Assembly to be assassinated.

- June 28, 2005: A suicide attack takes the life of Sheik Dhari Fayad, the oldest member of the Iraqi National Assembly.
- July 30, 2005: Sheik Khalaf Aliyan, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Council, escaped an assassination attempt in southern Baghdad.
- September 17, 2005: Gunmen kill Faris Nasir Hussein, a member of Iraq's Shabak ethnic minority. Hussein was elected to parliament on the Kurdish ticket. The attack, which took place on a road from Mosul, also injured another politician, Haidar Qassem.

After the success of the October referendum, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. For the month of November, these included:

- November 3, 2005: An internet statement posted on a website by Al Qaida in Iraq says the group had kidnapped Majida Yussef Sael, a candidate in the December elections and a member of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party.
- November 8, 2005: In Kirkuk, insurgents kidnap Hatam Mahdi al-Hassani, the brother of a leading Sunni Arab politician.
- November 12, 2005: Jamal Khaz'al, the chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Party in Basra, escaped an assassination attempt.
- November 13, 2005: Insurgents assassinate Kiaweh, a member of the Al-Naafi Advisory Council.
- November 17, 2005: Tariq al-Ma'muri, the deputy chairman of the Al-Ummah al-Iraqiyah Party and a candidate for the upcoming elections, escaped an assassination attempt in Al-Qut.
- November 18, 2005: For the second day in a row, Ma'muri escaped an assassination attempt. This time in southern Baghdad.
- November 18, 2005: Insurgents kidnapped Tawfiq al-Yasiri, secretary general of Iraqi Democratic Coalition and Shams al-Iraq candidate.
- November 22, 2005: Unknown gunmen broke into the headquarters of the Communist Party's branch offices in Sadr City, and killed two activists.
- November 23, 2005: Insurgents wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In a statement posted on an Islamist website, Al Qaida in Iraq announced it had killed Miqdad Ahmed Sito, a Kurdish election activist, on November 22 in Mosul.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in Baghdad kill Ayad Alizi and Ali Hussein. Both were members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni party that had boycotted the January elections but was running candidates in the December elections. Alizi had been selected to run as part of a Sunni ticket.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in southern Baghdad killed Ghalib al-Sideri, a candidate for the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue.

- November 28, 2005: Insurgents attacked members of the Assyrian Party in Mosul, killing two and wounding two others.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent female Shi'ite politician, wounding two guards.

A number of local and regional government officials were also killed in November. Because of the sectarian nature of the new political parties, however, it is unclear whether or not the murders were politically or religiously motivated.

Lessons About Methods of Attack and Combat

There is no clear division between the mix of insurgent and terrorist tactics focused on the political and psychological nature of war and those that focus on directly attacking targets like MNF-I and Iraqi government forces, Iraqi and Coalition officials, and the Iraqi economy and nation building process. The insurgents again made major adaptations in their tactics and methods of attack that still further increased the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces:

- **Mix crude and sophisticated IEDs:** Hezbollah should be given credit for having first perfected the use of explosives in well structured ambushes, although there is nothing new about such tactics – the Afghans used them extensively against the Soviets. Iraq has, however, provided a unique opportunity for insurgents and Islamist extremists to make extensive use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) by exploiting its massive stocks of arms. The insurgents were able to draw on large stocks of explosives, as well as large bombs and artillery shells. Nearly 400 tons of HMX and RDX plastic explosive disappeared from the Qaqaa weapons facility alone after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

The Iraqi attackers also learned to combine their extensive use of low grade IEDs, more carefully targeted sophisticated IEDs, very large car bombs and other devices to create a mix of threats and methods that is much more difficult to counter than reliance on more consistent types of bombs and target sets.^{lxii}

The insurgents based many of their initial efforts on relatively simple weapons designs, some of which seem to have been adapted from the Arabic translations of US field manuals on booby traps and similar improvised devices. The insurgents soon learned, however, to use more sophisticated detonators and triggering systems to counter US electronic countermeasures, and increase their distance away from the bomb. According to one report, only 10% of the IEDs used in Iraq as of May 2005 were modeled on the pressure-detonation devices shown in US Army Field Manual 5-31 and in a direct Iraqi translation published in 1987.^{lxiii} Insurgents had also learned how to make crude shaped-charges to attack US armored and other vehicles.

By the summer of 2005, insurgents were attempting an average of 65 IED attacks a day. Many were detected and defeated, but their use of shaped charges had become more sophisticated, using technology first developed by the Lebanese Hezbollah. In addition, the insurgents had learned to cluster and stack anti-tank mines, and use brute force IEDs like adapted 500-pound bombs.^{lxiv} They also learned the vulnerabilities of US and Coalition armored vehicles, and which held the most troops and/or crew. They learned more about the probable routes Coalition and Iraq forces would have to take, and which kind of attacks would do most to disrupt a given movement.

Insurgent organizations improved in structure to the point where key personnel directing operations, financing them, and providing technical support were far less active in the field, and more and more use was made of foreign volunteers, Iraqis recruited with little background, and Iraqis paid small sums to do part of the work in implanting IEDs.

Small, largely independent cells came to carry out many operations – a technique which ensured that operations were hard to detect and penetrate and making it difficult to roll up an organization by catching men in the field or interrogating members of any one cell. In some cases, holes and locations for IEDs were prepared by one small team -- sometimes using vehicles with holes cut in the bottom to defeat visual detection. A different team might cruise through an area and plant an IED quickly on a target of opportunity basis to defeat surveillance and patrols. Al Qaeda in Iraq and Ansaar al Islam became particularly skilled in such operations. In short, the insurgents advanced both their IED technology and tactics in tandem.^{lxv}

The insurgents also paid close attention to US intelligence collection methods, and counter-IED operations and change their behavior accordingly. They also use improved methods of concealment, like digging holes in a road and then “paving over” the hole. Other methods have included stealing police, military, and government vehicles, and uniforms and IDs, to penetrate in to secure areas, and linking bombings to ambushes with rifles and RPGs – or additional IEDs – to attack the response force.

In September 2004, General Richard Cody, the US Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that some 500-600 IEDs were then going off each month, and roughly half either harmed US personnel or damaged US vehicles.^{lxvi} While Coalition forces claimed to find some 30-40% of IEDs, and render them safe, by May 2005, they also reported that the number of IED incidents had steadily climbed to some 30 per day.

Lt. General James T. Conway, Director of Operations in the US Joint Staff, stated in May 2005, that a total of 70% of all Coalition casualties to date since the fall of Saddam Hussein had been caused by IEDs, an effort that had been so successful that the US announced that even uparmored Humvees were unsafe in high threat areas, and were being replaced with heavily armored 5-ton “gun trucks.”^{lxvii} An analysis by the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count showed that IEDs had killed 336 Americans by various suicide or car bombs, as of April 29, 2005.^{lxviii}

IEDs accounted for 189 of 720 US combat deaths in 2004 -- about 26 percent. Deaths caused by IEDs rose by more than 41% during the first five months of 2005, compared with a similar period in 2004, and accounted for 51% of the 255 combat deaths as of June 9, 2005. There were 85 deaths attributed to IEDs in the first five months of 2004, and 120 in 2005. This was a primary reason that the number of uparmored Humvees in US forces rose from around 200 in the summer of 2004 to 9,000 in June 2005.^{lxix}

Similar data are not available on Iraqi casualties, a larger percent of whom seem to have been hit by suicide bombers and in ambushes, but the chronology in the Appendix to this analysis shows there have been many effective attacks. For example, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and 44 were wounded in a single VBIED bomb attack on their bus on April 6, 2005.^{lxx} Iraqi military, security, and police are particularly vulnerable because they have little or no armor, and often must move into insecure facilities or go on leave in unprotected vehicles simply to perform routine tasks like bringing money to their families in a cash-in-hand economy.

The number of roadside bombs continued to increase in the fall of 2005, part of the larger wave of violence unleashed by insurgents in the run-up to the December 15 elections. The US military reported that for September and October 2005, there were more than 2,000 roadside bombs. While IED attacks had numbered around 700 a month in the spring of 2004, there were 1,029 attacks in August; 1,044 in September; and, 1,029 in October. Although both the Iraqi and US security forces were becoming more adept at detecting the bombs, the insurgents were planting explosives in greater numbers than ever before.

The lethality and effectiveness of the devices also increased. In the six month period between May and October 2005, more than 60 per cent of all US troop fatalities were caused by IEDs. Of the more than 569 attacks across Iraq that occurred during the last

week of October, 40 percent involved improvised bombs. IED attacks for that period accounted for 64 percent of coalition casualties and 37 percent of Iraqi security force casualties.^{lxxi}

Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a press briefing in November:^{lxxii}

Between the increase in armor and the changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that we've employed, the number of attacks-IED attacks-that have [killed or wounded troops] has gone down...That said, there are more overall IED attacks by the insurgents, and we are working on that problem.

But US efforts to combat the effectiveness of the IEDs and find them before they detonate have not always been successful. Jammers used by US troops in Iraq to prevent insurgents from detonating IEDs with cell phones or garage-door openers often interfere with US radio signals, causing troops to turn off the jammers when they use their radios.^{lxxiii}

According to Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita, IEDs pose a "tough" and evolving challenge because the problem that existed last year "is a different IED problem than the IED problem that exists today."^{lxxiv} In late fall, the Pentagon announced that insurgents were using new triggers or sensors on the devices but that it was unable to figure out where the new technology was coming from or how best to defeat it. Although most bombs were still believed to be coming from inside Iraq, the military said it had evidence that bombs and technology were entering Iraq from the outside. Iran, as discussed below, is the candidate most often suspected as the source of this new technology.

US military officials believe IEDs are likely to be a problem for US forces for years to come, and not just in Iraq. Improvised bombs could become the weapon of choice for future insurgencies and guerilla wars. A 140-person Pentagon task force began working on ways to combat the roadside bombings in mid-2004. Brig. Gen. Joseph Votel, who currently leads the Pentagon's anti-IED effort, said in early November 2005 that IEDs "remain the only thing that we haven't solved, I think, in terms of the enemy capability to operate against us." Lt. Gen. James Conway, the operations director of the Joint Staff, agreed, saying the US military was placing a greater emphasis on IEDs "because it's the only tool the enemy really has left in order to be able to take us on and be able to really cause casualties." Similarly, Di Rita has said that once the US finds a way to eliminate the improvised devices, "it's over."^{lxxv}

The Pentagon has been looking at how the British and Israelis dealt with similar problems in Northern Ireland and Lebanon in order to learn from those experiences. So far, however, the taskforce, which has received more than \$1.5 billion in funding to date, has been unable to produce a "silver bullet" against IEDs.^{lxxvi}

- **Adapt technology to match updates in Coalition defense capabilities:** Despite technological advances and changes in tactics by the US military, insurgents continue to remain one step ahead. The summer of 2005 brought an increase in "shaped-charge" explosives, the use of sophisticated infra-red motion detectors to fire them as targets passed by, and new radio-controlled triggers with enough range and power to work from outside the range of the Coalition's ECM bubble.

The number of American troops killed by IEDs spiked during the summer, with 35 deaths in May; 36 in June; and 39 in July.^{lxxvii} Another adaptation that has increased the lethality of insurgent IED attacks was the increased size of the weapons, a response to the up-armorings of U.S. vehicles. Initially, IEDs in Iraq were small charges composed of single 60mm and 81mm mortars. Insurgents have since increased the size to 122mm and 152mm, and begun to use buried 500- and 1,000-lb airplane bombs to effect an explosive upward force that can render current up-armorings useless.^{lxxviii} The 39 deaths by bombing in July 2005 was the largest to-date monthly toll since the war began.

In early October 2005, the British government announced that the recent increase in sophisticated roadside bombs in Iraq could be traced to Iran. During the summer of 2005 insurgents began using infra-red “trip wires” rather than the less sophisticated remote control devices to detonate IEDs. The technology is similar to that used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. While cautioning that they could not be sure about the level of official or unofficial Iranian involvement, Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters that new explosive devices being used against Coalition troops in Iraq could nevertheless be traced “either to Iranian elements or to Hezbollah.”^{lxxxix} A breakaway group from Moqtada al-Sadr’s militia is believed to be using the trip-wires, as are Sunni insurgents.

- **Specialize and compartment operations, use isolation, affiliation, and “swarming:”** Insurgent groups have learned to create structures where leadership cadres are almost totally isolated from operations and communication, focusing on providing broad guidance and the propaganda and media struggle. Finance, planning, armorer, and pert operational groups are similarly isolated and physically separated from the leadership and each other. Specialized groups are created in larger organizations for IED operations, assassinations, even strikes focused on specialized groups like Shi’ite clergy. Suicide bomber groups are kept separate from those planning and arming the attacks and treated as expendable. Low level and low value cadres are expended in defensive operations or attacks, while higher value cadres disperse and seek to survive. Paid elements are used to avoid loss of cadre personnel.

Cell structures are deliberately kept loose, and direct command and communication minimized. Mission tasking replaces the kind of direct tasking and communication that the Coalition and Iraqi forces might detect. Affiliated groups and different mixes of cells may be brought in to “swarm” a given target or support a given operation, but the proliferation of different groups and elements helps ensure the survival of all insurgent groups by making it impossible to target a given set of cells and leaders.

The insurgents also use their own version of “swarming.” They use media coverage, key calendar events, and other forms of “open source” targeting and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of given attacks to know which strike have high profile, what methods of attack work, and the media and military impact of their actions. The proliferation of groups and cells, attack somewhat at random, but against high value targets in given place or time, of a given type, or simply in a constant stream of diverse attacks removes the need for coordination and complex C4I/BM operations, and allows a slow and uncoordinated tempo of operations to be effective.

- **Adapt targets to place maximum pressure on Iraqi social and political apparatuses:** Insurgents have adapted their tactics as well, focusing greater attention on Iraqi military forces and police. In January 2005, 109 Iraq police and military were killed through insurgent activity. By May, this number had spiked to 259, and by July 304.^{lxxx} As the Iraqi constitutional process unfolded – which the Sunnis were largely absent from due to their widespread boycott of the Parliamentary election – sectarian violence became increasingly apparent. Sunni attacks on Iraqi security and political figures increased as radicals sought to derail the political process. On August 19, 2005, three Sunni election workers were kidnapped in Mosul, driven to Al Noor and executed before a throng of people gathered before the Al Noor Mosque. Of the election workers murdered, one was identified as Faris Yunis Abdullah, a senior official in the mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party. The three men were posting placards encouraging Iraqis to vote in the October 15 election when they were abducted.^{lxxxi}
- **Use mixed attacks, and seek to ambush military and emergency forces in follow-on attacks:** Iraqi insurgents steadily improved their ability to carry out complex attacks where an IED might be set off and then either more IEDs or other methods of attack would be used against rescuers and follow-on forces. Alternatively, an ambush might be used to lead US and Iraqi forces into an area with IEDs.

By the spring of 2005, insurgents increasingly used such mixed attacks to strike at US facilities. For example, they used a mix of gunmen, suicide car bombs, and a large fire truck filled with explosives to attack a US marine base at Camp Gannon at Husaybah near the Syrian border on April 11, 2005.^{lxxxii} On May 9, 2005, they used a hospital at Haditha as an ambush point, and then attacked the US forces that responded with suicide bombs once they are entered. This mix of unpredictable attacks, many slowly built up in ways difficult for US intelligence methods to detect, has greatly complicated the operations of US and Iraq forces, although scarcely defeated them.

- **Carry out sequential ambushes:** Increasingly carry out complex mixes of sequential ambushes to draw in and attack Iraqi and US responders to the initial or previous follow-on attacks.
- **Exploit the weaknesses in US, Coalition, and Iraqi combat and logistic vehicles:** The insurgents soon learned to target unarmored and lightly armored vehicles, and to highlight and train to hit at their weakness point. Deliberately or not, they learned this forced the US to use steadily heavier armor, disperse force to protect most movements, and pay the cost of trying to uparmor and uparm everything from truck and Humvees to armored fighting vehicles like the Stryker. At the same time, insurgents learned how to place IEDs where they could kill many armored vehicles from below –where their armor was lighter or less effective, and to use detonating devices that allowed remote triggering as armored vehicles passed above an IED or group of anti-tank mines.
- **Develop complex mixes and ambushes using small arms and light weapons:** At least through the spring of 2005, insurgents did not make effective use of looted guided anti-tank weapons, and had only been able to down one aircraft with manportable surface to air missiles (MANPADS).^{lxxxiii} They did, however, steadily improve their tactics from single fire ambushes to multiple firings of RPGs against the same target, mixes of firing positions, and sequential fire points, ambushes, and defenses -- mixing small arms, RPGs, and light automatic weapons.
- **“Swarming” techniques, and attacks on vehicles:** The quality of urban and road ambushes improved strikingly in Iraq, as did the ability to set up rapid attacks, and exploit the vulnerability of soft skinned vehicles. Insurgents also learned to “swarm” coalition forces by rushing in from different points or firing simultaneously from multiple locations. In some cases, a single vehicle could take eight RPG rounds in a short encounter. Particularly in built-up areas, these tactics could kill or disable even heavy armor like the Abrams tank, and posed a major threat to lighter armored vehicles, as well as exposed infantry.
- **Suicide bombs, car bombs, and mass bombings:** The use of such tactics increased steadily after late 2003, in part due to the high success rate relative to alternative methods of attack. By late 2004, exploding vehicles accounted for approximately 60% of Iraqi police and recruit fatalities.^{lxxxiv}

It is not always clear that suicide-bombing techniques were tactically necessary. In many cases, timed devices might produce the same damage. Events in Iraq showed, however, that suicide bombers had a major psychological impact and gain exceptional media attention. They also came to serve as symbols of dedication and commitment, can be portrayed as a form of Islamic martyrdom, and attract more political support and attention among those sympathetic to the cause involved.

The “cost” of suicide bombers was also low. While no reliable figures are available, only about 10% seemed to have been Iraqis as of August 2005, and most had been recruited from outside Iraq by various Islamist organizations. Key sources were North Africa, the Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, and Central Asia.

The limited evidence available indicates that many were chosen because they can be persuaded to seek Islamic martyrdom, and do so collectively and without trying to call

great public attention to themselves. They often could be rapidly indoctrinated and given minimal training and then be used as “force multipliers” for relatively small Islamic extremist groups. A single volunteer could use a strap-on bomb, or single vehicle filled with explosives, penetrate a crowded area or high profile target area, and then set off an explosion producing high casualties.

Even when such attacks fail to reach their target the explosion often got intense public and media attention. They also became political weapons by exploiting the fact Arab Sunni Islamists were being used to kill and maim large numbers of Arab Shi'ites and Kurds, as well as any Sunni volunteers and military in the Iraqi forces. Some of the larger weapons approached the status of weapons of mass terrorism, and even much smaller levels of casualties got enough attention to make them weapons of mass media and weapons of mass politics – tools that could be used to encourage ethnic and sectarian civil war. In the spring of 2005, some 170 such attacks were conducted in April, 151 in May, and 133 in June.

These attacks generate even greater public and media attention when women carry them out. Zarqawi has asserted that many Iraqi females have come to him asking to be dispatched on suicide missions. In the past, he has used this to try and shame Iraqi males into volunteering for suicide missions.^{lxxxv} Although Saddam Hussein's security forces used female bombers at least once during the 2003 war, Al Qaida in Iraq did not begin using female suicide bombers until the fall of 2005. (Prior to 2005, Coalition forces had reported capturing a number of female suicide bombers on foot, including one trying to enter the Green Zone in October 2003.^{lxxxvi})

The first female suicide attack occurred on September 28 in the city of Tal Afar. After having been denied entry to a civil military operations building, the bomber detonated her explosives in a nearby square where Iraqi civilians and US soldiers often interacted. The attack claimed the lives of five civilians and injured more than 30. Zarqawi's organization asserted responsibility for the attack in an Internet posting saying a “sister” of the Malik Suicidal Brigade had carried out the successful mission.^{lxxxvii}

The first female suicide attack of the insurgency was followed closely by a female suicide car bombing. On October 11, a female suicide bomber detonated her car near a group of US soldiers on patrol in Mosul. The only other known incident of a female suicide car bomber occurred in Haditha in April of 2003 when two women, acting on the orders of officials in Saddam Hussein's regime, killed three US soldiers.^{lxxxviii}

In response to the bombing in Tal Afar, the regional police chief-General Ahmed Mohammed Khalaf-issued the following statement:

Today's attack seems to represent a new tactic by the insurgents to use women, who are rarely searched at the Tal Afar checkpoints because of religious and social traditions that grant women special treatment.

Because of the bombing, Gen. Khalaf said women and children would now be searched “in the same manner as men”.^{lxxxix} Cultural and religious barriers have made any interaction between US forces and Iraqi women difficult in the past. Following the attacks, the Ministry of Defense announced there would be no new security measures other than “being more aware that females as well as men can be suicide bombers.”^{xxc}

The most well-known Iraqi female suicide bomber was that of Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, a 35-year-old mother of four from Ramadi, who was to have been the fourth suicide bomber of the November 9 hotel attacks in Amman. Rishawi fled the Radisson hotel after her husband detonated his explosives and her own failed to go off. She was picked up by Jordanian police three days later and made a televised statement that was subsequently aired around the world.

Hussein al-Dulaimi, a cousin of Rishawi, believes she was motivated by anger and humiliation. As discussed later, three of her brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq. According to Dulaimi, the family was often harassed by US troops:^{xc1}

“In one incident, Sajida’s house was raided, and an American soldier put his boot on the head of Sajida’s husband...That made her very angry, as this was a big insult against her and her husband.”

Rishawi’s case is unusual in that it is believed to be the first case of husband and wife suicide bombers.

In late November, reports surfaced that a European woman had been involved in a suicide attack in Iraq. Iraqi officials believe a November 9 attack on a US military convoy in Baghdad was carried out by a Belgian woman who had converted to Islam after marrying a radical Muslim. The woman, identified as Muriel Degauque, was the only fatality in the attack and had traveled to Iraq to carry out jihad with her husband.^{xcii} The case was the first instance of a European female suicide bomber.

- **Use foreign Islamist volunteers as cannon fodder; put “paid” and low value Iraqi insurgents in high risk positions:** Both Islamist extremist cells and more nationalist cells and groups learned to exploit young men recruited from outside Iraq as “Islamic martyrs” in suicide bombings and other high risk missions. They developed foreign recruiting networks, often staging such volunteers through Syria and Jordan, indoctrinating them, and then using them ruthlessly. Alternatively, groups and cells learned to isolate their leaders, financiers, and experts from high risk and front line missions, sending in inexperienced and junior personnel to take risks – sometimes young Iraqis paid token fees for risking the actual attack. In at least some cases, the difference between suicide attack and other attack was minimal. Iraqis were sent out to conduct attacks where the planner must have known they had little or no chance of survival.
- **Stay behinds, diehards, and suicide squads:** During and after Fallujah, insurgents increasingly had teams stay behind who seem to have been prepared to die or to seek martyrdom. Many were Iraqis. Their willingness to defend a building or small area with suicidal determination and no regard for retreat often inflicted higher casualties on MNF-I and Iraqi forces.
- **Make better use of light weapons like automatic weapons, RPGs, and mortars; attack from remote locations or use timed devices:** While much will depend on the level of insurgent and Islamist extremist access to arms, Iraq and Afghanistan have seen a steady improvement in the use of systems like mortars, anti-tank weapons, rockets, and timed explosives. It has also seen improvements in light weapons and the increasing use of armor piercing ammunition as a cheap way of attacking body armor, vehicles, and penetrating walls.
- **Import small “force multipliers”:** Rather than smuggle large numbers of arms, and create highly visible lines of supply, the insurgents imported devices like night vision systems, commercial communications, sniper rifles, and new forms of more sophisticated detonators.
- **Make effective use of snipers:** Iraqi insurgents initially had poor marksmanship and tended to fire off their weapons in sustained and poorly armed bursts. With time, however, some groups and cells not only developed effective snipers, but trained spotters, learned how to position and mix their snipers with other elements of Iraqi forces, and developed signals and other communications systems like them in tactical operations. Overall fire discipline and marksmanship remained poor through the late spring of 2005, but sniper elements became steadily more effective, and the overall quality of insurgent fire discipline and marksmanship was generally no worse than that of Iraqi soldiers, security personnel, and police. Snipers acquired new types of rifles, ant-armor ammunition, and body armor from outside Iraq, indicating they might have both support

and training from Islamist extremists. Islamist web sites also began to include interactive sniper “training” data as a recruiting tool and crude training aid.^{xciii}

- **Attack lines of communication (LOCs), rear area, and support activity:** Iraqi insurgents soon found that dispersed attacks on logistics and support forces often offer a higher chance of success than attacks on combat forces and defended sites, and make the Coalition fight wars based on “deep support” rather than “deep strikes” beyond the Forward Edge of Battle Areas (FEBA). In some cases, like the road from the Green Zone and central Baghdad to the airport, insurgents also chose routes that the Coalition and government forces could not avoid, where constant attacks both harassed operations and became a political statement and symbol of Iraq’s lack of security. These “ambush alleys” allowed the insurgents to force a major Iraqi or MNF defensive effort at relatively little cost.
- **Strike at highly visible targets with critical economic and infrastructure visibility:** Water and power facilities have a broad political, media, economic, and social impact. Striking at critical export-earning facilities like Iraq’s northern export pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields to the IT-1A storage tanks near Beiji, where oil accumulates before it is pumped further north to Cheyhan, has sharply affected the government’s revenues, forced it to create special protection forces, and gained world attention.
- **Kill Iraqi elites and “soft targets”:** The insurgents soon found it was far easier to kill Iraqi officials and security personnel, and their family members, than Americans. They also found it was easier to kill mid-level officials than better-protected senior officials. In some areas, simply killing educated elites and/or their family members – doctors, professionals, etc. – could paralyze much of the nation building process, create a broad climate of insecurity, and force the US and Iraqi forces to disperse resources in defensive missions or simply have to stand aside and tolerate continued attacks.
- **Target elections, the political process and governance:** Elections and the local presence of government are soft, dispersed targets whose operation is critical to political legitimacy. Hitting these targets helps derail the political process, gets media visibility, offers vulnerable “low hanging fruit,” and intimidates the government and population in much wider areas than those subjected to direct attack.

In the run up to the October referendum, insurgents intensified their attacks upon political and infrastructure targets. Insurgents bombed a number of party offices, including those of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party. The latter was attacked after it urged its followers to vote in favor of the constitution.

Despite predictions of major violence, there are relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital’s 1,200 polling stations are attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty.

- In Ramadi, US patrols clashed with insurgents in the early morning hours. Also in Ramadi, a roadside bomb kills five US soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers. Insurgents fired six mortar rounds at a sports hall being used as a polling center.
- A roadside bomb in Saqlawiyah killed a US Marine.
- South of Basra, gunmen attacked an empty polling station at 3 a.m., but were apprehended.
- In Baquba, a roadside bomb struck an Iraqi army and police convoy on patrol, killing three soldiers and wounding another three.

- In Baghdad, insurgents targeted five polling stations: A roadside bomb exploded early Saturday near a school polling station in the Amiriyah neighborhood of western Baghdad, wounding two policemen. At 8:30 a.m., a rocket landed nearby a voting station in Azamiyah, northern Baghdad, injuring one civilian. Half an hour later, a mortar landed near a polling station in the Kazemiyah area. The mortar did not explode. Insurgents opened fire on a polling station in the Amil district of western Baghdad. Iraqi policemen returned fire, accidentally wounding three civilians on their way to vote. At midday, insurgents shot and killed a voter walking home from a polling station in western Baghdad.

As already discussed, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. Attacks against party offices have also become common.

- **Strike at major aid and government projects after completion; break up project efforts when they acquire visibility or have high levels of employment:** Insurgents and terrorists often simply struck at the most vulnerable projects, but they seem to have learned that timing their attacks, looting, sabotage, and intimidation to strike when projects are completed means the Coalition and government aid efforts have maximum cost with minimum effect. They struck at projects when the security forces protecting workers and aid teams were no longer there. This often led the local population to blame the Coalition or government for not keeping promises or providing the proper protection. Alternatively, breaking up project efforts when they began to have maximum local visibility and employment impact had many of the same effects.
- **Hit the softest element of Iraqi military, security, and police forces:** The insurgents found they could strike at men on leave, their families, recruits or those seeking to enlist, green troops and trainees, and low quality units with limited fear of effective retaliation. High profile mass killings got major media attention. Moreover, isolated forward elements in hostile or threatened areas not only were vulnerable, but successful attacks broke up governance, aid efforts, and intimidated local populations. This strategy has been most damaging to Iraqi police, which remain the weakest element in the security apparatus.
- **Create informal distributed networks for C⁴I—deliberately or accidentally:** Like drug dealers before them, Iraqi insurgent and Islamist extremists have learned enough about COMINT and SIGINT to stop using most vulnerable communications assets, and to bypass many – if not most – of the efforts to control cash flow and money transfers.

The use of messengers, direct human contact, coded messages through the Internet, propaganda web pages, and more random methods of electronic communication are all cases in point. At the broader level, however, insurgents in Iraq seem to have adapted to having cells and elements operate with considerable autonomy, and by loosely linking their operations by using the media and reporting on the overall pattern of attacks to help determine the best methods and targets.

Smuggling, drug sales, theft and looting, and direct fund transfers also largely bypass efforts to limit operations through controls on banking systems, charities, etc. Under these conditions, a lack of central control and cohesive structure may actually be an asset, allowing highly flexible operations with minimal vulnerability to roll-up and attack.

The existence of parallel, non-competing groups of hostile non-state actors provides similar advantages and has the same impact. The fact that insurgent and Islamist extremist groups operate largely independently, and use different tactics and target sets, greatly complicates US operations and probably actually increases overall effectiveness.

- **Denying the Coalition and Iraqi government local victory:** The other side of the coin was that the insurgents found they could disperse and reinfiltate into many towns and parts of cities the moment Coalition and combat-ready Iraqi elements left and deny the Iraqi government the ability to either deploy police or govern. Alternatively, bombings and sabotage could prevent or restrict the recovery of a town or area, and create a level of risk that meant many would not return or attempt to live a normal life. The case of Ramadi is particularly illustrative. Even as late as November 2005, insurgents were able to capture large parts of the city and exert control.
- **Street scouts and spotters:** Like many previous insurgent groups, Iraqi hostiles learned to have children, young men, and others use cell phones, signals, and runners to provide tactical scouting, intelligence, and warning in ways that proved very difficult to detect and halt.
- **Make cities and towns urban sanctuaries and defensive morasses:** Iraqi insurgents found that cities with supportive and/or accepting populations can be made into partial sanctuaries and centers for defensive fighting and ambushes, and that tactical defeat can normally be dealt with by dispersal and hiding among the civilian population. Such tactics work well in attacks on local authorities and security forces friendly to the US, efforts to block nation building at the local level, and efforts to exploit religion, ethnicity, tribalism, etc. Several cities in Al Anbar province have served as sanctuaries for militants. Insurgents typically leave the cities before a major US operation begins and return once the operation has ended.
- **Use neighboring states and border areas as partial sanctuaries:** While scarcely a new tactic, Iraqi insurgents have made increased use of cross border operations and taken advantage of the difficulties in securing the Syrian, Iranian, and Saudi borders. By March 2005, for example, these tactics had created a near sanctuary in the area along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha toward Syria and through Ubaydi, Qaim, Karabilah, and Qusaybah to the Syrian border along the road to Abu Kamal.^{xciiv} The Vietnamese used the same tactic in Cambodia and Laos, and so have many other insurgent forces. The idea of securing a nation based on securing the territory within its tactical boundaries is often a tactical myth.
- **Create dispersed and rapidly mobile operations and centers, mixed with fixed “diehard” and “sleeper” installations.** The insurgents rapidly learned not to concentrate operatives and to keep them rapidly mobile. They mixed these with “die hard” facilities designed to fight and defend themselves and inflict casualties if attacked, and with sleeper cells and stay behind operations to recover after an area was attacked, captured, and “secured” by Coalition and Iraqi forces.
- **Exploit weaknesses in US human intelligence (HUMINT), battle damage assessment (BDA), and damage characterization capabilities:** Iraqi insurgents and other Islamist extremists learned that US intelligence is optimized around characterizing, counting, and targeting things, rather than people, and that the US has poor capability to measure and characterize infantry and insurgent numbers, wounded, and casualties. They exploit these weaknesses in dispersal, in conducting attacks, in concealing the extent of losses, and in manipulating the media by claiming civilian casualties and collateral damage.
- **Counter US advantages in intercepting satellite and cellular communications:** Insurgents utilize the text messaging function of cell phones to communicate in an effort to avoid electronic eavesdropping by the US. Insurgents will often use more than one phone to communicate a message, so that those listening in only hear part of the message.
- **Exploit slow Iraqi and US reaction times at the local tactical level, particularly in built up areas:** Learn to exploit the delays in US response efforts, and rigidities in US tactical C⁴I behavior, to attack quickly and disperse.

- **Exploit fixed Iraqi and US patterns of behavior:** Take advantage of any tendency to repeat tactics, security, movement patterns, and other behavior; find vulnerabilities and attack.
- **Hit at US HUMINT links and translators:** US dependence on Iraqi translators and intelligence sources is a key area of US vulnerability and one the insurgents have learned to focus on.
- **Use “resurgence” and re-infiltration – dig in, hide, and reemerge:** Disperse under pressure or when defeat seems likely. Let the US take an “empty” city or objective. “Resurge” when the US tactical presence declines.
- **Use incident frequencies, distribution of attacks, and tactics that strain or defeat US intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (IS&R) assets and ability to support Iraqi forces:** Assets like RPVs, aircraft, SIGINT systems, etc. can provide significant capability *when they are available*. It is unclear whether it is deliberate or not, but the geographic spread and daily incident count in Iraq indicates that insurgent movements and actions often reach numbers too large to cover. In fact, the US averaged some 1,700-2,000 patrols per day during May 2004. While it is nice to talk about netcentric warfare, it is a lot harder to get a big enough net.

Insurgents learned that the US has less ability to track and characterize irregular forces, insurgent/terrorist teams, and urban and dispersed infantry than forces using mechanized weapons or significant numbers of vehicles. Blending into the civilian population has worked well for local insurgents and Islamists in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iraqi insurgents learned that they can exploit rules of engagement where the US and Iraqi government forces do not have soldiers or agents on the ground to perform targeting and IFF functions. As valuable as IS&R assets are, they do not provide some critical kinds of situational awareness with any reliability.

- **Increase the size and power of IEDs to nullify the advantages of US and Coalition armor:** In two separate instances in early January 2005, IEDs destroyed a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and an Abrams tank. The two vehicles are among the more heavily armored vehicles in the US arsenal. Prior to the two bombings, both the Abrams and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle had proven relatively effective in protecting troops inside.
- **Choose a vulnerable Iraqi and US force:** Deny the US and Iraqi forces a large, cohesive enemy while attacking small or dispersed elements of US and Iraqi forces, facilities, or targets.
- **Counter US IS&R capabilities by adapting new techniques of communication and interaction:** The steady leakage of details on US and allied intelligence collection methods has led Islamist extremist and terrorist movements to make more use of couriers and direct financial transfer; use electronic communications more safely; screen recruits more carefully, find ways to communicate through the Internet that the US cannot target, disperse better, and improve their hierarchy and cell structure.
- **Counter US and Iraqi government IS&R assets with superior HUMINT:** Developments in Iraq indicate that the US faces a repetition of its experience in Vietnam in the sense that as various insurgent factions organize, they steadily improve their intelligence and penetration of organizations like the CPA, CJTF-7, the Iraqi government and security forces, and the Iraqi factions backing nation building.

Like Vietnam, Iraq is a warning that hostile HUMINT sources are often pushed into providing data because of family ties, a fear of being on the losing side, direct and indirect threats, etc. In Iraq's case, it seems likely that family, clan, and ethnic loyalties have made many supposedly loyal Iraqis become at least part time sources, and that US vetting will often be little more than either a review of past ties or checks on the validity of data being provided. The end result may be an extremely high degree of transparency

on US, Iraqi government, aid, and every other aspect of Iraqi operations. This will often provide excellent targeting data on key US and allied officials, events, etc. It can include leverage and blackmail, and vulnerability data, as well as warning of US and other military operations. Dual loyalty and HUMINT penetration of Iraqi security and military forces may be the rule, rather than the exception.

- **Use the media, infiltrators/sympathizers, and ex-detainees for counterintelligence:** Constantly monitor the media and Internet for data on US and Iraqi intelligence, targeting, and operational data. Use infiltrators and sympathizers. Debrief released prisoners and detainees to learn what their capture and interrogation reveals about US and Iraqi intelligence efforts.

Iraqi-US Asymmetric Interaction and Non-Interoperability

The problems such changes in insurgent tactics and technology created for US forces often allowed them to continue to fight below the threshold where US, British, and other Coalition forces could exploit their superior conventional weapons and technology. They kept casualties high enough to be serious and forced Coalition forces to spend at least an order of magnitude more on countermeasures than the insurgents had to spend on new weapons and tactics.

They also exploited the much greater vulnerability of Iraqi forces. The US not only initially failed to properly assess the growth of terrorism and insurgency during the first year following the fall of Saddam Hussein, but as the insurgency rose and became steadily more effective, the US failed to react by treating the Iraqi forces it was creating as serious partners. It failed to promptly restructure its force goals – and its training and equipment effort for Iraq military, security, and police forces.

The end result was a growing asymmetry in interoperability between US military forces, and the new Iraqi forces, as the insurgency took hold. As the data in the following chapters make brutally clear, the US initially failed to provide minimal facilities and equipment such as body armor, communications and vehicles. While the US training teams and US commanders in the field made steadily better efforts to organize and train Iraqi forces to protect themselves, the US as a whole concentrated on manpower numbers and then left Iraqis out in the field to die.

The seriousness of this problem is all too clear when one considers the impact of less serious shortfalls in equipment in US forces. It is clear from the Congressional and media reaction to the discovery that the US was slow to uparmor Humvees and trucks for its ground forces in December 2004. At the same time, it is striking that the resulting debate over the equipment issued to US and Coalition forces failed to ask what equipment was being provided to Iraqi forces although they had been a prime target of the insurgents and terrorists since late summer of 2003.

III. The Evolving Nature of the Insurgency

The insurgent and terrorist threat in Iraq remains all too real, and continues to evolve in response to the changes in Iraqi and Coalition forces. It continues to inflict serious casualties and damage, and now has significant elements that are doing their utmost to provoke a large-scale civil war along sectarian and ethnic lines.

This reflects the fact that serious insurgencies normally involve patterns that can play out over years and sometimes decades. It is easy to claim a trend towards "victory," but it is generally far more difficult to make them enduring or valid. It is equally easy to talk about "tipping points" or "turning points," but most such claims are wrong, oversimplified, and/or premature. Real patterns take time to emerge, and insurgencies are filled with cycles in which the patterns of a given day, week, or month are reversed, and later reversed again.

If one looks at the development of the insurgency in the previous chapter, the discussion of its evolution in this chapter, and its detailed history and patterns in the chapters that follow, one sees an insurgency that has changed strikingly since its early days, when it was dominated by the goals and actions of former regime loyalists. One also sees a major challenge to both the conventional warfighting superiority of US-dominated Coalition forces and the concepts such forces have had of swarming and adapting high technology systems to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The irony is that low technology insurgent forces can, in some ways, be far more effective at "swarming" than high mobility, high technology, advanced IS&R forces:

- The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated moves with well-organized cells. It is extremely difficult to attack and defeat because it does not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy within the larger movements. The larger movements seem to have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or even small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.
- The insurgency has effectively found a form of low technology "swarm" tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a counter. It can move slowly, in cycles, and episodically, and concentrate on highly vulnerable targets at the time of its choosing. Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can "swarm" slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to "swarm" against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the

insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects, sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.

- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against. It takes advantage of substantial popular support in Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.
- The insurgency attacks above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are also designed paralyze the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

The Historical Patterns in the Insurgency

One way to try to understand the complex and evolving nature of insurgencies is to consider the history of key events. In general, the insurgency had gathering momentum from the summer to the end of 2003, exhibited cycles of rising and dropping violence in 2004, and moved towards extensive fighting in the Sunni areas in Western Iraq in 2005.

Baseline/Post-Conflict: 1 May 2003 – Fall 2003

Looking back, many of the elements that would later come to characterize the insurgency were already present in the spring and summer of 2003. A chronology of some of the earliest incidents illustrates the types of attacks insurgents carried out in the initial months following the end of formal hostilities:

- **May 1, 2003:** President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq. Seven U.S. soldiers were wounded in a grenade attack upon an American base in Fallujah, a stronghold for Saddam Hussein loyalists. Earlier, U.S. troops killed 15 civilians at a protest in the city.
- **May 27, 2003:** Two U.S. soldiers die in an organized attack on an army checkpoint in Fallujah.
- **June 15, 2003:** Hundreds of American soldiers swept through Fallujah in an operation called "Desert Scorpion". The operation is intended to defeat organized Iraqi resistance.
- **June 30, 2003:** Three blasts rock Fallujah. One, at the Al-Hassan mosque, kills a Muslim cleric and six theology students, and injures 15 others. U.S. Central Command reports that "something like an ammunition dump" exploded near the mosque.
- **July 1, 2003:** An explosion destroys a Sunni mosque in Fallujah, killing at least 10 Iraqis, including the chief cleric, and injuring four others. Many Iraqis blame an American missile for the destruction and chant, "America is the enemy of God."
- **July 5, 2003:** An explosion at a police-training center in Ramadi killed seven Iraqi police recruits and wounded 40.
- **July 16, 2003:** Attacks in western Iraq claim the lives of a pro-U.S. mayor and his son.
- **August 7, 2003:** A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.
- **August 15, 2003:** Saboteurs blow up a crude oil export pipeline in northern Iraq, igniting a fire and disrupting oil exports to Turkey.
- **August 19, 2003:** A truck bomb explodes outside U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 were injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers.
- **August 29, 2003:** An explosion at a Najaf mosque kills 95, including one of Iraq's most prominent Shiite leaders, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim. Another 125 are wounded.

As can be seen, attacks against mosques and oil pipelines were popular targets for the insurgents from the start. The targeting of local Iraqi officials and police recruits, in addition to attacks on foreign diplomats, was another trend that emerged early on. Much of the initial violence was centered around Fallujah and Baghdad, in the area known as the "Sunni triangle".

At this point, however, most of the militants seem to have been former Saddam Hussein loyalists (FRLs), or Iraqi Sunni nationalists, with little impact by foreign jihadists. Instead of audiotapes from Abu Musab Zarqawi, tapes from Saddam Hussein urging militants to continue fighting were broadcast around the country.

As time passed and the insurgents became more organized, the lethality and frequency of attacks also increased. But many of the targets stayed the same. There was a gradual but steady increase in violence through May and June 2003. At the time, however, most of the violence was attributed to criminals, thugs and opportunists who were looting and murdering Iraqi civilians.

There were also attacks against US forces by members of newly formed militias roaming the streets of Iraq's major cities, but the US initially perceived these attacks as part of the normal breakdown in law and order following any war and not as the seeds of an insurgency. As a result, US policy during this time was to leave to the militias alone. Soldiers were under direct orders to only confiscate those weapons they came across while on patrol. A May 5, 2003 article in The Miami Herald described the emergence of the militias as follows:^{xcv}

Thousands of gunmen appear each Friday in the slum formerly known as Saddam City, with the blessings of some Shiite clerics, ostensibly to protect worshipers. Members, who say they answer to the sheiks at the Hikma mosque, claim they're 5,000 to 6,000 strong and on guard against attacks from any leftover Fedayeen Saddam or other Baath Party loyalists.

"I am taking orders from the mosque. I am a soldier," said Samer Elias, 28, a former Iraqi Army infantryman commanding a checkpoint a few blocks from the mosque.

...Kurdish political parties have posted a few armed fighters at their Baghdad offices to inspect all visitors and guard against attack. They're the vanguard of an estimated 30,000 Kurdish forces, roughly 15,000 each in the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, loyal to Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talibani, at times rival warlords for leadership of Kurdish northern Iraq.

...But the best-organized, most evident Iraqi militia is the 1,800-strong Free Iraqi Forces who answer to Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, the Pentagon-backed opposition movement that set up shop at the Iraqi Hunting Club in the desirable Mansour District.

The death toll in May and June averaged approximately one US soldier per day. More than 37 US soldiers were killed in May alone. The death toll for US troops in June was 30. In July the death toll reached 47, but leveled off in August and September to 35 and 30 respectively. In October, the death toll climbed to 43 and in November reached 82, almost doubling from previous months.

The Insurgency Starts to Become Serious: Fall-End 2003

Discriminate killings and anti-US violence began escalating in October and November 2003. US forces faced an average of 15-20 attacks per day during this period. The level of sophistication of attacks also increased dramatically during this period. The first coordinated suicide bombing occurred in October 2003. The following month, militants shot down two US helicopters. Together, these incidents signaled the start of a more mature insurgency. Insurgent attacks during this period included:

- **October 9, 2003:** A suicide bomber rams his car into a police station in Baghdad, killing nine.
Two U.S. soldiers die and four are injured in an ambush in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2003:** A suicide car bombing near the Baghdad Hotel kills eight and wounds 32.

- **October 14, 2003:** A suicide car bomb explodes outside the Turkish embassy in Baghdad, killing one Iraqi and wounding at least 13. In an apparent change of strategy, insurgents may be targeting supporters of the Coalition rather than U.S. troops.
- **October 17, 2003:** Three U.S. soldiers and at least seven Iraqis die in a gun battle outside the office of a Shia cleric in Karbala.
- **October 19, 2003:** Two American soldiers die in an ambush outside Kirkuk.
- **October 26, 2003:** A rocket hits the Rashid hotel in Baghdad, narrowly missing Paul Wolfowitz, the American deputy secretary of defense. A U.S. colonel dies; 18 others were wounded.
- **October 27, 2003:** Four coordinated suicide attacks in Baghdad kill 43 and wound more than 200. The targets were the headquarters of the Red Crescent (Islamic Red Cross) and three police stations. It's the bloodiest day since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.
- **November 2, 2003:** In the single deadliest strike on U.S. forces since the war began, guerrillas shoot down an American Chinook helicopter south of Fallujah, killing 16 U.S. soldiers and injuring 21 others.
- **November 7, 2003:** Six U.S. soldiers die when their Black Hawk helicopter crashes after being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade.
- **November 12, 2003:** A car bomb outside an Italian military police station in Nasiriya kills 18 Italian officers and at least eight Iraqis. The U.S. launches Operation Iron Hammer against suspected Hussein loyalists.
- **November 21, 2003:** A suicide bombing outside the PUK office in Kirkuk kills four.
- **November 29, 2003:** Two U.S. soldiers, seven Spanish intelligence officers, two Japanese diplomats, and a Colombian oil worker die in separate guerrilla attacks.
- **November 30, 2003:** U.S. forces repel three ambushes on American convoys in Samarra, killing 46 Iraqis and capturing eight.

The capture of Saddam Hussein outside Tikrit in early December 2003 did not reduce the level of insurgent violence. The US death toll for December was 40. By January 31, US fatalities from the post-combat period numbered 381, compared to 138 from the combat phase of hostilities. Between December and January, insurgents shot down five US military helicopters.

Serious Fighting in the Pre-Transition Period: Winter-Spring 2004

The lethality and sophistication of insurgency attacks increased dramatically in February and March 2004:

- **February 1, 2004:** 109 people die and 247 are wounded in two suicide attacks during celebrations at the headquarters of two leading Kurdish parties in Irbil. One American soldier is killed and 12 are wounded in a rocket attack. 20 people trying to loot an ammunition dump in southwestern Iraq are killed when the munitions unexpectedly explode.
- **February 10, 2004:** A car bomb explodes outside a police station in Iskandariya, killing at least 55 and wounding up to 65.
- **February 11, 2004:** In yet another attempt to disrupt the creation of security forces, a suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into a crowd of Iraqi Army recruits in central Baghdad, killing at least 47 and wounding 50 others.

- **February 14, 2004:** Roughly 70 guerrillas firing rockets, mortars and machineguns raid police headquarters and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in Fallujah in an effort to free foreign prisoners. 15 policemen, four insurgents and at least four civilians die in the attack. The dead guerrillas appear to be Lebanese and Iranian nationals. At least 70 prisoners escape, many – 18 by one account – flee with the attackers.
- **February 23, 2004:** At least 10 people are killed and over 35 are injured when a car bomb explodes outside a Kirkuk police station.
- **March 2, 2004:** In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of the war, at least five bombs explode near Shiite religious ceremonies in Baghdad and Karbala as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims pack the streets for the Ashoura ceremony. At least 270 people die; 573 are wounded.
- **March 9, 2004:** Iraqi policemen murder two CPA officials and their Iraqi translator outside Baghdad. The “targeting killings” are the first American civilian deaths in Iraq.
- **March 23, 2004:** Attacks against Iraqi police persist; 11 Iraqi policemen are killed in separate attacks in Kirkuk and Hillah.
- **March 24, 2004:** Fallujah continues to be a hotbed of insurgent activity, as attackers ambush a U.S. military patrol, killing three civilians and wounding two American soldiers.

Local Iraqi security forces, including police recruits, were signaled out for attack by insurgents. Due in part to this development, US fatalities for the month of February fell to 21; the lowest since May 2003. But March produced the second highest death toll for US troops-52-since the end of the war.

Pre-Sovereignty: 1 April – 28 June 2004

By early spring 2004, the insurgency had evolved into a two-pronged offensive. Coalition forces now faced a war on two fronts: against the Sunnis in central Iraq and against the Shiites in the south.

In early April, followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a Shiite cleric, seized control of several cities. Violent clashes between US forces and Shiite militias erupted in Kufa, Najaf and Qut. US forces continued to battle Sunni insurgents in Fallujah and elsewhere in the Sunni Triangle.

The period between April and June 2004 was marked by frequent battles between US and insurgent forces and had clearly become guerilla war rather than a terrorist campaign. The number of attacks against Iraqi civilians decreased noticeably, however, as insurgents concentrated their efforts on US forces. Because of the growing number of clashes between insurgents and Coalition forces, US fatalities for the month of April increased to 137, more than the previous three months combined. US fatalities for the month of May were 80.

Some of the intensity of the fighting was defused, however, when Sadr endorsed the Iraqi Interim Government and urged his followers to adhere to a previously negotiated ceasefire.

Sovereignty: 29 June – 26 November 2004

At least 162 US soldiers were killed in the three months immediately following the June 28 handover; more than the entire number killed during the war itself.

Insurgents continued their attacks against Coalition forces into the fall of 2004, killing 81 US soldiers in September and 65 in October.

In August, more than 1,100 US troops were injured; the highest monthly total since the start of the US led invasion. Another grim milestone was passed on September 7, 2004, when US military fatalities reached 1,000.

Insurgents continued to target Iraqis as well however. In early fall, the Iraqi Health Ministry reported that nearly 3,200 Iraqi civilians had been killed since April. September and October 2004 proved to be particularly bloody months, with more than 34 car bomb attacks throughout the country-the highest monthly total since the US invasion-occurring in September alone. Other attacks during this period included:

- **September 6, 2004:** In Fallujah, a car bomb kills seven US Marines and three Iraqi soldiers.
- **September 7, 2004:** One American soldier and 33 Iraqi insurgents are killed in clashes in Sadr City.
- **September 12, 2004:** 80 civilians are killed by insurgents in a 24 hour period. Many of the attacks are synchronized bombings; a group calling itself Unity and Jihad, which is reportedly led by Zarqawi, claims responsibility for many of the attacks.
- **September 14, 2004:** A car bomb outside Iraq's Army headquarters in Baghdad kills 47 recruits. 12 policemen were gunned down in drive-by shooting in Baquba. Zarqawi claims responsibility for both attacks.
- **September 17, 2004:** A suicide car bomb kills at least 13 people near a police checkpoint in Baghdad. Elsewhere in Baghdad, US soldiers clash with insurgents.
- **September 30, 2004:** Two car bombs rip through a crowd celebrating the opening of a new sewer plant, killing 41 Iraqis, including at least 34 children; 139 are wounded.
- **October 4, 2004:** Three car bombs – two in Baghdad and one in Mosul – explode, killing 26 people and injuring 100.
- **October 7, 2004:** Two rockets strike the Sheraton Baghdad hotel.
- **October 10, 2004:** At least 10 Iraqis die in explosions near the oil ministry and police academy. A suicide bomber fatally wounds a U.S. soldier outside the Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2004:** Six American troops die from hostile fire in Baghdad and in Al Anbar Province.
- **October 13, 2004:** Bombs in Baghdad, Mosul and the Al Anbar region kill seven U.S. soldiers.
- **October 14, 2004:** For the first time since the end of the war, insurgents penetrate the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, killing four Americans and six Iraqis.
- **October 15, 2004:** Car bombs near the Syrian border and in Mosul kill five American troops.
- **October 23, 2004:** Insurgents dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq.

- **October 25, 2004:** An explosion near the Australian embassy in Baghdad kills three Iraqi and injures two Australian soldiers.
- **October 28, 2004:** A militant group called "The Army of Ansar al-Sunna" executes 11 Iraqi security officers taken hostage south of Baghdad. The group, which is blamed for numerous beheadings, is an offshoot of Ansar al-Islam.
- **October 30, 2004:** In the deadliest day for American forces in six months, nine Marines were killed and nine more were injured in insurgent attacks in the Al Anbar province. At least 25 Iraqi civilians die from insurgent violence and from reckless fire by Iraqi security forces. Seven died when insurgents attacked the Al Arabiya news network. A previously unknown group calling itself "The 1920 Revolution Brigades" takes responsibility for the attack.
- **October 31, 2004:** Insurgents fire a rocket at a Tikrit hotel, killing 15 Iraqis and wounding eight.

This period was marked by a dramatic increase in Zarqawi-orchestrated attacks. A number of offshoot groups, all pledging allegiance to Zarqawi, emerged during this the fall of 2004. Zarqawi is believed to be consolidating his hold on the Iraqi insurgency.

The earliest sign that insurgents had penetrated Iraqi security forces appeared in late October. On October 23, insurgents dressed in Iraqi police uniforms killed 49 Iraqi Army recruits as they returned from a training mission with US forces. In another new development, insurgents appeared to be increasing the number of kidnappings of foreigners in an attempt to get countries to withdraw from the Coalition. In a seven-week period in September and October, 2 Italian aid workers; a Japanese civilian; and the British-Iraqi director of CARE international, in addition to several American and British contractors were kidnapped. Some are released; others are beheaded.

In early November, US and Iraqi forces enter Fallujah in an assault designed to rid the city of insurgents. Iraqi troops uncover "hostage slaughterhouses" where foreign captives were believed to have been executed.

Despite the offensive in Fallujah, insurgent attacks continue elsewhere in the country. The ongoing insurgent attacks in Baghdad, Mosul, Balad and the Sunni Triangle demonstrate the strength of the Zarqawi network and the Iraqi insurgency. On November 14, Fallujah falls to Coalition forces. The US military suffered 38 fatalities and more than 245 casualties. Between 1,200-1,600 insurgents were killed. Many more insurgents fled the city prior to the operation. November is the deadliest month for American troops since the invasion. Although 137 US soldiers were killed, fewer than half of them were killed in the Fallujah attack, signaling insurgents were resuming their offensive on US forces everywhere.

Even after the battle of Fallujah, Sunni insurgents repeatedly showed they could strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite dominated cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra in spite of US and Iraqi offensives. Increasingly bold and deadly insurgent attacks killed more than 80 Iraqis in a three-day period in early December. In one of the most deadly incidents, insurgents attacked a bus of unarmed Iraqi civilian contractors, killing 17. In Baghdad, insurgents struck the Green Zone two days in

a row; killing almost twenty and wounding several dozen. On December 15, insurgents attempt to overrun two police stations in Mosul but are repelled by Iraqi police and National Guards. One week later, insurgents mount a second attack, this time on an Iraqi military outpost in Mosul. The security presence in Mosul remained fragile after 80% of the police force abandoned their post last month due to mounting security fears.

The December 21 bombing of a US military mess tent in Mosul, which killed at least 22 people, including 18 Americans, further demonstrated the reach of the insurgents during winter 2004. The US death toll for December was 72.

The road from Baghdad to the international airport outside the city remained a popular target among insurgents, and became a symbol of the Coalition and Iraqi government's problems in bringing security to Iraq in late 2004. Iraqis referred to the route as "Death Street" and "IED alley." The continued violence in Sunni neighborhoods like Amariya, Hamra, Jihad, and Qaddisiya caused senior officials to use armored buses called "Rhinos" and helicopters when traveling in the area.

xcvi

The violence showed no signs of abetting in the New Year. During the first two weeks of 2005, insurgent attacks included:

- **January 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber kills 18 National Guardsmen and a civilian in Balad.
- **January 4, 2005:** Insurgents assassinate the governor of Baghdad province. Zarqawi's group, now calling itself Al Qaeda in Iraq, claims responsibility. Attacks throughout the country leave five U.S. and 13 Iraqi servicemen dead.
- **January 10, 2005:** Insurgents gun down Baghdad's deputy police chief and his son. Two U.S. soldiers die when a roadside bomb explodes in Baghdad.
- **January 12, 2005:** An ambush on a U.S.-Iraqi convoy in Mosul kills two Iraqi soldiers.
- **January 13, 2005:** In the latest in a string of predominantly Sunni insurgent attacks against Shiite leaders, a senior aide to Ayatollah Ali Sistani is assassinated in Salman Pak, a city south of Baghdad. Gunmen kill the director of a Baghdad election center.

During this period, insurgents increase the number of attacks on election candidates. In one such attack on January 16, insurgents try to assassinate Salama al-Khafaji, a candidate for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Khafaji survived the attack, but many other candidates did not.

The Patterns in the Insurgency in Early 2005

The January 30, 2005 election had enough public support to convince some observers that the insurgency was weakening. For example, the Iraqi Interim Government claimed in early 2005 that some 16 of Iraq's 18 provinces were secure. There was a significant level of security in 10 to 12 provinces, and the US and IIG had won significant victories in Najaf and Fallujah in 2004, but the insurgency was clearly not defeated, and it was clearly capable of attacks in supposedly safe Shi'ite and Kurdish areas.

Similarly, coalition and Iraqi success in preventing insurgent attacks on polling places on the day of the January 30 election did not mean that there were not

several hundred attempted attacks and actual attacks before the election, or prevent a massive new round of attacks and acts of terrorism after the election. The US lost 24 men and 60 were wounded in one attack on a mess tent in Mosul on December 21, 2004.^{xcvii} Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and some 175 wounded.^{xcviii}

Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, summarized the state of the insurgency as follows in February 2005:^{xcix}

The insurgency in Iraq has grown in size and complexity over the past year. Attacks numbered approximately 25 per day one year ago. Today, they average in the 60s. Insurgents have demonstrated their ability to increase attacks around key events such as the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) transfer of power, Ramadan, and the recent election. Attacks on Iraq's election day reached approximately 300, double the previous one-day's high of approximately 150 reached during last year's Ramadan,

The pattern of attacks remains the same as last year. Approximately 80 percent of all attacks occur in Sunni dominated central Iraq. The Kurdish north and Shi'a south remain relatively calm. Coalition forces continue to be the primary targets. Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) officials are attacked to intimidate the Iraqi people and undermine control and legitimacy. Attacks against foreign nationals are intended to intimidate non-government organizations and contractors and inhibit reconstruction and recovery. Attacks against the country's infrastructure, especially electricity and the oil industry, are intended to stall economic recovery, increase popular discontent, and further undermine support for the IIG and Coalition.

Recent polls show confidence in the Iraqi Interim Government remains high in Kurdish communities and low in Sunni areas. Large majorities across all groups opposed attacks on Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi and foreign civilians. Majorities of all groups placed great importance in the election. Sunni concern over election security likely explains the relatively poor showing by the Sunni electorate in comparison with the Shi'a and Kurdish groups. Confidence in Coalition Forces is low. Most Iraqis see them as occupiers and a major cause of the insurgency.

We believe Sunni Arabs, dominated by Ba'athist and Former Regime Elements (FRE), comprise the core of the insurgency. Ba'athist/FRE and Sunni Arab networks are likely collaborating, providing funds and guidance across family, tribal, religious and peer group lines. Some coordination between Sunni and Shi'a groups is also likely.

Militant Shi'a elements, including those associated with Muqtada al Sadr, have periodically fought the Coalition. Following the latest round of fighting last August and September, we judge Sadr's forces are re-arming, re-organizing and training. Sadr is keeping his options open to either participate in the political process or employ his forces. Shi'a militants will remain a significant threat to the political process and fractures within the Shi'a community are a concern.

Jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida operative Abu Musab al Zarqawi, are responsible for many high-profile attacks. While Jihadist activity accounts for only a fraction of the overall violence, the strategic and symbolic nature of their attacks, combined with effective Information Operations, has a disproportionate impact.

Foreign fighters are a small component of the insurgency and comprise a very small percentage of all detainees. Syrian, Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Iranian nationals make up the majority of foreign fighters. Fighters, arms and other supplies continue to enter Iraq from virtually all of its neighbors despite increased border security.

Insurgent groups will continue to use violence to attempt to protect Sunni Arab interests and regain dominance, provoke civil war, and/or serve the interests of Neo-Salafi Sunni extremism. Subversion and infiltration of emerging government institutions, security and

intelligence services will be a major problem for the new government. Jihadists will continue to attack in Iraq in pursuit of their long-term goals. Challenges to reconstruction, economic development and employment will continue. The keys to success will remain improving security with an Iraqi lead, rebuilding the civil infrastructure and economy and creating a political process that all major ethnic and sectarian groups see as legitimate.

Early 2005: Uncertain Claims the Insurgency Was Losing Ground

Jacoby's statement provided an excellent overview at the time it was made, but did not anticipate the level of Sunni Islamic extremism that was to follow, and a shift in targeting by Sunni Islamic extremists to attack Iraqi targets in an attempt to provoke a civil war. Several senior US officers went even further and claimed that the insurgency was losing ground after the election.

As is the case with many other types of official US reporting on Iraq, however, such claims were not supported with the detail and transparency necessary to establish their credibility. The US ceased to provide detailed unclassified data on the types of insurgent attacks or their locations in the summer of 2004. The private organizations that try to do this produce interesting results, but results that are often suspect.

What US official sources did say is that that prior to the Iraqi election:^c

- Some 40-60 towns and cities have been the scene of attacks each week since late August. Many are outside the "Sunni Triangle" and Al Anbar Province.
- The most violent city in terms of number of major incidents has been Baghdad, with 20-40 attacks a week.
- Mosul is second with 4-13 major attacks per week.
- The level of attacks in Basra has been relatively low by comparison, but peaks of 7 attacks per week have occurred in Basra and its environs.

In contrast, they stated shortly after the Iraqi election that:

- Attacks against US soldiers per day have fallen to between 40 and 50. US officials state that this is approximately ½ the level one year ago.
- Approximately ½ of the attacks that do occur cause no casualties or property damage.

Nor did the violence show any signs of abetting in February. More than 130 Iraqis were killed in a 7-day period in early February:

- **February 3, 2005:** Insurgents kill 12 Iraqi soldiers in an ambush south of Kirkuk, executing the unarmed men one by one in the street.
- Five policemen and a National Guardsman are killed in Baghdad.
- **February 6, 2005:** Insurgents attack a convoy of trucks hauling cars destined for Iraq's Ministry of the Interior. The truck drivers are kidnapped and the cars destroyed.
- **February 7, 2005:** At least 27 Iraqis die in two suicide bombings, one targeting policemen collecting paychecks near a Mosul hospital, the other a police post in Baquba.

- **February 8, 2005:** In the second straight day of violence since the elections, a suicide bomb struck Baghdad's National Guard volunteer center, killing at least 20 potential recruits.
- **February 9, 2005:** Masked gunmen kill a television correspondent working for the American-funded network Al Hurra and his 3-year-old son in Basra.
- In Baghdad, insurgents assassinate a director of the Ministry of Housing and three Kurdistan Democratic Party officials. Zarqawi's group claims responsibility.
- 10 British soldiers die when a C-130 crashes.
- **February 10, 2005:** On the first day of the Muslim New Year, insurgent violence claims more than 50 lives throughout Iraq.
- **February 11, 2005:** Insurgents attack three Shiite targets – a mosque and two bakeries – in central Iraq, killing at least 21.

On February 17, 2005, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Service Committee that classified estimates on the size of the insurgency were not static, but rather “a moving target.” In the same session, General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also avoided hard numbers but described the insurgency as having limited capabilities; meaning that the insurgency could now “only” mount around 50 to 60 attacks on any given day.

Lt. General John F. Sattler, the head of the USMC Expeditionary Force claimed in March that insurgent attacks were averaging only 10 per day, with two producing significant casualties, versus 25 per day, with five producing significant casualties, before the battle of Fallujah in November 2000.

Much of this optimism began to diminish, however, as the spring went on. General George W. Casey, commander of MNF-I, consistently warned that the insurgency would take years to fully defeat, but stated on March 9, 2005 that “the level of attacks, the level of violence has dropped off significantly since the [Iraqi] elections.”^{cii} General Casey stated that insurgents operating from the Sunni areas had enough manpower, weaponry, ammunition, and money to launch between 50 and 60 attacks a day.^{cii} Casey did, however, point to the arrest of several suspected terrorist leaders. Though the terrorists retained enough ammunition and arms to continue fighting for years, the general maintained that the capture of certain leaders had degraded the insurgents' abilities to fashion IEDs, the deadliest weapon confronting US troops

The US Chief of Staff, General Richard B. Myers claimed that same week that the number of attacks had fallen to 40-50 per day, far fewer than before the elections, but roughly the same as in March 2004.^{ciii} The Iraqi interim Minister of the Interior, Falah al-Naqib, also made such claims. So did Lt. General Sir John Kiszely, then the British Commander in Iraq.^{civ}

Senior US officers like General Abizaid gave far more cautious briefings in May than officers had given in February, and talked about years of combat.^{cv} US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated in late May that while the levels of insurgent attacks had decreased, their lethality had increased.^{cvi} The only good news was that there was no significant Shi'ite anti-Coalition or

government insurgent activity since Sadr's militia ceased to actively try to occupy cities and shrines in the south after its defeat in the summer and fall of 2004 -- although Sadr had rebuilt at least part of his organization and did support anti-Coalition demonstrations after the January 2005 election.

A New Rise in the Violence and the Coalition and Iraqi Government Campaigns in the Summer and Fall of 2005

The insurgency was still capable of inflicting severe damage on Iraq's population in the spring of 2005. On April 13, insurgents blew up a fuel tanker in Baghdad and in a separate incident, attacked a US convoy on the road to the Baghdad International Airport, killing five Iraqis wounding four US contractors. In Kirkuk, insurgents killed 12 policemen and nine Iraqi soldiers; the latter were guiding Kirkuk's oil fields. Insurgents also detonated explosives targeting US forces and Iraqi police in Mosul. As these attacks demonstrate, insurgents had begun to step up their attacks on fuel convoys and oil infrastructure in the northern part of the country in an effort to disrupt life for everyday Iraqis.

By April and May of 2005, it was clear that the election, and Coalition counterinsurgency activities, had not reduced the seriousness of the insurgency. The US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive yet in the Syrian border area and hostile areas along the main route from Syria to Iraq in April 2005. This "Operation Matador," and a series of follow-up attacks by Marine, US, and Iraqi forces in western Iraq, again showed that the insurgents could not survive if they stood and fought but could always disperse and survive.^{cvi} Iraqi forces only played a limited support role in these battles, but did deploy in greater strength in other areas. These included a major 40,000-man Iraqi security operation -- called "Operation Lightning"-- in the greater Baghdad area in June 2005. This operation too had its successes, but again could not destroy insurgent activity in any given area on a lasting basis.

This forced the Coalition and Iraqi forces to resume offensives in the Sunni areas in Western Iraq. In the spring summer 2005, US and Iraqi forces launched a series of operations in western Iraq designed to deny insurgents a stronghold and secure the region in the run-up to the October 15 referendum. Most of the operations were conducted in Al Anbar province, along the Syrian border. Coalition operation forces ranged in size from several hundred to several thousand troops:

May 29, 2005: Operation Moon River Dragon Iraqi troops from the 203rd Army Battalion in conjunction with US soldiers from Task Force Liberty entered Al Julaam in Western Iraq looking for a suspected insurgent leader. Speaking afterwards about the operation, US Army Capt. Robert Croft said: "The (Iraqi Army) presence completely changes the dynamic of the operation. People will cooperate with us just the same. However, when Iraqi soldiers are in the lead giving the instructions, things happen much more quickly and with less confusion. The effect is that the operation is safer for both U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians."^{cvi}

June 7, 2005: US troops from 2nd Squadron, 34rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi forces from 1st Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division carry out operations to disrupt anti-Iraqi forces in the southwest province of Ninewah. A joint operation launched on May 26 in Tal Afar has uncovered nine weapons caches and captured 73 militants. The operations are part of 30 combined/independent operations being conducted throughout Iraq.

June 17-22, 2005: Operation Romhe (Spear)-US-Iraqi forces conduct searches in Karabilah. Coalition forces discover three car bomb factories and several weapons caches, and kill 47 insurgents.

June 28-July 6, 2005: Operation Saif (Sword)-Coalition forces conduct operations designed to root out terrorists and foreign fighters living along the Euphrates River between the cities of Haditha and Hit. There were no American or Iraqi troop fatalities.

July 4, 2005: Operation Muthana Strike-Iraqi soldiers numbering 600 joined 250 US soldiers from Task Force Baghdad in conducting searches of safe houses nearby the Baghdad International Airport, leading to the capture of 100 suspected terrorists.^{cix} The

July 5, 2005: Operation Bow Country: Iraqi Security Forces joined Coalition Forces in an early-morning raid in eastern Baghdad; a number of weapons and ammunition caches were uncovered.^{cx}

July 7- ?, 2005: Operation Qmtia (Scimitar)-Approximately 100 Iraqi security forces and 500 US Marines conduct raids in Zaidon, 30 km south of Fallujah. The operation is designed to disrupt terrorist activity in the region.

July 26-30, 2005: Operation Thunder Cat-Iraqi and US soldiers conducted a series of cordon-and-attack missions resulting in the capture of 171 suspected terrorists.^{cxii}

July 2005-ongoing: Operation Hunter (Sayaid)-The operation, intended to disrupt insurgent activities, deny freedom of movement and reduce the insurgents ability to plan future attacks, is focused around the city of Qaim and along the Syrian border. The operation is expected to last until the December 15 elections.

August 3-10, 2005: Operation Quick Strike-US-Iraqi forces conduct operations designed to root out insurgents in Haditha, Haqliniyah, and Barwanah (Parwana). The combined force of 800 US Marines and 180 Iraqi soldiers captured 36 insurgents and defused nine car bombs and more than 28 I.E.D.'s.

August 4, 2005: Operation Able Warrior-Coalition forces from Taskforce Baghdad conduct a series of raids designed to defeat insurgent forces operating west of Baghdad airport.

September 10, 2005-?: Operation Restoring Rights-U.S.-Iraqi forces totaling 8,500 enter Tal Afar in a new offensive designed to root out insurgents. The operation is expected to last several weeks. Tal Afar is home to roughly 500 insurgents

September 11, 2005: Operation Zoba'a (Cyclone)-US and Iraqi forces conduct a series of raids designed to root out Al Qaida in Iraq insurgents operating in Rutbah.

September 14, 2005: Operation Flea Flicker-US and Iraqi forces search houses in Zafaraniya, as part of an attempt to disrupt anti-Iraqi activity in the area in preparation for the October 15 constitutional referendum. Coalition forces detained several suspected insurgents and uncovered a number of weapons caches.^{cxiii}

October 1-6, 2005: Operation Kabda Bil Hadid (Iron Fist)-US and Iraqi forces carry out operations in Anbar Province. More than 1,000 U.S. troops move into the town of Sa'dah, in the al Qaim region, near the Syrian border. Other cities targeted include Karabilah and Ubaydi. The goal of the operation is to interdict foreign fighters and provide security for the upcoming referendum. More than 50 Al Qaida in Iraq terrorists are killed.

October 4, 2005: Operation River Gate-In the largest operation this year (and the second in western Iraq this week), U.S. forces numbering 2,500 and Iraqi security forces carry

out raids designed to deny insurgents the ability to operate in the Euphrates River towns of Haditha, Haqlaniyah and Barwanah (Parwana).

October 28-29, 2005: Operation Clean Sweep-Task Force Baghdad soldiers along with Iraqi Security Forces targeted more than 350 houses in southern Baghdad, capturing 49 terror suspects.^{cxiii}

November 5-22 2005: Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain)-2,500 US soldiers along with 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers launch attacks in western Al-Anbar province. The operation is designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border and is the largest Coalition operation in months.^{cxiv}

November 16, 2005: Operation Numur (Panthers)-The first of five operations involving Iraqi and US soldiers is launched. The operations, centered on Ramadi, are intended to secure the area for the upcoming December elections.

November 19-21, 2005: Operation Dhibbah (Bruins)-Approximately 150 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines conduct operations in northern Ramadi as part of efforts to block off known terrorist escape routes.^{cxv}

November 23-24, 2005: Operation Asad (Lions)-200 Iraqi Army soldiers along with 250 US soldiers conduct operations in the Tammim area of southern Ramadi. It is the third such series of disruption operations aimed at capturing or killing terrorists in the Ramadi area.^{cxvi}

November 26-?, 2005: Operation Nimur (Tigers)-550 Iraqi Army soldiers along with soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team carry out operations in the Ma'Laab District of eastern Ramadi aimed at securing the conditions for a successful December 15 election.^{cxvii}

December 2-? 2005: Operation Harba (Shank)- 200 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines carry out operations in Al Anbar's capital of Ramadi. Operation Shank is the fifth in a series of operations aimed at disrupting terrorist groups in the area.

In early September 2005, US and Iraqi forces began "Operation Restoring Rights" on the insurgent stronghold of Tal Afar. It was the largest to-date urban assault since Fallujah. Troops faced little resistance, and some suspect that most insurgents fled the city during the pre-assault evacuation of civilians. Developments in the fight for Tal Afar as of fall 2005:

- 157 terrorists were killed, 291 others were arrested. One Iraqi serviceman was killed, as were six civilians.
- Insurgents planted explosives in the al-Sarai district of Tal Afar. At least a dozen homes were destroyed. 10-15 thousand USD will be paid to those who lost their homes. Supplies, including 1,000 tents arrived from Baghdad and Mosul to help refugees fleeing Tal Afar.
- The Iraqi government announced it would deploy peacekeeping forces into the town of Tal-Afar after the combat operations in the region were over. In addition, it said that 1,000 residents of the town would be trained to maintain security in the long run. The tribes based in area were also to play a major role in maintaining security and stability.^{cxviii}

The September death toll for US soldiers was 49, down from 85 in August. But those numbers do not tell the whole story. US fatalities in Iraq fluctuated throughout most of the summer in 2005, with no clear pattern discernable. 78 US soldiers were killed in June. The death toll for July was 54.

There was a noticeable change, however, in early fall 2005. The death toll for October was 92, nearly a 50 percent increase from the previous month. October was the second-deadliest month for US troops in 2005, second only to January. It was the fourth deadliest month since the war began. November's death toll was 85.

Figure III.1: Fall 2005 Coalition Campaigns in Al-Anbar Province

Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain (October and November 2005)

Coalition and Iraqi efforts further intensified in the late fall of 2005, in part because of increases in insurgent violence, and in part to help secure the October 15th referendum on the constitution and prepare for the election on December 15th. Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain are part of larger ongoing operations, known as Sayaid (Hunter), launched in mid-to-late summer 2005. Little is known about Hunter, currently being conducted by US and Iraqi forces in western Iraq.

The operation was launched sometime in mid-to-late summer and is expected to last until the December 15 elections. In July, an Army squadron of Stryker vehicles set up an outpost near the town of Rawah, as part of the first phase of the operation. More than 1,000 US troops along with a battalion from the Iraqi Intervention Force cordoned off traffic in the area. In September, US warplanes blew up two small bridges in the towns of Karabilah and New Ubaydi, forcing all traffic in the region to use the US controlled Rawah river crossing.^{CXIX}

The western part of Iraq's Al-Anbar province has been the center of insurgent operations for some time now. The insurgency has increasingly been driven westward. US officials believe the insurgents have found their last foothold in the area along the border with Syria.

In late summer 2005, there were reports that insurgents loyal to Zarqawi had taken over at least five Iraqi towns on the border with Syria. The insurgents, estimated to number between 300 and 400, were distributing “death letters” in which they ordered residents to leave their homes or face death. According to Lt. Col. Julian Alford, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment stationed near Qaim, “It appears that al Qaida in Iraq is kicking out local people from a lot of these towns out there.” US forces in the region, numbering 1,000 at the time, estimated that as many as 100 families per day were fleeing their homes. Fighters loyal to Zarqawi had been in complete control of the area for at least a month. No Iraqi soldiers or police officers were believed to be operating inside the towns of Dulaym al Husayba, Karabila, Sada and Al Ubaydi.^{cxx}

In late September, The Washington Post reported that a gradual buildup of US and Iraqi forces in the Euphrates River valley was underway. US officials reported that the move was aimed at securing the border area around Qaim and suppressing other insurgency activity in the region.^{cxxi} The move appears to have been undertaken in preparation for Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain), launched in the western part of Al-Anbar province on November 5, 2005. Operation Steel Curtain, like Operations Iron Fist and River Gate before it, is part of the larger Operation Hunter. Steel Curtain involved 2,500 US soldiers and 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Operation Steel Curtain concluded on November 22. During the 17-day operation, more than 139 terrorists were killed and 256 detained.

The Meaning of Coalition Victories and Insurgent Defeats

Insurgents have suffered a series of significant and continuing tactical defeats since early 2004, notably in cities like Najaf, Baghdad, Samarra, Fallujah, and Mosul, but also increasingly in the “triangle of death,” Sunni triangle, and Iraqi-Syrian border areas.

Nevertheless, Iraqi government and US attempts to root out the insurgency have so far had limited impact. US and Iraqi efforts to thwart individual insurgent attacks – while tireless – have also sometimes been hollow victories. As one US Marine specializing in counterinsurgency in Iraq recently noted, “Seizing the components of suicide bombs (or IED making material) is like making drug seizures, comforting, but ultimately pointless. There will always be more. Both sides are still escalating to nowhere.” The fact also remains that securing Coalition areas and forces often simply drives insurgents and terrorists to attack Iraqis.

While some US officers began to talk as early as the battle of Fallujah in November 2004 as a “tipping point,” many US experts were cautious even at the time. They felt the insurgents did lose a key sanctuary, suffered more than 1,000 killed, and lost significant numbers of prisoners and detainees. They also lost some significant leaders and cadres. Many insurgents and insurgent leaders seem to have left Fallujah before the fighting, however, and many others escaped.

No province is yet fully safe from occasional attack, and the frequency and intensity of attacks have been only part of the story. Various insurgent groups are

still able to attack in other areas like Mosul, Ramadi, Samarra, Baquba, Balad, Beiji, Tal Afar, and Hawija during the fighting in Fallujah, and seem to have planned to disperse and to shift their operations before the fighting in Fallujah began.^{cxix} The fighting in Mosul was particularly severe after the battle of Fallujah, and the US military reported a total of 130-140 attacks and incidents a day.^{cxix} While the Coalition and Iraqi forces did capture large numbers of weapons and supplies, few experts – if any – felt that the insurgents faced any near term supply problems given the numbers of weapons looted from Iraq's vast arms depots during and after the fighting that brought down Saddam.

The battles that have followed during the course of 2005 have been less concentrated and less intensive, but almost continuous – mixed with raids, captures, and the sudden “swarming” of known and suspected insurgent headquarters and operational areas. They have also involved continuing kidnappings and assassinations, and exceptionally bloody suicide bombings of Shiites and Kurds-designed to provoke a civil war. While neither MNSTC-I nor the Iraqi government have provided counts of insurgent killed and wounded, the figures almost certainly exceed 10,000 between May 2003 and May 2005, and could be substantially higher.

In spite of new offensives, Sunni insurgent groups remained active in Sunni-populated areas like the “Sunni Triangle,” the Al Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, and the so-called “Triangle of Death” to the southeast of Baghdad. As a result, four of Iraq's provinces continued to have a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence. Sunni insurgents have repeatedly shown since the battle of Fallujah that they can strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite-dominated cities like Baghdad, Tal Afar, Mosul and Basra, and occasionally in Kurdish areas.^{cxix}

There has been continuing sabotage of key targets like Iraq's oil facilities, and a constant campaign of intimidation, disappearances, and “mystery killings.” Even cities that were supposedly liberated before the battle of Fallujah, like Samarra, have been the source of enough continuing attacks to force the redeployment of large numbers of Iraqi security and police forces and elements of key US counterinsurgency units like Task Force 1-26.^{cxix}

There are also uncertain reports that some elements of the insurgency may be moving into other areas. In August 2005, for example, Saudi authorities announced that they had seized 682 Iraqis who tried to infiltrate Saudi territory in the first six months of the 2005. Interior ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Mansour Turki stated that new security measures were being taken along the border with Iraq, including the erection of sand barricades, the deployment of heat sensors and cameras, and round-the-clock patrols. Still, according to Turki, the problem remaining is a lack of security measures on the Iraqi side.^{cxix} Aside from an 800-kilometer border with Saudi Arabia, porous borders with Jordan and Syria remain liabilities in combating foreign assistance to Iraq's Sunni insurgency.

In mid 2005 reports began surfacing that al Qaida was preparing to send insurgents back to their own countries in order to carry out attacks there. In October, Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr announced that documents seized from Abu Azzam (a lieutenant of Zarqawi's killed in September 2005) contained

details about a plan to widen the insurgency beyond Iraq. Jabr told Reuters that prior to his death, Abu Azzam had written Zarqawi and asked him to “begin to move a number of Arab fighters to the countries they came from to transfer their experience in car bombings in Iraq” and that hundreds of fighters had already left Iraq for their homes.^{cxxvii}

Three months earlier, the private Israeli research service Debkafile reported that al Qaida in Iraq was “diluting its Iraq force” and moving more than 1,000 of its operatives to Europe and countries in the Middle East in order to launch terror offensives there. The targeted countries were: Britain, Italy, France, Denmark, and Russia in Europe; and, in the Middle East, Egypt Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel.^{cxxviii} According to Debkafile the summer 2005 attacks in London and Sharm al Sheikh were the first of many attacks part of the new Al Qaida offensive.^{cxxix}

More broadly, insurgents continue to operate in the Kurdish and more secure Shi'ite areas. Islamist extremists use bombings and other large attacks to fuel a constant feeling of insecurity, and to try to divide Iraqis along ethnic and sectarian lines. No province is safe from occasional attack, and attacks are only part of the story. Sabotage, politically oriented crime, and intimidation are all important weapons in the insurgent arsenal.

IV. Measuring the Evolution of the Insurgency by The Pattern of Attacks

Another way to analyze an insurgency is to look at the pattern of attacks. This is not easy. There has been a reasonable amount of summary reporting, and a flood of reporting on daily incidents. However, US and British official reporting on the insurgency has been erratic, and has left many gaps that make it difficult to analyze the insurgency's intensity and cycles, and characterize trends.

For example, the counts of attacks issued by senior US officials have generally focused on attacks directed at US and Iraqi government targets rather than all attacks, and did not include all attempts and minor incidents. They do not include Iraqi criminal activity or sabotage. DIA figures and Coalition data also tend to be skewed in favor of counts of attacks on Coalition forces and undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians, and some aspects of Iraqi officials, military, and police.

One of the tragedies of Iraq is that as part of its effort to “spin” reporting on the war in favorable directions, the Department of Defense has rarely attempted to count Iraqi casualties of any kind, or treat Iraqi military and police casualties as partners whose sacrifice deserves recognition. Coalition counts also undercount acts of sabotage. Like most such partial counts, this disguises another important shifts in the patterns in insurgency.

These problems are compounded by the fact there are no meaningful Iraqi government data. Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior had stopped issuing meaningful reporting on the number and intensity of attacks in the summer of 2004.

Summary Attack Patterns

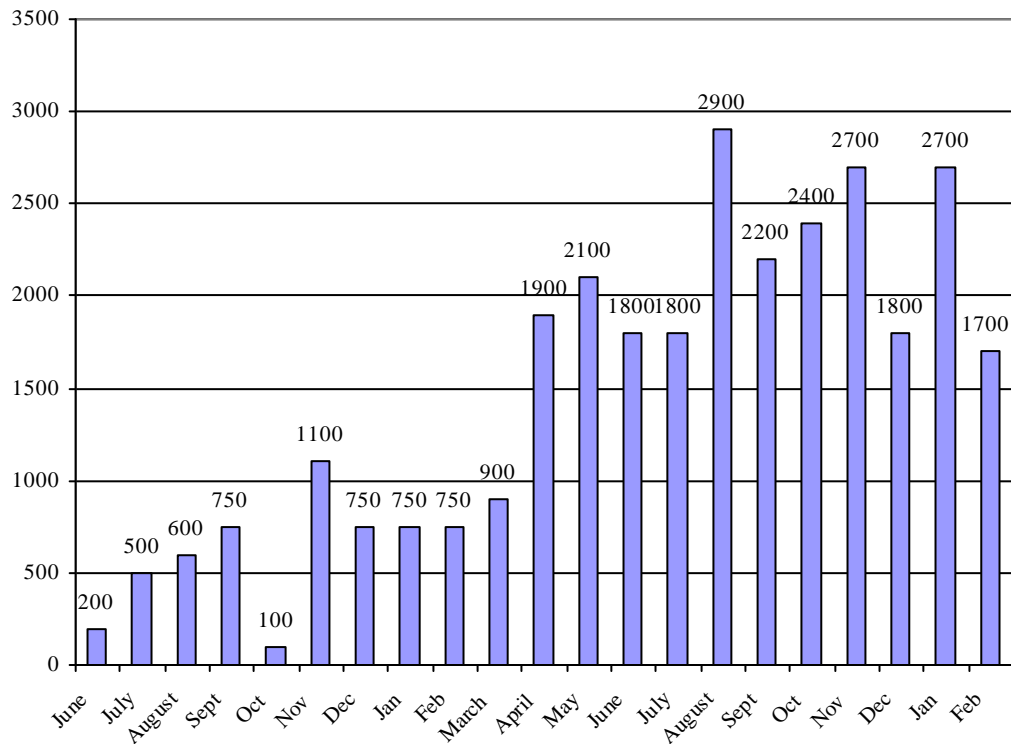
In spite of such caveats, however, enough data are available on the patterns in attacks to shed considerable insight on what is happening. Unclassified work by DIA and MNF-I showing the approximate number of total attacks per month from June 2003 to February 2004 is summarized in Figures IV.1 and IV.2. These data reflect patterns typical of the cyclical variations in modern insurgencies.^{cxix} The same is true of the trend data on US casualties discussed later in this chapter, and it is clear from a comparison of such data that there is only an uncertain correlation between incident counts and casualty counts, and even accurate incident counts would be only the crudest possible indication of the patterns in insurgency without a much wider range of comparative metrics.

These attack counts confirm the fact that insurgent activity surged before the January 30, 2005 elections temporarily eased back, and then surged again -- rather than diminishing in any lasting way. An internal US Army analysis in April 2005 calculated that the apparent shift was more a shift in focus to more vulnerable non-US targets than an actual drop in incidents.^{cxixi} Similarly, a study by the National Intelligence Council in the CIA, that was leaked to Newsweek, concluded that US government reporting had so many conflicting sources and methods of analysis that the resulting metrics could not be trusted, and that there

was inadequate evidence to support any conclusions about whether the insurgents were being defeated.^{cxxxii}

Figure IV.3 shows the trend measured by a different standard: total attacks and effective attacks. It provides a much clearer picture of the intensity of the war and how sharp the cycles are in attempted attacks over time. At the same time, there is often surprisingly little correlation between attempted and effective attacks. The cycles in attempted attacks are much smaller and the trends are largely meaningless. The level of effective attacks is nearly constant from April 2005 through the end of 2005.

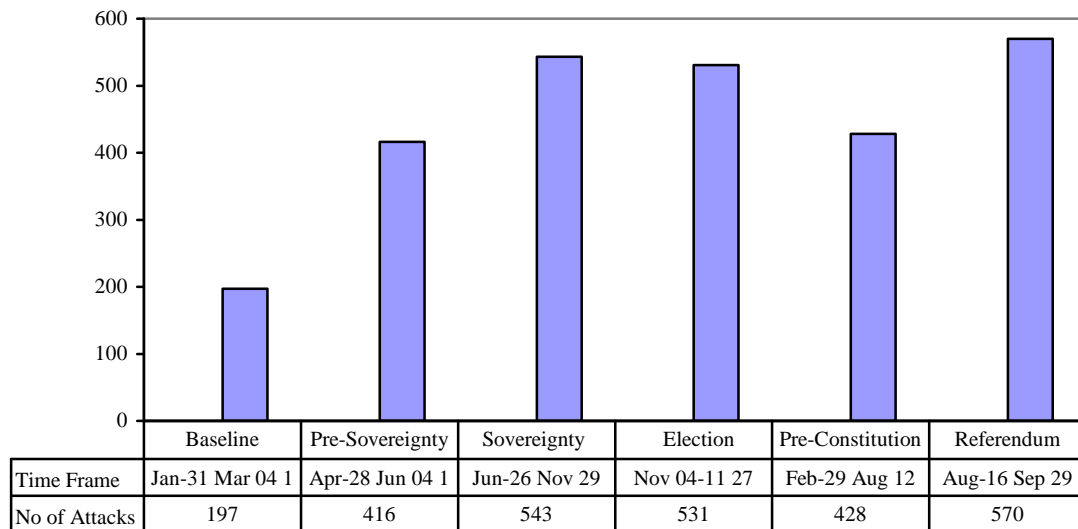
Figure IV.1: Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003-February 2005



Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, *Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police*, Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-43IT, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

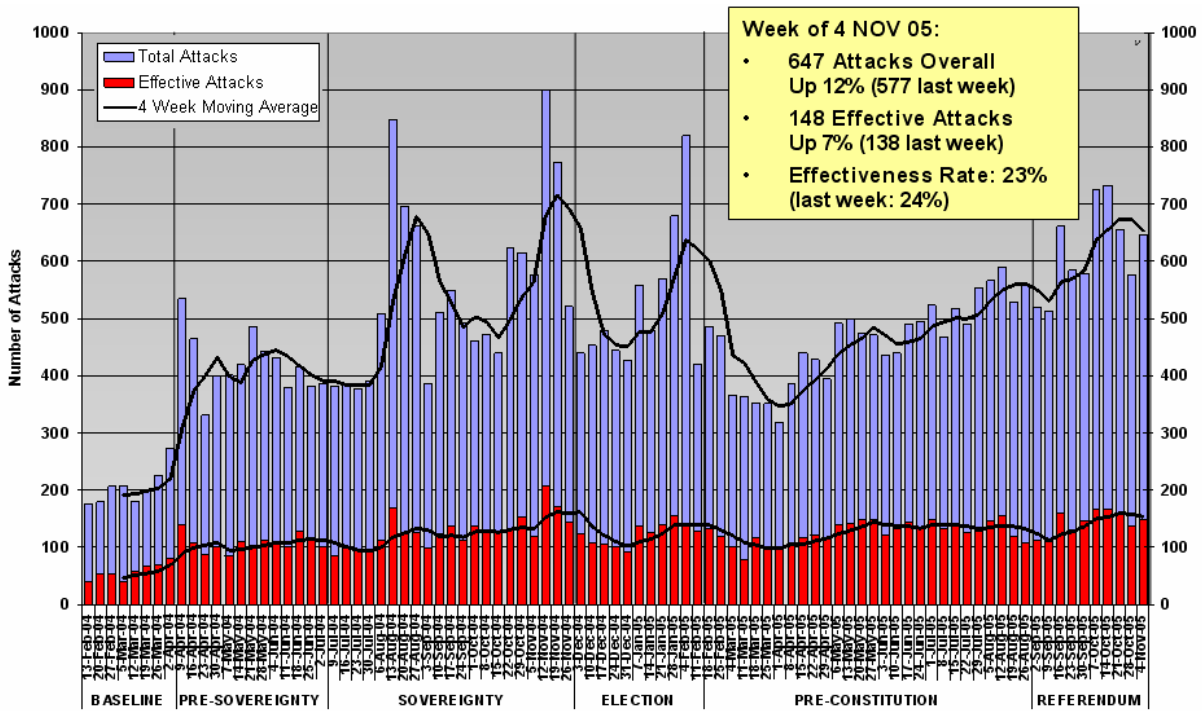
Figure IV.2: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – September 2005



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," DOD Report to Congress, October 13, 2005. Available at:

Note: Referendum period only has three weeks of data; average may be skewed by spikes in attacks.

**Figure IV.3: Total Average Weekly Attacks versus Effective Attacks by Time
Period: February 2004 – November 2005**



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

Total Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Bombings, Vehicle Borne Bombings (VBIEDs), and Suicide Bombings, and

The trends in all forms of improvised explosive devices are shown in Figure IV.4. they fluctuate over time, but show a steady increase, and a significant rise in successful detonations towards the end of 2005.

The patterns in suicide attacks, car bombings, the resulting casualties, and in the numbers of bombmakers captured and killed are more complex and shown in Figure IV.5. These figures only cover 2005, but do show interesting trends. The number of attacks has gone down since a high in early 2005, but the number of casualties has not. There is no correlation between the two trends. The trend for bombers captured or killed is of interest largely because, while the number is rising, the overall total has been and remains so low.

If one looks at data from other sources, the number of car bombings rose from 65 in February 2005 to 170 in April, and the total number of major attacks per day rose from 30-40 in February and March to 70 in April and May. The intensity of the attacks also increased as more suicide bombings took place by Islamist extremists – many conducted by young men from countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan who infiltrated in from across the Syria border.

The number of major attacks involving suicide bombers rose from 25% in February to a little over 50% in April. There were 69 suicide bombings in April 2005, more than in the entire period from the fall of Saddam Hussein to the transfer of power in June 2004. In May, some 90-suicide bombings were the primary cause of some 750 casualties that month.^{cxxxiii} The annual pattern was equally serious. If one only counts car bombings, there had been more than 482 successful bombings in the year since the handover of power on June 26, 2004, killing at least 2,176 people and wounding at least 5,536.^{cxxxiv}

While the insurgents focused more on Iraqi targets, and increasingly on Shiite and Kurdish targets that might help provoke a major civil war, the attacks on MNF-I forces climbed from 40 a day in March to 55 in April, far below the peak of 130 a day before the January 30, 2005 elections – but scarcely reassuring.^{cxxxv} The good news for the US was that only 146 Americans died during the three-month period from February 1 to April 30, 2005, versus 315 in the previous three-month period.^{cxxxvi}

The difficulty in analyzing the patterns in a constantly changing situation is illustrated by another surge in activity that took place as the new government was appointed. The Iraqi government announced most of its appointments on April 28, 2005 -- some three months after the election and months after the supposed deadline for doing so.

In the week that followed (April 28-May 6), there were 10 major suicide bombings, and 35 major attacks. Insurgents killed more than 270 Iraqi civilians, and at least 14 bodies were found in a Baghdad garbage dump that may have been

from previous attacks. Many of the attacks were against Iraqi forces and recruits, and the intensity of the attacks is indicated by the fact that a suicide bomber from the "Army of Ansar al-Sunna" killed more than 60 people in the Kurdish city of Irbil in Northern Iraq in a single attack.^{cxvii} For the first time, in April, more than 50% of the car bombings were suicide attacks.^{cxviii}

During the same period, 80 more bodies had been found floating in the Tigris, and 19 more were discovered in a soccer stadium.^{cxix} The total number of US killed now totaled 1,593 (1,216 killed in hostile action), and 12,243 wounded. Some 180 allied military had been killed, and 86 US civilians, and unofficial estimates put the number of Iraqi dead at least 21,450-24,325.^{cxl}

These developments led some US officers and officials to claim that the insurgents were lashing out because they had taken so many casualties that they were desperate, and/or to say that the successful car bombings by Islamic extremists had little strategic meaning since they alienated the Iraqi people and could easily be carried out by a small number of largely foreign volunteers that were not representative of Iraqi Sunnis.

Such arguments could not be disproved or proved, but they were made at a time the US Marines found it necessary to conduct a major offensive along the Euphrates from Haditha to the Syrian border, the largest offensive since the attack on Fallujah. US forces also had to launch another major operation to secure the area south and west of Baghdad, and follow them up with a series of major campaigns around Mosul and in western Iraq during the summer and fall.^{cxli}

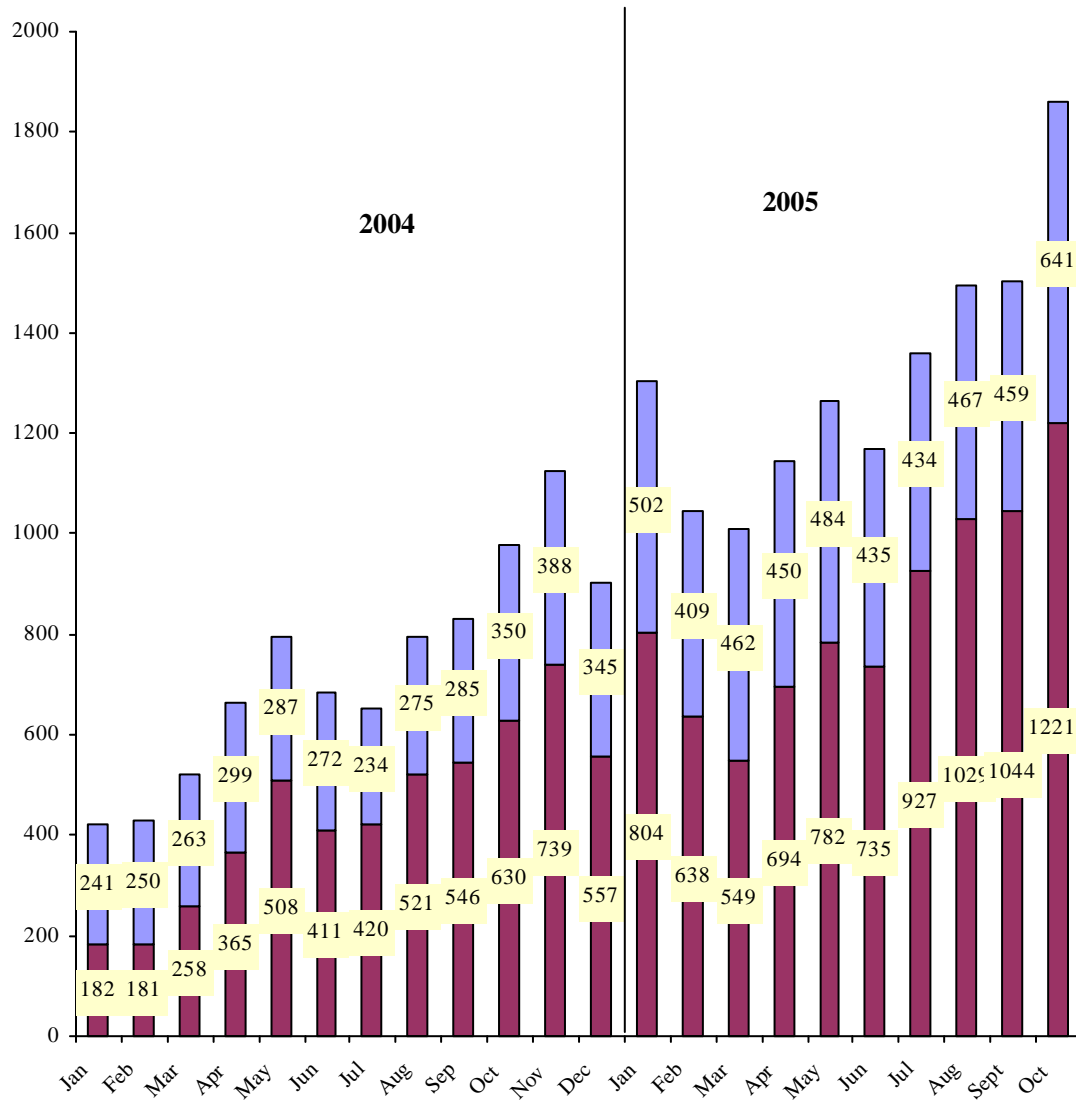
Such operations have had to be followed up again and again, largely because many of the insurgents can disperse the moment they came under pressure, and the Coalition and Iraqi forces both lacked the manpower to occupy high threat areas and the requisite Coalition or Iraqi government teams to back up tactical victories with civic action programs and efforts to establish effective governance.

As of the early summer of 2005, insurgents and terrorists continued to try to strip the new government of its perceived legitimacy. In spite of MNF-I estimates that some 1,000-3,000 insurgents were being killed and captured each month, attacks on Iraqi security forces and government officials continued, and the number of suicide bombings continued to mount.

The patterns in bombings revealed similar cycles for the rest of 2005, although considerable uncertainty sometimes emerged over such counts because the Iraqi government and Coalition did not already report consistently. There were 21 car bombings in Baghdad alone during the first two weeks of May, and 126 in the 80 days before May 18th. This compared with 25 during all of 2005. Daily attacks had averaged 30-40 a day in February, but were at least 70 a day in June.^{cxlii} Although the number of car bombings decreased from April to July 2005, (from April's high of 170 car bombings, the number fell to 151 in May; 133 in June; and, less than 100 in July) at the time, experts believed this was merely al Qaida "storing up" for the late summer and fall offensive.^{cxliii}

The cycles were equally uncertain for the rest of year. Coalition reporting in December 2005 showed a drop in the number of suicide bombings from 70 in

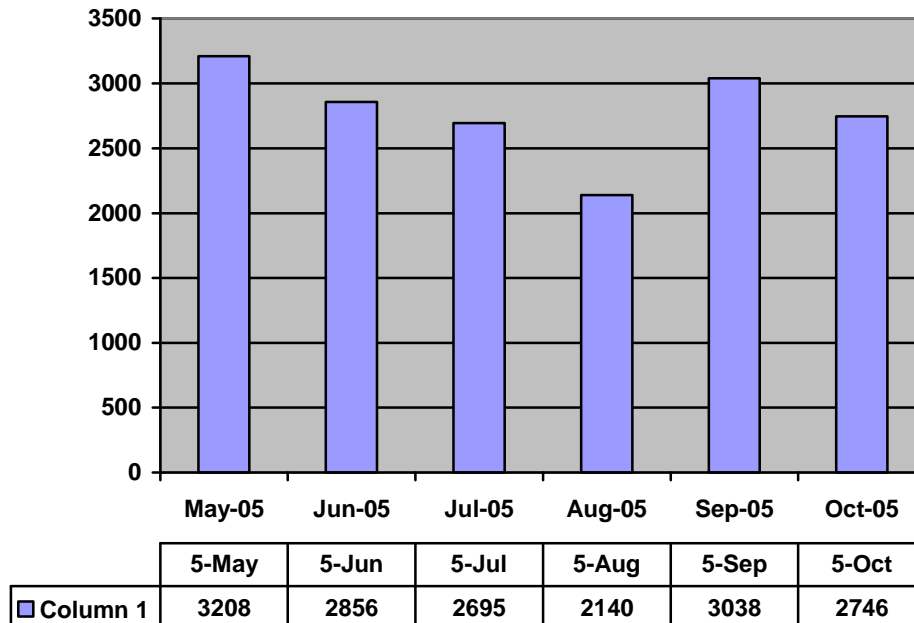
May to 40 in August, a rise to 50 in October, and then a drop to 23 in November. The number of bombs exploded or cleared dropped rose from 1,170 in June to 1,869 in October, and then dropped to 1,330 roadside bombings and 68 car bombings in November. There had been 130 car bombings in February.^{cxliv} The US death toll rose from 49 in September to 96 in October, and then dropped to 85 in November. By end November, the US had lost 80 or more dead in 10 of the 33 months of the war. Iraqi deaths went from 69 in August to 356 in September and 290 in November.

Figure IV.4: Patterns IED Attacks: January 2004 to October 2005

Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

Figure IV. 5: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: February 2004 – November 2005 – Part One

Casualties



VBIEDs

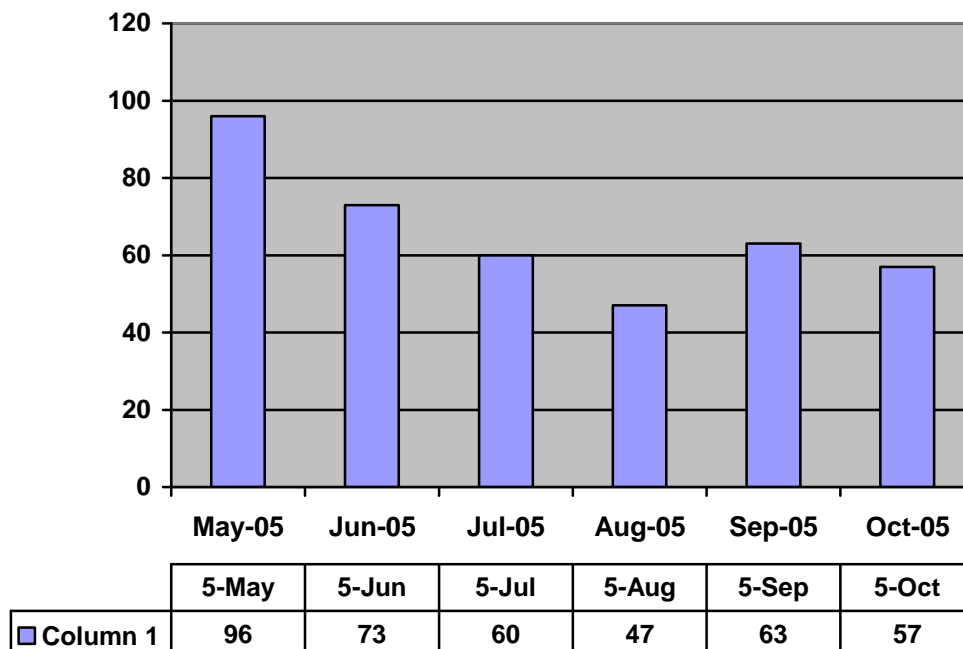
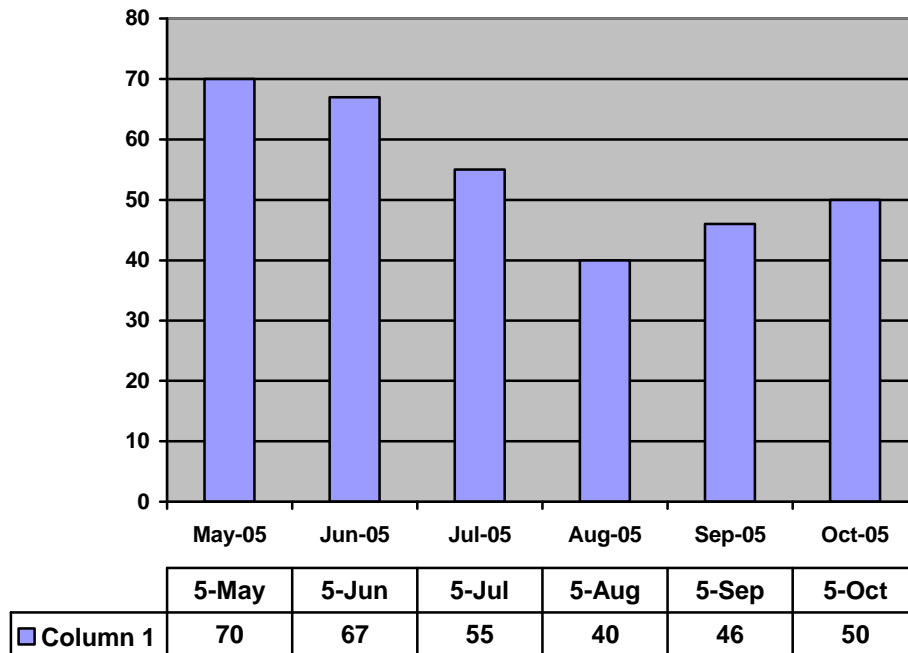
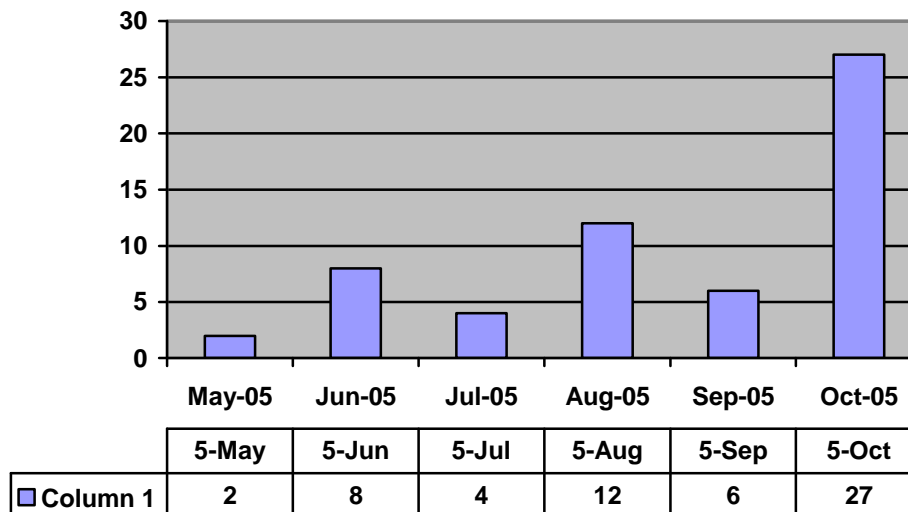


Figure IV. 5: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: February 2004 – November 2005 – Part Two

Suicide Attacks



Bomb Makers Captured or Killed



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

Sabotage and Infrastructure Attacks

As Figure IV.6 shows, insurgents have continued attacks designed to disrupt supplies of water, electricity, crude oil, gasoline and heating oil, particularly in the greater Baghdad area. The shift in attack patterns do show significant cycles, but cannot be related to the effectiveness of such attacks, and seems to reflect a massive undercount of large numbers of minor sabotage attempts and success that are not included in these figures.

If one looks at the history of such attacks in more detail, one finds the following patterns:

- Attacks on power and water facilities both offset the impact of US aid and cause Iraqi anger against the government. Al Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets because they deny the government revenue (in the first quarter of FY 2005 Iraq lost an estimated \$887 million in export revenues due to insurgent attacks on infrastructure)^{cxlv}, affect both power and Iraqi ability to obtain fuel, get extensive media and foreign business attention, and prevent investment in one of Iraq's most attractive assets.^{cxlvi}

The impact of this activity is regularly reflected in the histograms in the Department of Defense, *Iraq Weekly Status Report*. For example, the April 27, 2005 edition shows that electric power generation remained far below the US goal, and usually below the prewar level, from January 1, 2004 to April 21, 2005. Crude oil production averaged around 2.1 MMBD from February through April 2005, versus a goal of 2.5 MMBD, and a prewar peak of 2.5 MMBD in March 2003. For September-October 2005, the crude oil production average fell to 2.02 MMBD, still below the target goal of 2.5 MMBD.^{cxlvii} Exports averaged only about 1.3-1.4 MMBD from January to April 2005, largely because of pipeline and facility sabotage -- although record oil prices raised Iraqi export revenues from \$5.1 billion in 2003 to \$17.0 billion in 2004, and \$6.2 billion in the first four months of 2005. From May to September 2005, Iraqi oil exports averaged 1.42 MMBD. The increase was driven largely by strong exports (over 1.5 MMBD) for the months of July-September. Early estimates for October 2005, however, showed oil exports falling to 1.305 MMBD.^{cxlviii}

The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages in others. It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend \$1.0 billion of \$4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and \$261 million out of \$1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.^{cxlix}

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005, and some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates. The Iraqi Municipalities and Public Works Ministry calculated in April 2005 that it provided water to some 17 million Iraqis (70% of the population), and supplies were so bad that some 30% of the 17 million did not have access to drinkable water.^{cl}

In June, Baghdad's mayor, Alaa Mahmoud al-Timimi threatened to resign over crumbling infrastructure in the city. On September 7, a Congressional mandated report stated that the ongoing insurgency had severely hampered efforts to rebuild Iraq's water and sanitation systems. Of the more than \$24 billion the US Congress has authorized for reconstruction efforts since 2003, roughly \$2.6 billion was allotted for rebuilding water and sanitation services. Congress had initially planned on spending almost \$4 billion on

water and sanitation projects, but more than \$1 billion was eventually redirected towards other priorities, including security needs.^{cli}

Despite this, however, some progress appears to have been made in Baghdad. In October, USAID announced that more than 15,650 houses had recently been connected to the Baghdad Water Distribution System. But the distribution system experiences 60 percent loss, a result of leaks, illegal connections and sabotage.^{clii} And, as late as September 2005, several water and sewage stations in Fallujah were still operating below 20% capacity.^{cliii}

The patterns of such attacks also continued to come in cycles. For example, Figure IV.6 shows that insurgent attacks on infrastructure targets increased dramatically in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attacks in recent months. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August 2005, following the deadline for writing Iraq's Constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than 10 attacks on pipelines.^{cliv}

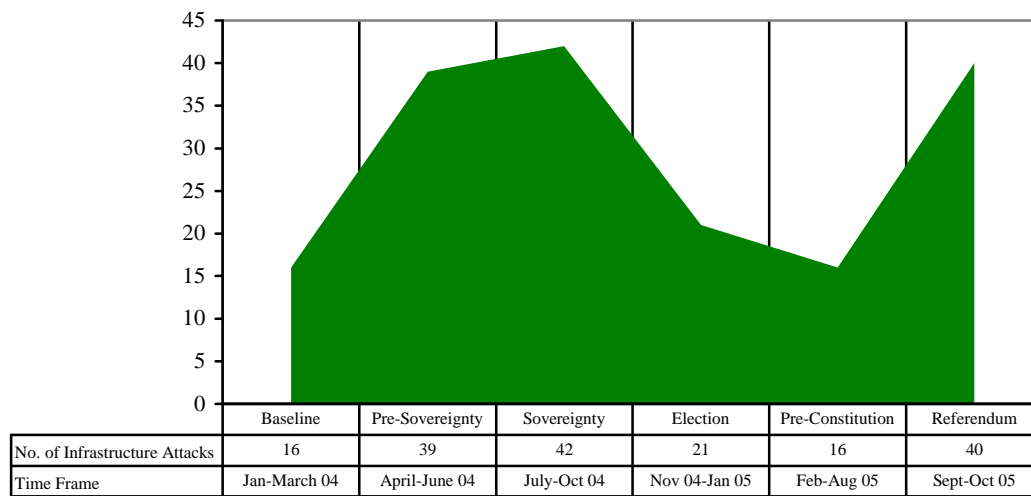
The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005.^{clv}

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bomb the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Cheyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire breaks out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire breaks out on an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire is unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damages an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs are expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shuts down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bomb a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji. Damage is expected to be significant.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bomb the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad's electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.^{clvi} Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.^{clvii}

The insurgents have scarcely paralyzed the country, but have had notable successes in virtually every area. These included significant attacks on oil export facilities, water plants, and power. For example, the national average amount of electricity generated reached a post-war high in August 2004 with 4,707 megawatts, but steadily declined throughout the rest of 2004 and most of 2005 as a result of successful insurgent attacks on electricity and oil infrastructure.^{clviii} Because of the technological expertise involved in these attacks, some experts believed that former, Hussein-era officials were still aiding the sabotage efforts –

although others felt that by this time, there was a large pool of such expertise in the various insurgent forces.^{clix}

Figure IV.6: Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, July 21, 2005. Available at:
www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050721secstab.pdf

Measuring the Evolution of the Insurgency by Its Cost in Blood

The human cost of the insurgency is only one measure of how it has evolved, but it makes the seriousness of the conflict all too clear. The data in Figures IV.7 through IV.11 show that there were 12 months from March 2003 to November 2005, where US fatalities per month were greater than 75. During that same period, there were three months (April 2004; November 2004; and, January 2005) where US fatalities were greater than 100.^{clx}

Certainly US casualty rates did not alter in any predictable way. Rather than experience a decline, the average number of casualties per day had grown from 1.7 in 2003 to 2.3 in 2004, and then remained relatively constant in 2005. January 26, 2005 – just before the election -- was the worst day of the war to date with 37 American dead. Seventeen American's died on a single day on August 3, 2005, and 29 on March 23, 2005.^{clxi}

In mid-November 2005 the US military reported that the survival rate for wounded soldiers was 90 percent, the highest of any war. The army credited the high survival rate to better body armor, forward deployed surgical teams, swift medical evacuations, and improved trauma care.^{clxii}

Also in November, the US military reported that more than 200 of the US troops killed to date in Iraq were officers. The figure accounted for 10.4% of deaths in Iraq, a number similar to the casualty rate of previous wars. Of the 58,178 US soldiers killed in Vietnam, 7,878 or roughly 14%, were officers. The casualty rate for officers in Iraq appeared to be increasing in late 2005. Between October 25 and November 15, 58 US troops were killed, of which 13, roughly 22%, were officers. But military officials do not believe the recent increase in officer deaths marks a change in insurgent tactics:^{clxiii}

We have no evidence pointing to the insurgents or terrorists targeting officers as opposed to other members of the military. [Suicide bombs and IEDs] are pretty indiscriminate in what they hit.

As of December 1, 2005, the U.S. had suffered 2,114 killed, of which 1,657 had been killed in hostile action, and well over 15,000 Americans had been wounded.^{clxiv} Coalition allies had lost 201 lives, and estimates of killed Iraqi security forces totaled in the thousands.^{clxv} Approximately 23,589-26,705 Iraqi civilians and 66 international media workers had been killed as of August 31, 2005.^{clxvi}

Patterns in Iraqi Forces and Government Casualties

Coalition views of the cycles in Iraqi casualties: The MNF and MNSTC-I have reported that they keep track of Iraqi casualties, but generally do not disclose such numbers in detail. One MNSTC-I expert stated, "Data on Iraqi casualties are collected by the Coalition, but public distribution of information about this topic should remain the purview of the Iraqi government. They have more visibility over the issue, could be more accurate in reporting and are the appropriate authority to discuss the meaning."^{clxvii}

Nevertheless, Figure IV.7 illustrates Coalition efforts to show the cycles in Iraqi casualties, and the numbers show a cyclical tendency towards steady escalation.

The Health Ministry has provided a breakdown of Iraqi deaths from early November 2004 until early April 2005, although this count relies on uncertain data from morgues and hospitals.

The ministry noted that during this period:^{clxviii}

- 32% of the 3,853 deaths accounted for by the ministry occurred in Baghdad.
- Al Anbar witnessed the second highest number of deaths.
- Najaf had the third highest number of deaths.
- Children represented 211 out of the 3,853 deaths.
- The highest death rates per capita were Al Anbar, followed by Najaf and Diyala.
- The ministry recorded 15,517 wounded, of which men made up 91%.

Figures were not available for the months prior to August 2004 and no breakdowns of the data were made available. This gap in the data may be partly explained by the fact that until summer 2004, casualty information was gathered by the Ministry of Health and relied on information provided by hospitals and morgues.^{clxix} Yet, reliance on hospitals and morgues alone to count deaths provides a low figure for approximate deaths. Certainly, not every dead body is taken to the hospital or morgue and certain groups of Iraqis probably avoid the hospitals altogether.

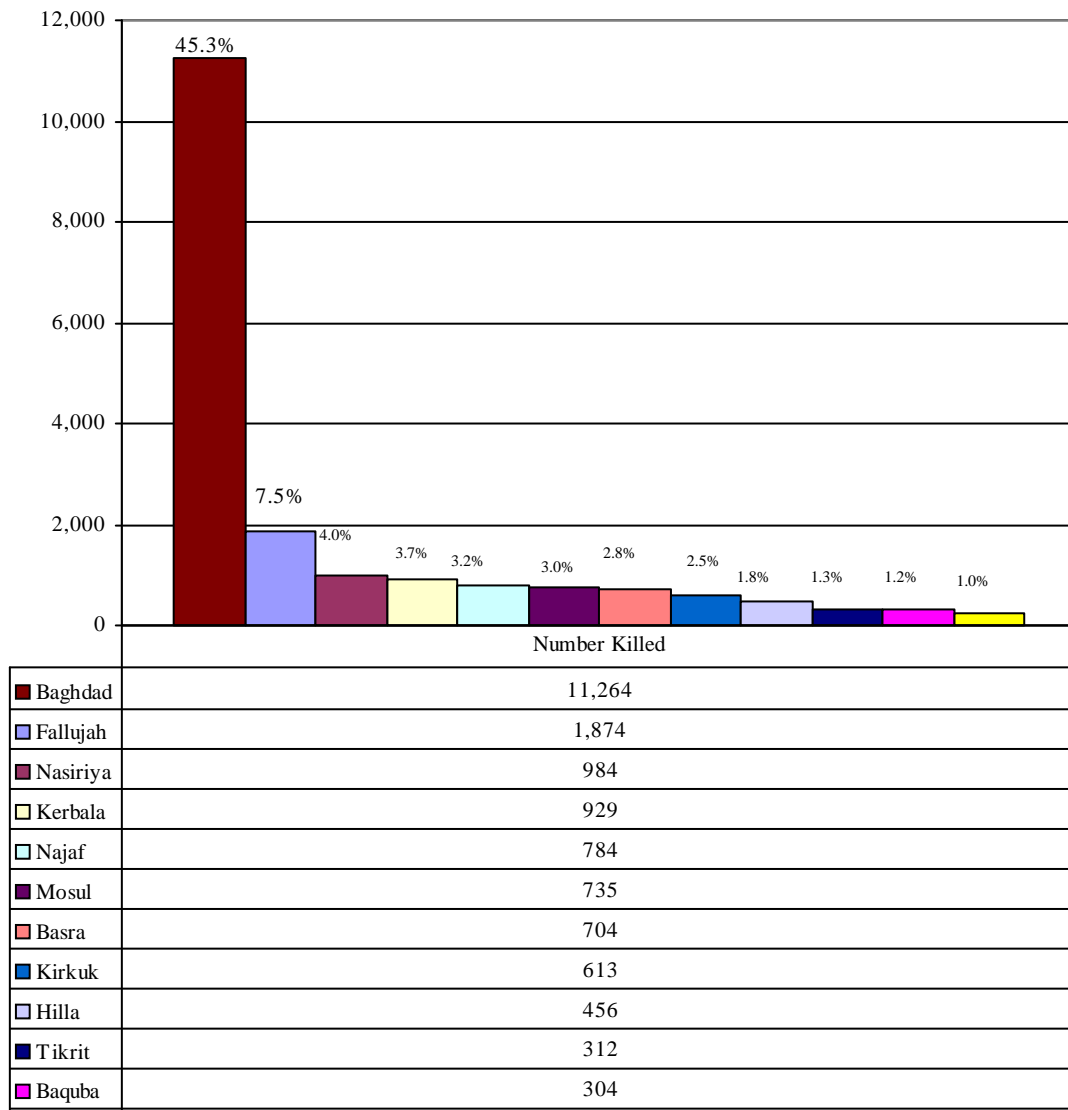
The Iraqi government has since been reluctant to release casualty data, perhaps because it fears this could show its weaknesses and discourage recruiting. The Ministry of Defense did report, however, that 85 Iraqi soldiers were killed in May 2005, compared with 40 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 79 soldiers were wounded in May, compared with 63 in April.

The Ministry of Interior reported that 151 Iraqi police were killed in May 2005, compared with 86 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 325 policemen were wounded in May, compared with 131 in April. The Ministry of Health reported that 434 civilians were killed in May, compared with 299 in April, and that 775 civilians were wounded, versus 598 the previous month.^{clxx}

In June 2005, the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior released new figures on Iraqi civilian and security force casualties. The ministry found that Iraqi civilians and police officers died at a rate of about 800 a month from August 2004 until May 2005. Reportedly, insurgents killed 8,175 Iraqis during that time.^{clxxi}

Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr stated in June 2005 that insurgents had killed approximately 12,000 Iraqis since the Coalition invasion, an average of 500 a month as reported by the New York Times.^{clxxii}

An independent count of Iraqi military and police casualties showed that some 1,300 had been killed between the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 and the end of 2004, but that an increase in insurgent activity and a new focus on Iraq forces killed 109 in January 2005, 103 in February, 200 in March, 200 in April and 110 in the first week of May. This was a total of roughly 1,200 killed in the first six months of 2005, raising the total to over 2,400 killed – scarcely a decline in insurgent activity.^{clxxiii} In contrast, the MNF-I reported that "more than 2,000" Iraqi security forces personnel had been killed by the end of July 2005.^{clxxiv}

Figure IV.7: Iraqi Fatalities by City: March 2003-February 2005

Source: Iraq Body Count Data, www.iraqbodycount.org

Patterns in Iraqi Civilian Casualties

There are no reliable estimates of killed and wounded for Iraqi civilians. The best data -- or "guesstimate" seems to be one by Iraq Body Count, but it is extremely uncertain. The group released a study of Iraqi casualties since the Coalition invasion in conjunction with the Oxford Research Group in mid-2005. The study concluded that approximately 25,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in 2003 and 2004 with about a third having been killed by Coalition troops.

Although men over 18 accounted for the bulk of civilian deaths, the study found that women and children accounted for almost 20% of all deaths. Almost 80% of civilian deaths occurred in 12 cities. Baghdad accounted for almost half of the civilian deaths during this period. Figure IV.3 shows the breakdown.

The study relied on casualty reports made available on 152 selected websites and did not try to verify the sites' sources. Some of the sites are relatively unknown and are of uncertain reliability. It also is not clear how strenuously the IBC has tried to sift military casualties from civilian casualties. Impinging the credibility of the IBC's figures further is the fact that it is an avowed antiwar group.^{clxxxv}

In late 2005, IBC updated its database, raising its estimate of the number of Iraqis killed to 26,982-30,380.^{clxxxvi} Although the IBC figure is uncertain, the much higher estimates made by some other organizations; however, use methodologies and databases that are so weak that they simply lack credibility. US official data are also uncertain, but do provide some useful insights. According to the Pentagon's October 2005 "Measuring Stability and Security In Iraq" report to Congress, "Approximately 80 percent of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, but 80% of all casualties are suffered by Iraqis." The Pentagon data showed the average number of daily attacks against Iraqis had more than doubled since early 2004, from around 25 attacks per day to an average of 64 per day in the summer and fall of 2005. A clear trend was visible in the data, with the number of daily attacks against Iraqis climbing from 40 in the pre-election period (June-November 2004) to more than fifty during the election (December 2004-February 2005), and then increasingly dramatically to more than 60 in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.^{clxxxvii}

The Pentagon numbers did not, however, distinguish between Iraqi security forces and civilian deaths.^{clxxxviii} Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Command Greg Hicks played down the significance of the report, telling reporters: "It's kind of a snapshot...The Defense Department doesn't maintain a comprehensive or authoritative count of Iraqi casualties."^{clxxxix}

A follow-on analysis of the Pentagon data carried out by several news organizations however showed 26,000 Iraqis had been killed or injured since the end of the war. Further analysis of the Pentagon data showed that for every US soldier killed in Iraq, at least 13 Iraqi civilians were also killed.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health has periodically reported casualty figures since mid-2003. In late 2003, the ministry announced that 1,764 Iraqis had been killed

during the summer months.^{clxxx} Data for the period between April 2004 and October 2004 show 3,853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured.^{clxxxi}

In January of 2005, the Ministry provided the BBC with the following statistics for the six-month period from July 2004 to January 2005:^{clxxxii}

- 3,724 people in Iraq were killed and 12,657 injured in conflict related violence
- 2,041 of these deaths were the result of military action, in which 8,542 people were injured
- 1,233 deaths were the result of "terrorist" incidents

These figures, based on records from Iraqi public hospitals, do not distinguish between the deaths of civilians or Iraqi security forces, and may include insurgent casualties as well. UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw described the Iraqi method of calculating casualties in October 2004:^{clxxxiii}

Every hospital reports daily the number of civilians (which may include insurgents) who have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents or as a result of military action. All casualties are likely to be taken to hospital in these circumstances except for some insurgents (who may fear arrest) and those with minor injuries.

Iraqi government figures released by the defense, interior and health ministries in late October 2005 reported more than 4,000 Iraqi deaths (of whom at least 3,000 were civilian) to date for the year 2005.^{clxxxiv} The breakdown was as follows: 3,314 civilian; 1,053 police; and, 413 soldiers. Also killed were 1,389 suspected insurgents.^{clxxxv}

Iraqi officials reported 702 Iraqi deaths for the month of September 2005 alone. The figure fell by 42 percent to 407 the following month. October's figure included 83 police and at least 25 soldiers. Although it was the fourth deadliest month for US forces, the death toll for Iraqi civilians and security forces was relatively low in October.^{clxxxvi}

Figure IV.8: Casualty Patterns by Period Over Time

(MNSTC-I Estimate of Daily Killed and Wounded)

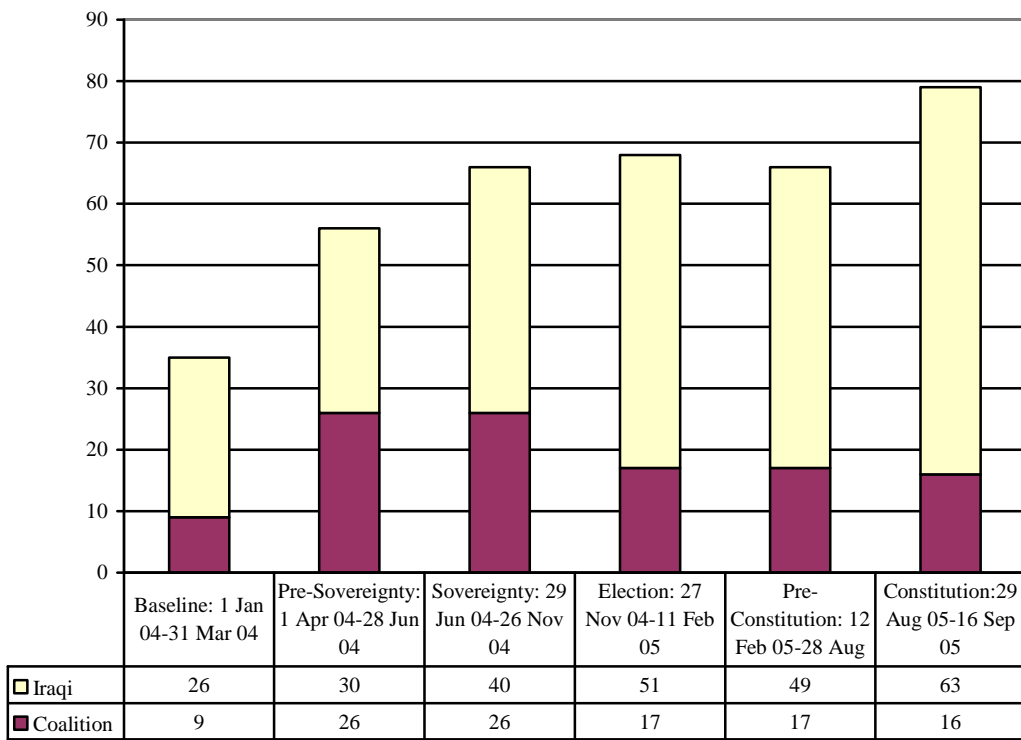
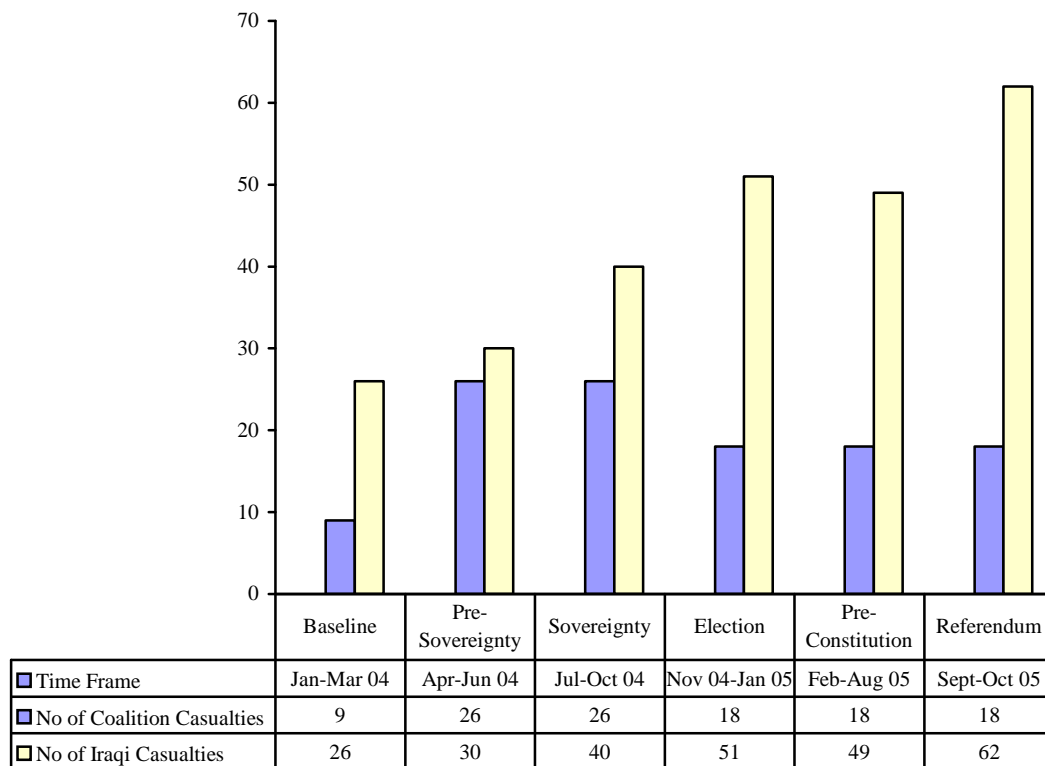
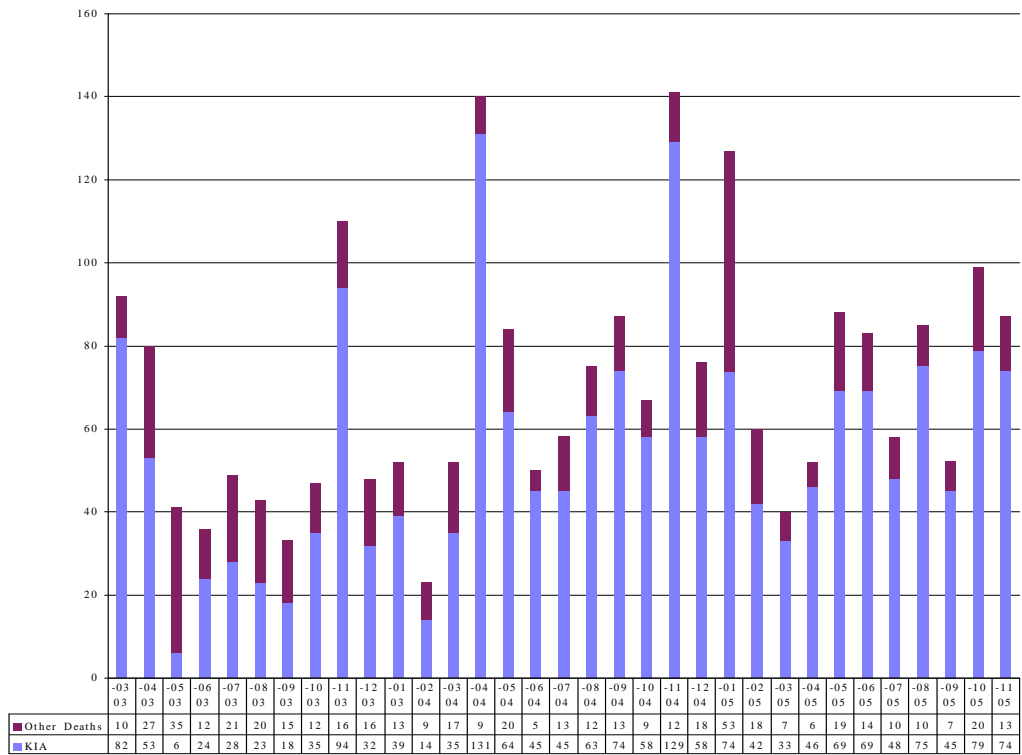


Figure IV.9: Average Daily Casualties-Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004-September 2005



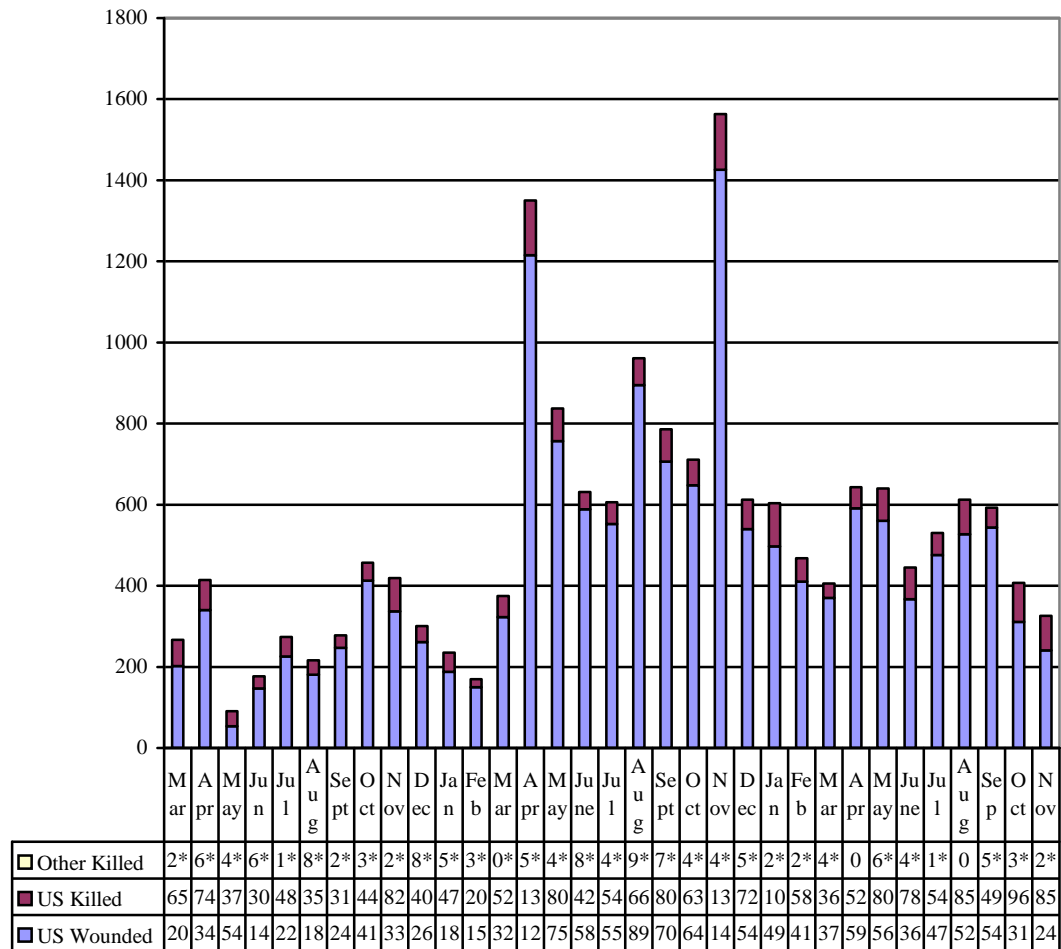
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, Page.24.

Figure IV.10: Trends in US Killed by Month



Source: Adapted from data proved by the Department of Defense, www.defenselink.mil, and the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>, accessed December 1, 2005.

Figure IV.11: Approximate Number of US Killed and Wounded: March 2003-October 2005



Note: Other Killed includes all other Coalition military forces but no civilians and no Iraqis.

Source: Adapted from data proved by the Department of Defense, www.defenselink.mil, and the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>, accessed December 1, 2005.

V. Characterizing the Insurgency: The Pivotal Role of the Sunni and Islamist Extremist Threat

Coalition and Iraqi forces must deal with a complex mix of threats – only some of which have as yet come into play. The Bush Administration summarized the nature of the insurgency, and its successes and failures, as follows in its October 2005 report to Congress:^{clxxxvii}

The insurgency is primarily a Sunni Arab phenomenon and is not a national movement; it has a very narrow base in the country. It continues to be comprised of semi-autonomous and fully autonomous groups with a variety of motivations. Measuring the strength of the insurgency in terms of numbers alone does not provide an adequate assessment of insurgent capabilities.

Insurgent numbers are a very small fraction of Iraq's population. The vast majority of these groups are connected in some way through members belonging to social networks (e.g., familial, tribal, and former professional) that stretch across Iraq and beyond. Insurgents can also be grouped into several strands: terrorists and foreign fighters, "rejectionists" (mostly Sunni), Saddam loyalists, and criminals.

The main threat to achieving Iraqi control of and responsibility for security in provinces is, in the near and medium term, terrorists and foreign fighters because of the psychological impact on the population of their terror campaign, which appears to target Iraqi civilians indiscriminately.

... One noteworthy strategic indicator of progress in the security environment is the continued inability of insurgents to derail the political process and timelines. This is a key objective they are failing to achieve. As expected, there has been an increase in the average number of insurgent attacks during the period leading to the constitutional referendum. Insurgent attacks remain concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces; half of the Iraqi population lives in areas that experience only six percent of all attacks. Six provinces reported a statistically insignificant number of attacks based on population size. Although about 80% of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, about 80% of all casualties are suffered by the Iraqi population.

...Iraqi rejectionists maintain a steady level of violence that complicates efforts to stabilize Iraq. Criminal elements and corruption often enable the insurgency. As noted, these several strands of the insurgency have failed to derail the political process, and their efforts to foment ethnosectarian conflict have not been successful due in large part to key Iraqi figures calling for restraint among their communities.

Successful elections will not likely change the foreign fighters' strategy. The Iraqi rejectionists – particularly those who are Sunni – may, nonetheless, lose some of their support base as the political process advances. Saddam loyalists may present a longer-term threat to building a democratic, prosperous Iraq because they remain focused on creating conditions in which they can disrupt and subvert the government.

Multi-National Force-Iraq operations in several of the areas most affected by the insurgency have combined with local commanders' engagement of local officials, tribes, and clerics. These operations have disrupted a number of key insurgent cells, limited their freedom of action, and maintained cooperation with influential local leaders in order to keep reconstruction and democracy-building moving forward. A significant factor enabling progress against the insurgency is the dramatic increase in intelligence tips received from the population in the past several months, indicative of increasing popular rejection of the insurgents.

... Insurgent groups continue...to demonstrate an ability to adapt, relocate, regenerate, and sustain a campaign of intimidation against Iraqi officials, professionals,

“collaborators with the coalition,” and religious figures.

The insurgency remains concentrated in Baghdad, Ninevah, al-Anbar, and Salah ad Din provinces. In these areas, the insurgency sustains a level of violence and casualties that can produce effects that include: maintaining a non-permissive environment that undermines local governance, emerging institutions, reconstruction efforts, and economic growth; inhibiting foreign investment and diplomatic representation; limiting the roles of non-governmental organizations and contractors; and increasing the costs of reconstruction.

The Sunni elements of the insurgency involve a wide range of disparate Iraqi and foreign groups, and mixes of secular and Islamic extremist factions. There are elements tied to former Ba’athist officials, and to Iraqi and Sunni nationalists. There are elements composed of native Iraqi Sunni Islamists, groups with outside leadership and links to Al Qa’ida, and foreign volunteers with little real structure - some of which seem to be seeking Islamic martyrdom rather than clearly defined political goals.

Tribal and clan elements play a role at the local level, creating additional patterns of loyalty that cut across ideology or political goals. The stated objectives of various groups range from a return of some form of Ba’athist like regime to the creation of an extremist Sunni Islamic state, with many Iraqi Sunnis acting as much out of anger and fear as any clearly articulated goals.

The various insurgent and terrorist groups often cooperate, although there are indications of divisions between the more-Ba’ath oriented Iraqi Sunni groups and some of the Sunni Islamic extremist groups with outside ties or direction. At least some Sunni groups are willing to consider negotiating with the new government, while Islamist extremist groups are not. This had led to threats and some violence between various Sunni factions.^{clxxxviii}

At the same time, there is the constant threat that Sunni Arab extremists will provoke something approaching a full-scale civil war. They have stepped up suicide and other attacks on Shi’ites and Kurds, and many of these attacks have clearly been designed to block efforts at including Sunnis in the government and to try to provoke Shi’ites and Kurds into reprisals that will make a stable national government impossible to achieve.

Political developments clearly affect the character of the insurgency. Some experts believe the January 30, 2005 elections have led some of the native Iraqi insurgents to be more willing to consider negotiating with the government and playing a role in the political process, while events inside and outside Iraq led Al Qa’ida and other Islamist extremist groups to see Iraq more and more as a center of their operations both because of the possibility of “defeating” the US and because it was one of the few theaters of operations that had significant public support in the Arab world.^{clxxxix}

The political process does, however, remain very uncertain, and Sunni religious extremists will do everything possible to block the acceptance of the draft of the, Iraqi Sunnis from entering the government, and the elections scheduled for the end of 2005.

Even those Sunnis taking part in the constitutional process remained dissatisfied as of the fall of 2005, as Shiite and Kurdish representatives to the drafting committee attempted to push through a version of the document that the Sunnis objected to on several grounds. On August 28, 2005, Sunni Arab negotiators, in a joint statement by the 15-member Sunni panel, rejected the Iraqi draft constitution and asked the Arab League and the United Nations to intervene.

Chief among Sunni objections to the document were the issue of a federal Iraq, which Sunnis believe would deprive the West of oil revenues, and exclusionary references to the Ba'ath party, which many Sunnis see as an attempt to codify their political disenfranchisement. Another issue was the document's failure to enshrine Iraq's identity as 'Arab.' However, as of September 14, 2005, Shiites and Kurds agreed to amend the Constitution as it goes to UN print to cite Iraq as a founding member of Arab League, a nod to Sunni demands for national ethnic identity. Federalism clauses, however, were not removed, thus preserving Shiite and Kurds regional options.^{cxc}

There is also the risk of factional fighting within the Shi'ites, and between Iraq's Arabs and Kurds. Serious divisions exist between the more secular and more religious Shi'ites over how religious a new Iraqi state should be, and within Shi'ite religious factions. Figures like Muqtada al-Sadr raise the risk of renewed Shi'ite insurgent movements, and tensions between Arab and Kurd have long been near the flashpoint in Kirkuk and present serious problems in Mosul.

Iraq's neighbors have conflicting interests and play a role in the insurgency. Syria has supported and tolerated Sunni Islamist infiltrations, and has allowed ex-Ba'athists to operate from Syria. Turkey is primarily interested in ensuring the Iraq's Kurds do not become an example to Turkey's Kurdish dissidents. Iran has its own interests in supporting Iraq's Islamic Shi'ites, creating an ally, and ending American "encirclement." The Arab states of the Gulf and Middle East do not want a Shi'ite dominated Iraq, and fear a Shi'ite "crescent" of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The Regional, Sectarian, and Ethnic Nature of the Insurgency

The insurgency in Iraq has not been a national insurgency. Iraqi Kurds have never supported it, and only small numbers of Shi'ites have taken an active role. It has been driven by a relatively small part of Iraq's population concentrated in part of the country, and its most violent actions have been led by a group of foreign volunteers and extremists which did not seem likely to exceed 3,000 full time insurgents as of September 2005.

Although there are no accurate census data, the Arab Sunni population only seems to be around 15-20% of Iraq's total population, and only 6-8% of Iraq's total population is located in the areas most hostile to the Coalition and the Iraqi government. Moreover, if one looks at the total population of all the scattered cities and areas where insurgents and terrorists largely dominate, it does not

exceed 6-9% of Iraq's total population. Furthermore, the insurgency has not been dominated by foreign fighters.

Sunni insurgents have exerted considerable sway--at various points--in Fallujah, Rawa, Anna, Haditha, Ramadi, Rutbah, Qaim, Ubaydi, Karabilah, Haqliniyah, Barwanah, Tal Afar, and others. They have not, however, established long-term control over "safe havens" from which to operate, and Coalition assaults have disrupted continuous insurgent control in such areas and the creation of insurgent sanctuaries.

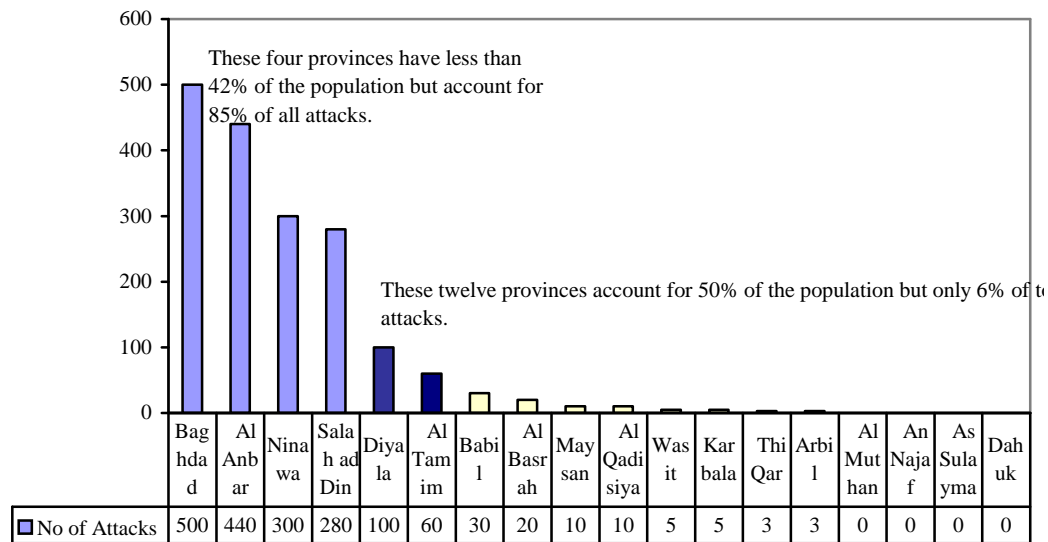
General John Abizaid, commander of the US Central Command, has said that the four provinces with particularly difficult security situations are western Baghdad, Al Anbar, Nineveh and Salahuddin.^{cxci} Yet, even in these areas -- where insurgents have significant local influence -- much of the population is divided and only limited areas have normally been under active insurgent control.

In October of 2005, a Congressional report noted that the insurgency remained concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces: Baghdad, Al Anbar, Ninewah, and Salah ad Din. As shown in Figure V.1, these four provinces have less than 42% of the country's population but account for 85% of the violence.^{cxcii}

Al Anbar is both Iraq's largest province (roughly the size of Belgium), and one of its least populated -- roughly one million people out of Iraq's 27 million. It is at least 90% Sunni Arab, and offers a route to a potential sanctuary in Syria, and has borders with Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well. Aside from Fallujah, the area immediately surrounding the Euphrates, and its agricultural areas have become a key operating area for insurgents. So have the towns along its border with Syria and the road to Syria, and insurgents take advantage of the largely desert and rough terrain for smuggling and dispersal. While it has some major cities, it has long been a tribal area where the government has exercised limited control.

It is scarcely surprising that it has become a center of the Sunni insurgency, and some estimates indicate that 500 of the 1,630 US servicemen killed in Iraq during the war up to June 2, 2005, died in Al Anbar. It is one of the few areas where insurgents have openly occupied towns and set up check points, and large numbers of Jordanian truck drivers have been killed on the road from Amman in an effort to break up lines of supply.^{cxci}

Figure V.1: The Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Total Attacks by Province: August 29-September 16, 2005



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p.21-22.

Estimates of Insurgent Forces

Estimates of the size of the insurgency have varied widely ever since the struggle first became serious in August 2003. Much depends on the definition of insurgent and the level of activity and dedication involved, and virtually everyone who issues such estimates admits they are little more than sophisticated "guesstimates."

A few outlying estimates have been as low as 3,500 full-time actives making up the "core" forces. Most US military estimates range between 8,000 and 18,000, perhaps reaching over 20,000 when the ranks swell for major operations. Iraqi intelligence officials, on the other hand, have sometimes issued figures for the total number of Iraqi sympathizers and insurgents as high as 200,000, with a core of anywhere between 15,000 and 40,000 fighters and another 160,000 supporters.

Newsweek quoted US sources as putting the total of insurgents at 12,000-20,000 in late June 2005. Another US expert was quoted as saying it had some 1,000 foreign jihadists, 500 Iraqi jihadists, 15,000-30,000 former regime elements, and some 400,000 auxiliaries and support personnel.^{cxiv}

The true figure may well fall somewhere in this range of different figures, but the exact number is also largely irrelevant. There is no single meaningful definition of the term. There are many different kinds of "insurgents": cadres, full time, part time, sympathizers, collaborators and passive tolerators.

In any case, the real issue is whether the insurgency enjoys enough popular sympathy among Sunnis and others to continue to fight, and whether the violence of Sunni Islamist extremist groups can paralyze efforts at inclusiveness and national unity, or even trigger civil war. In practice, suicide bombings by small groups of such extremists may be far more dangerous than the lower levels of violence by larger mainstream Ba'athist or Sunni groups.

It is interesting, however, to speculate on how the Iraqi insurgency compares with that of other modern insurgencies. In August 2005, U.S. Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command, estimated that the insurgency was only 20,000 strong, and that it could be even less than that. This number amounted to less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the Iraqi population. Figure V.2 displays data on seven twentieth century insurgencies analyzed in a 1963 government-sponsored report by Andrew Molnar. The figure shows the percentage of the total population represented by each respective insurgency. The average number is about 2.4 percent, well above the 0.1 percent that Gen. Abizaid cited for Iraq's insurgency.

Figure V.2: Ratios of Insurgents to Population and Guerillas to Underground Members

(For Seven Irregular Conflicts)

Country	Insurgents as % of Population	Ratio of Armed Guerillas to Unarmed Members of the Underground
France (1940-45)	0.97 %	1:3
Yugoslavia (1941-45)	1.65 %	1:3
Algeria (1954-62)	0.29 - 0.58 %	1:3
Malaya (1948-60)	1.9 %	1:18
Greece (1945-49)	8.86 %	1:27
Philippines (1946-54)	0.58 %	1:8
Palestine (1945-48)	2.25 %	1:2

Source: Adapted from Andrew R. Molnar, *Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare* (Washington, DC: Special Operations Research Office, 1963), Page 13-16.

Comparisons of Threat and Iraqi Forces

There also is no way to quantify how the development of Iraqi military, security, and police forces has kept pace with the development of effective Iraqi government forces. There are also no meaningful comparative casualty estimates, although MNSCT-I has issued reports of over 1,000 dead in the various elements of Iraqi forces, and one US commander has talked about 15,000 insurgent and terrorist casualties.^{cxcv}

In any case, numerical comparisons are largely pointless. The ratio of security forces to insurgents sometimes has to reach levels of 12:1 through 30:1 in order to provide security in a given area, if there is no political solution to the problems that create the insurgency or active presence by the government. In other cases, a small number of security forces can decapitate a movement or cell and end it. Intangibles like the battle for political perceptions and “hearts and minds” are often far more critical than the numbers of insurgents and defenders.

As Chapters II and III have shown, threat forces have evolved steadily through the course of the conflict in response to attacks by Coalition and Iraqi forces, their own inventiveness, and lessons learned from other conflicts. The insurgents and terrorists have grown in capability and size, although serious fighting in Fallujah, Mosul, and Samarra may have reduced their capabilities towards the end of the year. The insurgents have also learned a great deal about how to use their weapons, build more sophisticated IEDs, plan attacks and ambushes, improve their security, and locate and attack targets that are both soft and that produce political and media impact. Insurgents deployed six suicide bombers with explosive belts in February 2005 alone, indicating that insurgents are learning ways to get around security restrictions that make car bombings more difficult.^{cx cvi}

The Dominant Role of Iraqi Sunni Arab Insurgents

A violent split between the Arab Shi'ites and Kurds remains possible, as do such splits within the major Shi'ite factions inside and outside the government. Barring such divisions, however, the insurgency will remain largely Iraqi and Sunni dominated. CENTCOM estimated in the summer of 2005 that 90 percent of the insurgency was Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower.^{cx cvii} While relatively small, this foreign element is recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.

The Sunni insurgents are divided into a complex mix of Sunni nationalists, pro-Ba'ath/ex-regime, Sunni Iraqi Islamists, outside Islamic extremists, foreign volunteers with no clear alignment, and paid or politically motivated criminals. Some are organized so that their cadres are in relatively small cells, some as small as 2 or 3 men. These cells can recruit or call in larger teams, but the loss of even a significant number of such cells may not cripple a given group, and several Sunni groups operate in most areas. Others seem to operate as much larger, but normally

dispersed groups, capable of coming together for operations of as many as 30-50 men.

Some 35 Sunni Arab "groups" have made some kind of public announcement of their existence, or claimed responsibility for terrorist or insurgent attacks – although many may be little more than cells and some may be efforts to shift the blame for attacks or make the insurgent movement seem larger than it is.^{cxcviii}

Some may be little more than tribal or clan groupings, since many elements of the Sunni insurgency have strong tribal affiliations or cells. An overwhelming majority of those captured or killed have been Iraqi Sunnis, as well as something like 90-95% of those detained.

As has been touched upon previously, the main Sunni insurgent groups are concentrated in cities ranging from areas like Mosul and Baghdad; in Sunni-populated areas like the "Sunni Triangle," the Al Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, and the so-called "Triangle of Death" to the southeast of Baghdad; and in Sunni areas near the Iraqi and Turkish borders. As a result, four of Iraq's provinces have both a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence.

Sunni "Nationalist" Insurgents

Any reader of insurgents' statements and web pages quickly becomes aware that motives differ significantly between group and faction, and sometimes within the cells and elements of a given organization. Many insurgents know far more about what they are against than what they are for. Most native Iraqi Sunni insurgents, however, still seem to be primarily nationalist in character. They are not seeking regional or global Jihad, but rather to influence or control events in Iraq.

In general, native Iraqi Sunni "nationalists" want some mix of a return to a government closer to a Ba'athist regime, a secular regime which Sunnis dominate or where they have a "fair share" of power, or an Iraq in which Iraqi Sunnis -- not Shi'ites -- power and the religious lead. Anger, revenge, economic need, opposition to the US invasion and any government that grows out of it or sheer lack of hope in the current system are all motives as well.

Sunni "Neo-Salafi" Insurgents

The Sunni "neo-Salafi" insurgents – particularly those led by people like Zarqawi – have different goals. They believe they are fighting a region-wide war in Iraq for a form of Sunni extremism that not only will eliminate any presence by Christians and Jews, but also create a Sunni puritan state in which other sects of Islam are forced to convert to their interpretation or are destroyed. Non-believers are bad enough from their perspective and neo-Salafis have little of mainstream Islam's tolerance for "peoples of the book," but they have no tolerance of other interpretations of Islam. Such insurgents are known in the Muslim world as *Takferies*—a term that refers to groups that base their ideology on determining who is a believer in their view. They see those who do not fit their definition of piety as apostates. To some, particularly the group led by Zarqawi, all other Islamic sects like Shi'ites and even other Sunnis, are effectively nonbelievers or *Kafirs*

Granted, such generalizations have severe limits. There is no way to know how many Iraqis support the neo-Salafi and other Sunni extremist elements of the insurgency, any more than there are any precise counts of the foreign volunteers who support them. It is unclear how many members of Sunni extremist groups actually support the group's ideological goals rather than act out of anger, misinformation, and/or a naïve search for martyrdom. There are no clear dividing lines as to belief, the willingness to use given kinds of violence, or the willingness to use Shi'ites and Kurds as targets.

It is also important to point out that, Sunni Puritanism does not, in itself, mean advocating violence against other Islamic sects or those outside Islam. Other Sunni puritan movements call Shi'ites and other sects heretics (*bid'a*), attacker of God's unity (*tawhid*), and even as advocates of polytheism (*shirk*). Some extremist puritan Salafis preachers have called Shi'ites apostates, and advocate shunning them, hating them, and scorning them as *rawafidh* (which means rejectionists; this is a reference to the Shi'ites' rejection of electing Abu Bakr as the first Caliph after the death of the Prophet over Ali, Islam fourth Caliph and Shiites first Imam). Yet, such religious rhetoric has rarely taken the form of violence. Like Christian and Jewish extremists, words do not necessarily mean a commitment to action.^{cxcix}

Some traditional Salafist groups and traditional Shi'ite groups have also coexisted and worked closely together. Notable examples include Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Palestine. Another example was the Muslim brotherhood dealing with Iran after the revolution, despite some of Iran's actions against Iranian Sunnis.

Today's violent neo-Salafi extremist groups differ, however, both in their willingness to use violence against non-combatants and the innocent and in their willingness to use violence against other Muslims. In broad terms, the Sunni Islamist extremist insurgents in Iraq are far more willing to use extreme methods of violence like suicide bombs and use them against Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. They are equally willing to use them against Iraqi officials and Iraqis in the military, security, and police services, and Iraqis of all religious and ethnic background that do not support them in their interpretation of jihad. Moreover, they act on the principle ordinary Iraqi citizens can be sacrificed as expendable in a war fought in God's cause: These Sunni Islamic extremists are fighting a war that extends throughout the world, not simply in Iraq, and their goals affect all Arab states and all of Islam.

This ideological rationale has an important implication -- particularly for the insurgent movements with large numbers of foreign Islamists. Such insurgents do not have to "win" in Iraq, at least in any conventional sense of the term. An outcome that leaves Iraq in a state of prolonged civil war, and forces a spreading conflict in Islam between Sunnis and other sects, and neo-Salafists and other Sunnis, would be seen a prelude to a broader eschatological conflict they believe is inevitable and that God will ensure they win. They are not fighting a limited war -- at least in terms of their ultimate ends and means. Compromise is at best a temporary action forced upon them for the purposes of expediency.

This means there are no clear limits to the willingness of some of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this means trying to drive the nation into a civil war they cannot win. They are also likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened.

From the viewpoint of negotiation and deterrence, it seems almost certain that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded; only defeated. Furthermore, they not only will remain alienated and violent --almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis do -- they will remain active diehards until they are rooted out, move on to new countries or areas if force to disperse, and join other extreme Sunni Islamist movements if the ones they currently support are defeated.

The ideological background of these groups is hard to characterize. They are far more political and military activists than theologians. As such, they are not puritans in the sense of Wahabis, nor are they Salafis in the traditional sense of the word. While they are "Islamist," they are not so much religious as committed to a violent struggle for their beliefs. Their foreign leaders and cadres have been created in past wars, and their Iraqi members have been created since the Coalition invasion of Iraq.

No one can reliably estimate how many such neo-Salafi extremists there are in the field. No one fully understands how many movements and cells are involved. It seems fairly clear, however, that such neo-Salafi groups are a small part of the insurgency. It is also fairly clear that they are tactical and lethal in their violence in Iraq.

It is equally true that the neo-Salafi extremist groups, such as that of Abu Musab Zarqawi are the main suspects of suicide bombing, especially the ones directed against the Shi'ites. At times Zarqawi has made his views clear on the permissibility of attacking other Muslims, but he has also been ambiguous at times arguing that Shi'ites that appose the occupation are not a target.

These neo-Salafi extremists have used religious rhetoric effectively in Iraq, and have tried to link the conflict in Iraq to other Muslim struggles in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Their statements and recruitment tapes start with references to these conflicts and tie their "struggle" in Iraq as part of this worldwide Islam vs. the West conflict.

This has also proven to be an important factor in the composition of these groups and extending their reach into the Iraqi population. There have been reports that some "nationalists" have joined ranks with these neo-Salafi groups in Iraq. Mowaffag Rubaie, Iraq's national Security advisor, was quoted as saying, "Religion is a strong motive. You are not going to find someone who is going to die for Ba'athists. But Salafists have a very strong message. If you use the Koran selectively, it could be a weapon of mass destruction."^{cc}

Guessing at Their Structure, Names, and Total Strength

There is no firm count of the number of Islamist extremist movements, or claimed movements, much less their actual strength. The most visible groups or names for

a mix of affiliates include Sunni Islamist groups like Al Qaeda and Ansar al Sunna, and "Ba'athist groups like the Victorious Army Group. More than 35 groups have claimed to exist at various times. Their numbers include groups like the Supporters of the Sunni People. Some sources put the number at over 100, but these totals seem to include mere fronts and Sunni groups that are more secular or affiliated with the Ba'ath. The names include names like the Men's Faith Brigade; the Islamic Anger, Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade; and, the Tawid Lions of Abdullah ibn al Zobeir.

Some, such as the Ansar, or "Suicide" Brigade, create confusion because their name implies they are members of one group but claim affiliation with another. The Ansar Brigade claims claim an affiliation with Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Al Qaeda openly claims only some of the groups that claim affiliation with Al Qaeda. This means their exact affiliation with Al Qaeda and Zarqawi is often unclear, and a number of such groups state that they act alone or under the guidance of some other group.^{ccii}

A study of internet websites and posting by SITE found more than 100 groups that claimed to exist in various proclamations and Sunni Islamist websites. Of these, SITE found that 59 were claimed by Al Qaeda and 36 by Ansar al Sunna. Another eight groups claimed to be operating under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups claimed to be operating under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade.^{ccii}

The major groups do seem to have cadres of leaders, planners, financiers, and armorers. These may or may not control a given operation; have jurisdiction over a given group of cells, or simply supply affiliates. It is clear that Al Qaeda sometimes claims attacks are coordinated by different elements, for example an October 24, 2005 attack on the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels in central Baghdad by the "Attack Brigade," the "Rockets Brigade," and "Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade" -- but it is far from clear what is really involved. As these names indicate, some groups also seem to specialize in given types of attacks, and other on given types of targets. Some, for example, only seem to attack Coalition targets while others (the "Omar Brigade"?) are so specialized that they attack elements of the Badr Organization on the grounds they attack Sunnis.

The high degree of compartmentalization, isolation, and independence of such movements not only helps protect them and enables them to operate as informal distributed networks; it makes their strength fluid and extremely hard to estimate. As Bruce Hoffman of the Rand Corporation points out, "There is no center of gravity, no leadership, no hierarchy; they are more a constellation than an organization," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at the Rand Corporation. "They have adopted a structure that assures their longevity." Abdul Kareem al-Eniezi, the minister for national security, has said that, "The leaders usually don't have anything to do with details...Sometimes they will give the smaller groups a target, or a type of target. The groups aren't connected to each other. They are not that organized."^{cciii}

Most experts guesstimate the number of Islamist extremist insurgents at some 5-10 percent of the total insurgents without being able to say what base number they

are a percent of. US experts and officers sometimes make reference to a total of 20,000 insurgents of all kinds, but such experts are among the first to state that these are more nominal mid-points in a range of guesses than real estimates. Other experts guesstimate the total number of Sunni insurgents and active sympathizers insurgents of all kinds at totals from 15,000 to 60,000, with far larger numbers of additional passive sympathizers. These guesstimates would put the Sunni Islamist extremists at anywhere from 1,500 to 6,000.

Some estimates do put the total number of neo-Salafi Sunni extremists much higher.^{cciv} Anthony Loyd of the *London Times* has stated that, "An intelligence summary, citing the conglomeration of insurgent groups under the al-Qaeda banner to be the result of rebel turf wars, money, weaponry and fear, concluded that of the estimated 16,000 Sunni Muslim insurgents, 6,700 were hardcore Islamic fundamentalists who were now supplemented by a possible further 4,000 members after an amalgamation with Jaysh Muhammad, previously an insurgent group loyal to the former Ba'athist regime." Given the difficulty in distinguishing core activists from part time or fringe activists, no one can discount such estimates.

While most experts agree that the total number of Sunni insurgents is not increasing or decreasing sharply, there is no agreement on the trend in numbers or over the level of expertise that survives constant Coalition and Iraqi government pressure. It is clear that significant numbers of ordinary insurgents and part timers have been killed, captured, or dispersed. It is also clear that a number of mid and top level leaders have been captured as well. There is no agreement, however, on the impact of such actions on the overall strength and capability of the insurgent groups and networks that are being attacked. There is no agreement over whether the insurgent groups are taking serious losses to their expertise and competence over time, or are able to rebuild their networks and gain skill and experience faster than they experience losses.

Certainly, the insurgents continue to be able to act – particularly in carrying out bloody suicide bombings and other attacks on soft targets like Shi'ite and Kurdish civilians and poorly protected recruits, police, journalists, diplomats, contractors, and officials. While the Coalition and Iraqi government have long ceased to issue any public estimates, in an effort to downplay the seriousness of the insurgency, Iraq papers are filled with daily reports of insurgent violence, and increasingly with reports of possible reprisals. It is also clear that even when the victims are not identified by sect or ethnicity, the civilian targets and mass killings are largely Shi'ite, some time Kurdish, and normally are only Sunni when an area seems loyal to the government or the civilians involved as associated with Iraqi government, Iraqi forces, or Coalition targets. Ba'athists and Ex-Regime Loyalists

Iraq's Arab Sunnis are only beginning to forge new political identities out of the power vacuum left by Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. It is important to note that while most of Iraq's ruling elite during Saddam Hussein's decades of dictatorship were Sunni, the top elite came from a small portion of Sunnis, many with family backgrounds in what were originally rural military families. The top elite had strong ties not only to Saddam's extended family, but to Tikritis in general, and

the al-Bu Nasir tribe and its Bejat clan and Majid family.^{ccv} The vast majority of Sunnis got little special benefit from Saddam's rule, and many Sunnis suffered from his oppression in the same way as other Iraqis.

Most Sunni Arabs, like most Shi'ite Arabs, favored a strong, unified Iraqi state during 2003-2004, when public opinion polls covering broad areas were still possible. Like Iraq's Arab Shi'ites, polls show that Iraqi Sunnis are generally religious and see Islam as a key aspect of their lives, but do not favor a theocratic state.

Sunni efforts to create a new political identity include the minority that has participated in the new government and political process, many who boycott it, and political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and Iraq Islamic Party. They also include clerical bodies like the Association of Islamic Scholars, which is headed by Dr. Muthanna Harith al-Dhari – an Egyptian educated Islamic scholar. The Association of Islamic Scholars claims to represent some 6,000 mosques, or 80% of the total. There is no way to validate such claims.^{ccvi}

The Sunnis' self-imposed exclusion from the electoral and constitutional process before the January 30, 2005 elections backfired for a Sunni population that saw the political future of the country unfolding without its input in the summer and fall of 2005. Sunni leaders threatened that a constitution forced through without the consent and consideration of the Sunni population would result in a stepped-up Sunni insurgency.

In summer 2005, a former Iraqi electricity minister, Iyham al-Samarri, announced that he had established a sort of communication organization through which the various insurgent groups could convey their views and concerns to both the elected Iraqi government and the Coalition.^{ccvii} It became clear, however, that al-Samarri had a questionable past and a controversial tenure as electricity minister. Furthermore, it could not be substantiated that al-Samarri had had any contact with any insurgents as he claimed. Not long after he claimed this ability to speak on behalf of the insurgents, militant groups criticized him via the Web. They asserted that he did not speak for them and that he was 'spreading lies.'

A week later, an Internet statement appeared stating that the Army of the Mujahedeen and the Islamic Army in Iraq had appointed a spokesman, Ibrahim Youssef al-Shammari, to speak on behalf of the two insurgent groups. His identity was confirmed on websites linked to the two militant organizations.^{ccviii}

The furor over who did and did not speak for the various groups within the insurgency led analysts to suggest that perhaps some of the militants were moving to form political wings.^{ccix} It remained unclear whether such wings would seek to formally run in the elections to come or whether they would seek to simply put forward cogent demands and expectations.

Yet there were signs that Sunni insurgents participated in the October referendum. As discussed below, Sunnis turned out in larger numbers than the January 30 election. The story of one Sunni insurgent leader is particularly illustrative. In the weeks prior to the referendum, Abu Theeb, the commander of a cell of Sunni insurgents north of Baghdad known as the Anger Brigade, traveled the

countryside visiting Sunni villages. The message was the same at each stop: Sunnis should register to vote but vote no in the referendum.

Many Sunnis now see their boycott of the January election as a mistake. "It is a new jihad," said Abu Theeb, who has been fighting coalition troops for more than two years. "There is a time for fighting, and a time for politics."^{ccx}

So determined to ensure a Sunni turnout was Theeb that he supplied a local polling station with his own guards on the day of the vote. Despite an Al Qaida vow to kill anyone, including Sunnis, who participated in the referendum, Theeb ordered his followers to protect the local school to ensure that Sunni voters would be safe. Theeb even reprimanded a young follower for planning an IED attack the night before the election, saying: "I thought we agreed that nothing will happen for the next few days."^{ccxi}

The participation of Sunni insurgents in the Iraqi political process marks a profound shift in their thinking and tactics. It might also be the first sign a growing rift between local Iraqi insurgents and al Qaida forces in Iraq. Men like Theeb are speaking out against al Qaida more and more. In the early phases of the insurgency, al Qaida was viewed favorably among the Sunnis because of its successes and its financial and logistical capabilities. According to Abu Theeb, most of the local Iraqi mujahedeen groups joined the umbrella of al Qaida for support because they needed money and weapons.

But al Qaida soon wore out its welcome. Sunni insurgents have protested al Qaida's attacks on Iraqi security forces and Iraqi civilians. Many Sunnis also don't support al Qaida's declaration of war against Shiites. The rift in the insurgency became evident in the fall of 2005, with clashes erupting between al-Qaida fighters and Sunni insurgents.^{ccxii}

Even in Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown, there were signs that Sunnis were beginning to participate in the political process in late 2005. By November, there were more than two-dozen political groups with offices in Tikrit and young men could be found hanging campaign posters. Some posters even reached out to former members of Saddam's party. One such poster read, "Vote for us and we promise we will end de-Baathification."^{ccxiii}

Most Sunnis, however, still feel their rights have been curtailed under the Iraqi government. Many complained that they were being allotted fewer seats than their Shi'ite counterparts. "Had the Sunnis participated in the previous elections, we wouldn't have witnessed this imbalance and problems," said Abdul-Hadid Jamil, a member of the National Dialogue Front. Yet there were unmistakable signs in the weeks before the December legislative elections that Sunnis would participate.

Ba'athists, Non-Ba'athists, or Semi-Ba'athists?

US analysts -- like those in the CIA -- acknowledge that Ba'athist and ex-regime loyalists represent only a part of the insurgency -- although they have played a key role in leadership, organization, and financing. The largest elements of the insurgency appear to be newly radicalized Iraqi Sunnis.

According to the CIA reports, the Sunni loss of power, prestige, and economic influence is a key factor, as is unemployment and a loss of personal status -- direct and disguised unemployment among young Sunni men has been 40-60% in many areas ever since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Many insurgents are motivated by tribal or family grievances, nationalism and religious duty. Others are motivated by the U.S. occupation -- particularly those who have lost a loved one fighting U.S. forces -- and the political and economic turmoil that accompanied the occupation.^{ccxiv}

This does not mean that ex-Ba'athists do not play a critical role. The Ba'ath Party did not dissolve when the CPA formally abolished it in May 2003. It reorganized with a new structure, established a new politburo in 2004, and at least some elements operated from a de facto sanctuary in Syria.^{ccxv} At the same time, many full-time and part-time Iraqi members groups associated with the Ba'ath are linked more by tribe, family, and locality than any sense of Ba'ath political identity.

Many of the Sunni insurgent groups or cells that are not Islamist extremist groups, or associated with them, may get money or some degree of leadership from the Ba'athist structures that have emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein, but have no meaningful ties to or family linkage to former Ba'ath groups or to former members of Saddam and the Ba'ath regime. It is generally misleading to call them "former regime loyalists (FRLs)" or "former regime" elements (FREs). They are rather Sunni nationalists involved in a struggle for current power. This has allowed the insurgency to broaden its base and establish ties to Islamic groups as well.

Other Iraqi-dominated Sunni insurgent groups have a significant degree of independence from the former Ba'ath leadership, although it is clear that many cooperate in at least some operations, and that many of the elements with at least some ties to ex-supporters of Saddam's regime have some degree of central leadership and coordination. US experts talk of informal networks, using tools like the Internet, to coordinate operations and exchange data on tactics, targets, and operations. There is evidence of such exchanges between cells in Iraq and outside groups including those in Syria and Afghanistan. Insurgent groups also use the media to get near-real-time information on what other groups and cells are doing and to find out what tactics produce the maximum political and media impact.

In short, it is unclear how much influence various "Ba'athist" groups have. However, both US and Iraqi Interim Government officials -- such as the MNF commander General Casey and Iraqi Defense Minister Hazan Shaalan -- believe that Ba'ath leaders in Syria coordinate with at least some of the Ba'ath sympathizers. The office of the Iraqi Prime Minister also called for the arrest of six senior members of the former regime in March 2005:^{ccxvi}

- Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri: Believed to be the leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party. (He died on November 10, 2005.)

- Muhammed Younis al-Ahmad: financial facilitator and operational leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party.
- Rashid Ta'an Kazim: Central Ba'ath Party Regional Chairman in Al Anbar Province.
- Abd Al-Baqi Abd Al-Karim Al-Abdallah Al-Sa'adun: Recruiter and financier of terrorist activity in eastern and central Iraq.
- Aham Hasan Kaka al-Ubaydi: A former intelligence officer, and now associated with Ansar Al Islam.
- Fadhi Ibrahim Mahmud Mashadani (aka Abu Huda): Top member of the New Ba'ath Party and a key financier of insurgent and terrorist activity.

Ba'athist elements benefit from the fact that they still have access to some of the former regime's money and they began to organize – at least a crude level – before the invasion began, and have since steadily tightened their organization and purged suspect members. According to one report, they held a major meeting at Al Hasaka in April or May of 2004 to tighten their structure.

Field leaders reportedly include Mohammed Younis al-Ahmad, a former aide to Saddam Hussein, and Ibrahim Sabawi, Hussein's half brother and a former security director. They also benefit from the fact that some elements of the leadership of the Iraqi 5th Corps are still in Mosul, and Syria has provided a covert sanctuary for at least some Iraq Ba'athist leaders.^{ccxvii}

The relations between such mainstream Iraq Sunni insurgent groups and the smaller Islamic extremist groups are mixed. In some cases, MNF-I and US officials see evidence that secular Sunni groups, and even Hussein loyalists, were cooperating with extreme Islamists. In Mosul, Ba'athists worked with Salafists to attack American troops and derail the election process.^{ccxviii} While the two groups have conflicting visions and aspirations for Iraq's future – and sometimes feud or even kill each other -- their short-term goals are largely the same: instability and insecurity, breaking up the new Iraqi government and depriving it of popular legitimacy, keeping Iraqi forces from becoming effective, and driving the US and MNF-I forces out of Iraq.

In September of 2005, however, Army Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner acknowledged that the Ba'athist insurgency had been surpassed by a terrorist campaign led by Zarqawi's group. Speaking to the Washington Post, Zahner said: "You'll see some of the old regime elements [out] there, mainly just to maintain pressure and, frankly, accountability...But when you look at those individuals central the inflicting of huge amounts of violence, it really is not those folks. The Saddamists, the former regime guys, they're riding this."^{ccxix} The view that Al Qaida in Iraq, not Iraqis loyal to Saddam Hussein (known as "Saddamists"), were becoming the driving element behind the insurgency in the summer and fall of 2005 is however controversial.

Guesstimates and the "Numbers Game"

As has already been discussed, there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of the various types of Sunni insurgents, or breakdowns of their strength by motivation and group. There also are no recent polls that provide a clear picture of

how many Iraqi Arab Sunnis support the insurgents, although some ABC polls indicated that the number was well over 33% by the spring of 2004. Many members of the Sunni clergy have become steadily more supportive of the insurgency since that time, and battles like Fallujah have inevitably helped to polarize Sunni opinion.

US officials kept repeating estimates of total insurgent strengths of 5,000 from roughly the fall of 2003 through the summer of 2004. In October, they raised their estimates to a range of 12,000 to 16,000 but have never defined how many are hard-core and full time, and how many are part time. As has been discussed earlier, estimates as divergent as 3,500 and 400,000 were being cited in the spring and early summer of 2005.^{ccxx}

US and Iraqi officials would be the first to indicate that any such numbers were little more than guesstimates. They have been consistently careful to note that they are uncertain as to whether the numbers are increasing or decreasing with time as a result of US and Iraqi operations versus increases in political and other tensions that lead Iraqi Arab Sunnis to join the insurgents. There is no evidence that the number of insurgents is declining as a result of Coalition and Iraqi attacks to date. US experts stated in the spring of 2005 that they had no evidence of a decline in insurgent numbers in spite of large numbers of kills and captures since the summer of 2004.

Once again, the numerical strength of the insurgents is only part of the issue. Insurgent cadres have also steadily become more experienced, adapting tactics and methods of attack as fast as Coalition can counter them. Coalition troops reported that insurgents in Fallujah utilized an improved RPG in efforts to counter armored vehicles. The fighting in September-November of 2004 has shown they are developing networks with some form of central command, planning, and financing.

The Crime Problem

At least some elements in the Sunni insurgency work with criminal elements looting and sabotage campaigns. These clearly involve some native and foreign Sunni Islamist extremists – particularly in areas like kidnappings – but the alliances “Ba’athists” and “Sunni nationalists” have with criminal groups seem to be much stronger. They also seem to dominate the cases where tribal groups mix insurgents and criminals.

The insurgents and their criminal allies understand the limits of Coalition ability to cover the given areas and the Coalition’s vulnerabilities. Many patterns of Coalition, Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces activity are easily observed and have become predictable. Bases can often be observed and are vulnerable at their entrances to rocket and mortar attacks, and along their supply lines. There are many soft and relatively small isolated facilities.

The crime problem also affects Iraqi popular confidence in the government and its popular legitimacy. Far more Iraqis face day-to-day threats from criminals than from terrorists and insurgents, although there is no area totally free from the risk

of attack. If Iraqis are to trust their new government, if insurgents are to be deprived of recruits and proxies, and if Iraq is to move towards economic development and recovery, the crime problem must be solved at the same time the insurgents and terrorists are being defeated. This is a key priority in terms of Iraqi force development because it means effective regular policy is critical, and must have the same emphasis as developing military and security forces.

The Intelligence and Security Problem

“Ba’athists” and “Sunni nationalists,” and Sunni Islamist extremists, all pose acute security and counterintelligence problems for MNF-I and Iraqi forces. As has been touched upon in previous chapters, the insurgents have good sources within the Iraqi Interim Government and forces, Iraqi society and sometimes in local US and Coalition commands. This is inevitable, and little can be done to stop it. Iraq simply lacks the resources and data to properly vet all of the people it recruits.

Many Iraqis only work for the government or in the Iraqi forces because they cannot find other employment. They may, in fact, quietly sympathize with the insurgents. Workers in US and government facilities, and in various aid and construction projects, are even harder to vet. Men who do support the government are vulnerable to threats against the families, kidnappings, and actual murders of friends and relatives.

US, allied, and Iraqi human intelligence is improving but Coalition efforts are badly hurt by high turnover and rotations. Most Iraqi networks serving the US in hostile areas have serious quality and loyalty problems, while others either use their positions to settle scores or misinform Coalition troops. Iraqi intelligence is just beginning to take shape, and has only limited coverage of Sunni areas. Training and equipment have improved significantly in the last six months, and Iraqi units do seem to be able to get better input from the local population, but the training and organization of effective Iraqi intelligence and counter intelligence efforts will take at least until the end of 2005 and probably well into 2006.

Coalition and Iraqi government vulnerability is unavoidable to some extent. Aid projects are easy to infiltrate and to target when nearing completion. NGO or contractor headquarters are easily observable targets. Infrastructure and energy facilities are typical targets that have long lines of pipes or wires and many vulnerable links. The media has to be careful and defensive, as do emergency workers and medical teams. Any nation is inevitably filled with soft or vulnerable targets that insurgents can choose at will, and experienced insurgents and terrorists will always target these vulnerabilities.

Inclusion versus Exclusion

In theory, the various native Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups are more capable of paralyzing progress, and fighting a long war of attrition, than of actually defeating an Iraqi government which is dominated by a cohesive Shi’ite majority, and which maintains good relations with the Kurds. Regardless of who is doing the counting, the total for active and passive native Iraqi Sunni insurgents still leaves

them a small minority of Iraq's population. Unless the Iraqi government divides or collapses, they cannot bring back Arab Sunni minority rule or the Ba'ath; they cannot regain the level of power, wealth, and influence they once had. They cannot reestablish the form of largely secular rule that existed under Saddam, or reestablish Iraq as a country that most Arabs see as "Sunni."

An understanding of these same political and military realities may eventually drive many Sunni insurgents to join into the non-violent political process in Iraq *if* the Shi'ite and Kurds elements that now dominate the government and political process act to include them and provide suitable incentives. Such shifts are likely to be slow and limited in scope. Historically, most insurgent groups have a much better vision of what they oppose than what they are for, and they have limited interest in pragmatic *realpolitik*. Most Sunni groups are still committed to doing everything -- and sometimes anything -- they can to drive the Coalition out and break up the peaceful political process almost regardless of the damage done to Iraq and to Sunni areas.

Richard Armitage, the former US Deputy Secretary of State, commented on the insurgency and its lack of realistic political goals as follows: "In Algeria, the so-called insurgents, or in Vietnam, the so-called insurgents, they had ... a program and a positive view...In Iraq that's lacking ... they only have fear to offer. They only have terror to offer. This is why they're so brutal in their intimidation."^{ccxxi}

At the same time, the various Sunni insurgent elements are becoming better trained and organized, and may still be able to establish themselves as *the* dominant political and military force within the Sunni community—particularly if Iraq's Arab Shi'ites and Kurds mishandle the situation or react to the growing provocation of bloody suicide attacks and other killings by Neo-Salafi extremists.^{ccxxii} They can try to present themselves as the only legitimate alternative to the occupation, even if they fail to provide a popular agenda. This means they can survive and endure as long as the government is too weak to occupy the insurgency dominated areas, and as long as the large majority of Sunnis in given areas does not see a clear incentive to join the government and Iraq's political process.

Much will depend on just how willing Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds are to forget the past, not overreact to Sunni Islamist and other attacks designed to divide and splinter the country, and continue to offer Iraqi Sunnis a fair share of wealth and power. Iraq's president and prime minister have both done this. The search for a Sunni Minister of Defense examined some 10 candidates before choosing Sadoon al-Dulaimi in early May 2003, and was a key factor delaying the creation of a new government. At the same time, other Shi'ites and Kurds have called for the systematic purging of all Sunnis with ties to the Ba'ath, including many in the Iraqi forces, and unexplained raids have taken place on Sunni political groups involved in trying to negotiate with the government.^{ccxxiii}

Although no exact figures have yet been published, Sunni turnout in the October 15, 2005 referendum was much heavier than expected. Overall turnout in the referendum was 63 per cent, up from 58 per cent in January. Moreover, turnout in

many Shi'ite and Kurdish-dominated provinces fell below January's figures, indicating the increase in overall turnout had come from Sunni Arab voters.^{ccxxiv}

In Salahuddin Province, a Sunni stronghold and home to Saddam Hussein's family, however, 81 per cent rejected the constitution. Elsewhere in the country, voting was largely divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Voting in the mixed province of Diyala, home to both Sunnis and Shiites, was illustrative of this split with 51.76 per cent voting yes and 48.24 per cent voting no.^{ccxxv}

As previously discussed, there were signs in the fall of 2005 that Sunni participation in the December 15 elections would be significant. Almost all of the parties running, however, were divided along sectarian or religious lines. Of the 228 political parties and alliances that registered to run, there were six major alliances expected to win the majority of seats. These were.^{ccxxvi}

- **Iraqi Concord Front:**

Key leaders: Mohsen Abdul Hamid and Sheik Khalaf al-Ilyan

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Sunni-dominated; religious

- **Iraqi Front for National Dialogue:**

Key leaders: Saleh al-Mutlaq

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Sunni dominated; secular

- **Iraqi National List:**

Key leaders: Former prime minister Ayad Allawi

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Shiite and Sunni; secular

- **Kurdistan Alliance List:**

Key leaders: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Kurdish; secular

- **National Congress for Iraq**

Key leaders: Deputy Prime Minister Ahamd Chalabi

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Mix of Sunni and Shiite; secular

- **United Iraqi Alliance**

Key leaders: Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari

Main ethnic or religious affiliation: Main Shiite group; religious

Islamist Groups and Outside Volunteers

Sunni insurgent elements include Arab and Islamist groups with significant numbers of foreign volunteers, as well as Iraqi Islamist extremists. These include groups like the one led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, first known as *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, or Unity and Holy War, and now known as *Tandhim Qa'idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* or as the al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers.^{ccxxvii}

The other easily identifiable group with significant numbers of foreign volunteers is the offshoot of Ansar al-Islam, or Protectors of Islam, an Islamist group created in the Kurdish regions in September 2001, called Ansar al-Sunna, or Protectors of the Sunna Faith. Ansar suffered a joint attack from Kurdish and US forces in March 2003, forcing many of its fighters to scatter, possibly to Iran, before allegedly several settled in Mosul. Other groups and their area of operation include:^{ccxxviii}

- *Al-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya al-Wataniya al-Islamiya—Fayaliq Thawrat 1920* or the Iraqi National Islamic Resistance—the 1920 Brigades: West Baghdad, Ninewah, Diyala, and Anbar.
- *Al-Jibha al-Wataniya litahrial-'Iraq* or the National Front for the Liberation of Iraq and which seems to be an umbrella for groups of Islamists and nationalist, namely the Islamic Army of Iraq, the Army of Mohammad, the Iraqi Resistance Front, the Iraqi Liberation Army, and the Awakening and Holy War: Fallujah, Samarra, and Basra.

In June 2005, U.S. Lt-Gen John Vines, commanding general of coalition forces in Iraq, identified the foreign fighters as the most violent group in Iraq's ongoing insurgency. According to Vines, insurgent activity among Iraqis was being driven by money, not ideology, and foreign jihadists were using their financial resources to get Iraqis to attack other Iraqis.^{ccxxix}

There seem to be no clear limits to the willingness of some of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this means trying to drive the nation into a civil war they cannot win. Some are likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened. It seems almost certain that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded, only defeated. Some non-Islamist extremist groups will remain alienated almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis do, and will move on to join the most extreme Islamist movements.

The US State Department Assessment of Zarqawi

The US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, described the overall level of such terrorist activity in Iraq at the end of 2004, and the role of key Islamist groups, as follows:^{ccxxx}

Iraq remains the central battleground in the global war on terrorism. Former regime elements as well as foreign fighters and Islamic extremists continued to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians and non-combatants. These elements also conducted numerous insurgent attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, which often had devastating effects on Iraqi civilians and significantly damaged the country's economic infrastructure.

...Jordanian-born Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and his organization emerged in 2004 to play a leading role in terrorist activities in Iraq. In October, the US Government designated Zarqawi's group, Jama'at al Tawhid wa'al-Jihad, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In December, the designation was amended to include the group's new name Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (or "The al-Qa'ida Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers") and other aliases following the "merger" between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida organization. Zarqawi announced the merger in October, and in December, bin Laden endorsed

Zarqawi as his official emissary in Iraq. Zarqawi's group claimed credit for a number of attacks targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as civilians, including the October massacre of 49 unarmed, out-of-uniform Iraqi National Guard recruits. Attacks that killed civilians include the March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel, killing seven and injuring over 30, and a December 24 suicide bombing using a fuel tanker that killed nine and wounded 19 in the al-Mansur district of Baghdad.

In February 2004, Zarqawi called for a "sectarian war" in Iraq. He and his organization sought to create a rift between Shi'a and Sunnis through several large terror attacks against Iraqi Shi'a. In March 2004, Zarqawi claimed credit for simultaneous bomb attacks in Baghdad and Karbala that killed over 180 pilgrims as they celebrated the Shi'a festival of Ashura. In December, Zarqawi also claimed credit for a suicide attack at the offices of Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of Iraq's largest Shi'a parties, which killed 15 and wounded over 50.

Zarqawi has denied responsibility for another significant attack that same month in Karbala and Najaf, two of Shi'a Islam's most holy cities, which killed Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 120. Terrorists operating in Iraq used kidnapping and targeted assassinations to intimidate Iraqis and third-country nationals working in Iraq as civilian contractors. Nearly 60 noncombatant Americans died in terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2004. Other American noncombatants were killed in attacks on coalition military facilities or convoys. In June, Zarqawi claimed credit for the car bomb that killed the chairman of the Coalition-appointed Iraqi Governing Council. In April, an American civilian was kidnapped and later beheaded. One month later, a video of his beheading was posted on an al-Qa'ida-associated website. Analysts believe that Zarqawi himself killed the American as well as a Korean hostage, kidnapped in June. Zarqawi took direct credit for the September kidnapping and murder of two American civilians and later their British engineer co-worker, and the October murder of a Japanese citizen.

In August, the Kurdish terrorist group Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and killing of 12 Nepalese construction workers, followed by the murder of two Turkish citizens in September. Many other foreign civilians have been kidnapped. Some have been killed, others released, some remain in their kidnappers' hands, and the fate of others, such as the director of CARE, is unknown.

Other terrorist groups were active in Iraq. Ansar al-Sunna, believed to be an offshoot of the Ansar al-Islam group founded in Iraq in September 2001, first came to be known in April 2003 after issuing a statement on the Internet. In February 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for bomb attacks on the offices of two Kurdish political parties in Irbil, which killed 109 Iraqi civilians. The Islamic Army in Iraq has also claimed responsibility for terrorist actions. Approximately 3,800 disarmed persons remained resident at the former Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MeK) military base at Camp Ashraf; the MeK is a designated US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). More than 400 members renounced membership in the organization in 2004. Forty-one additional defectors elected to return to Iran, and another two hundred were awaiting ICRC assistance for voluntary repatriation to Iran at the end of the year. PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel, a designated foreign terrorist group, maintains an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 armed militants in northern Iraq, according to Turkish Government sources and NGOs. In the summer of 2004,

PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel renounced its self-proclaimed cease-fire and threatened to renew its separatist struggle in both Turkey's Southeast and urban centers. Turkish press subsequently reported multiple incidents in the Southeast of PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel terrorist actions or clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel militants.

The State Department report also provided a more detailed description of the role of Ansar al-Islam (AI) (a.k.a. Ansar al-Sunnah Partisans of Islam, Helpers of Islam, Kurdish Taliban):^{ccxxxi}

Ansar al-Islam (AI) is a radical Islamist group of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs who have vowed to establish an independent Islamic state in Iraq. The group was formed in December 2001. In the fall of 2003, a statement was issued calling all jihadists in Iraq to unite under the name Ansar al-Sunnah (AS). Since that time, it is likely that AI has posted all claims of attack under the name AS. AI is closely allied with al-Qa'ida and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's group, Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) in Iraq. Some members of AI trained in al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan, and the group provided safe haven to al-Qa'ida fighters before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Since OIF, AI has become one of the leading groups engaged in anti-Coalition attacks in Iraq and has developed a robust propaganda campaign.

AI continues to conduct attacks against Coalition forces, Iraqi Government officials and security forces, and ethnic Iraqi groups and political parties. AI members have been implicated in assassinations and assassination attempts against Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) officials and Coalition forces, and also work closely with both al-Qa'ida operatives and associates in QJBR. AI has also claimed responsibility for many high profile attacks, including the simultaneous suicide bombings of the PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) party offices in Ibril on February 1, 2004, and the bombing of the US military dining facility in Mosul on December 21, 2004.

Its strength is approximately 500 to 1,000 members, its location and area of operation is primarily central and northern Iraq... The group receives funding, training, equipment, and combat support from al-Qa'ida, QJBR, and other international jihadist backers throughout the world. AI also has operational and logistic support cells in Europe.

Zarqawi Operations in 2005

Views have differed sharply over the size of Zarqawi's movement, the depth of its ties to Bin Laden and Al Qa'ida, how many of its current "fighters" are Iraqi versus non-Iraqi, and how many other Islamist extremist groups exist and how independent they are of Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida. A number of groups claim affiliation with Zarqawi, but it is unknown how closely tied many of these groups are to Zarqawi. It is likely that some of them either only claim him as an inspiration, or operate as almost totally independent groups and cells. This seems to include a number of elements organized along tribal lines.

At the same time, forces with ties to Zarqawi have been capable of large offensive operations like the spring 2005 attack on Abu Ghraib prison, and many of the insurgent forces the US Marine Corps fought in its offensive along the Euphrates and near the Syrian border in May 2005 either had ties to Zarqawi or were part of mixes of Zarqawi loyalists and other Iraqi Sunni insurgents.

In the spring of 2004, US officials estimated that there might be a core strength of fewer than 1,000 foreign fighters in Iraq or as many as 2,000. However, some MNSTC-I and Iraqi experts felt that so many volunteers were coming in across

the Syrian and other borders that the total was rapidly increasing.^{ccxxxii} A few press estimates went as high as 10,000 before the fighting in Fallujah, but seemed to be sharply exaggerated. It seems more likely that Zarqawi's movement now consists of a series of cells, with a limited central organization. They probably total less than 2,000 full and part time men -- including both Iraqis and foreigners -- and probably with a core strength of no more than several hundred.

Zarqawi does seem to have been able to recruit more and more outside volunteers after the fighting in Fallujah, and substantially more volunteers for suicide bombings after the January 30, 2005 elections brought a Shi'ite and Kurdish dominated government to power. It is not clear whether this is sharply strengthening his movement, or simply helped to cope with the constant attrition caused by MNF-I and Iraqi attacks. The problem of infiltration, however, was serious enough to make improving border security a top Coalition and Iraqi government priority in January and February 2005, and a factor in a major Marine offensive in the Syrian border area in May 2005.^{ccxxxiii}

While US claims about the importance of the killings and captures of Zarqawi's senior lieutenants have sometimes seemed exaggerated -- as do claims to have nearly killed or captured Zarqawi -- there were real successes. On January 10, 2005, then Prime Minister Allawi announced that Izz al-Din Al- Majid, a chief Zarqawi financier, was arrested in Fallujah in early December 2004. Al Majid had more than \$35 million in his bank accounts and controlled \$2 to \$7 billion of former regime assets stolen from Iraqi government accounts. His objective, according to interrogators, was to unite the insurgent groups Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army. Since that time, the appendix to this report shows that MNF forces have killed or captured many other such senior cadres.

In July 2005, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers announced that the Coalition had captured a long sought after battlefield commander, Abu 'Abd-al-Aziz. According to the US military, al-Aziz had led a foreign fighter cell in Fallujah up until the US took control of the city. Fleeing the city, al-Aziz apparently came to Baghdad and earned the moniker 'the Amir of Baghdad' among fellow insurgents.^{ccxxxiv} Later that month, the US military announced the capture of what was described as an Al Qa'ida commander and close confidant to Zarqawi. Khamis Farhan Khalaf Abd al-Fahdawi, or Abu Seba, was captured with approximately 30 other terrorist suspects. It is believed that Seba played a role in the murder of Egypt's ambassador and in the attacks on the Pakistani and Bahraini envoys. An Internet posting purportedly written by Zarqawi's group claimed that Seba was a low-level leader of a cell in Baghdad and that the US forces were inventing ranks to portray an image of success in taking down the terrorist networks.^{ccxxxv}

Not long after, an Egyptian insurgent named Hamdi Tantawi was captured by Iraqi police in the town of Yusufiya, along with weaponry, computers, and money. It is believed that Tantawi financed insurgent operations and allegedly was a lieutenant to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the second most recognized international Al Qa'ida figure behind Osama bin Laden.

Further details were unavailable, and it is unclear whether Tantawi was operating independently or coordinating with Zawahiri and/or Zarqawi. If he was as close to Zawahiri as suggested by the press reports, it would suggest that the coordination between the old guard Al Qaeda leadership and the Al Qaeda in Iraq group is far closer than previously thought. It would also suggest that Bin Laden and Zawahiri are perhaps not as hard pressed and on the run along the Afghan border with Pakistan as has largely been assumed.

US military spokesman General Kevin Bergner told reporters on September 16 that joint operations between Iraqi and US forces in northern Iraq had captured or killed 80 senior leaders since January 2005.^{ccxxxvi}

In late September 2005, the US military announced it had killed two senior members of Zarqawi's group. Abu Nasir, believed to be Al Qaeda in Iraq's leader in Karabilah, was killed near the border with Syria on September 27. Two days earlier, US forces in Baghdad shot and killed Abdullah Najim Abdullah Mohamed al-Jawari, also known as Abu Azzam. Thought to be Al Qaeda in Iraq's No. 2 man, Abu Azzam was the leader of the insurgency in Iraq's Anbar Province. Recent improvements in US human intelligence, improved technical intelligence, targeting of insurgents, and more developed informants, are believed to have contributed to the success of the two operations.^{ccxxxvii}

In November, US officials reported that they had come close to capturing Zarqawi on at least three occasions. The military said it was using eavesdropping satellites, unmanned drones and U-2 spy planes to gather intelligence on the insurgency and to track Zarqawi's movements. US forces were also helping Iraqis in the intelligence process.^{ccxxxviii}

Some US officials have expressed frustration with the Iraqi government for failing to move quickly enough in developing its own intelligence agency. US and Iraqi authorities worked together in a joint intelligence effort to capture former Ba'ath Party members, including Saddam Hussein, and Washington would like to see the same happen with Zarqawi. But according to US officials, Baghdad has been unable to establish a network of local informants.^{ccxxxix} An October 2005 report to Congress, however, showed the number of tips from Iraqi citizens had increased by more than six fold from 483 March to 3,341 in August 2005.^{ccxli}

On November 10, the military released a diagram (Figure V.3) showing the makeup of the Zarqawi network. At a news conference describing the US military's progress in capturing Zarqawi operatives, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch told reporters:^{ccxli}

The insurgency is broken into three groups: terrorists and foreign fighters, Iraqi rejectionists and Saddamists. We believe that the terrorists and foreign fighters are the most lethal group of the insurgency. And it is indeed an organized group, and the face of that group is Zarqawi -- al Qaeda in Iraq...

Over the last several months, we've been able to kill or capture over 100 members of al Qaeda in Iraq. Since I've talked to you about this graphic last, we have indeed taken out one additional tier-one member.

Reminder: tier one are those people who have direct access to Zarqawi. They are Zarqawi's lieutenants. They are his trusted advisers. They have visibility in al Qaeda

operations not just in Iraq but across the entire Middle East. And when Zarqawi loses a tier-one member, he's losing one of his most trusted advisers. The Ramadi military leader was killed in an operation in Ramadi a week ago, Abu Abdullah, along with 12 additional terrorists. So one more tier-one individual killed.

Tier two: tier-two leadership plan and facilitate operations in a region of Iraq. They are responsible for flow of money, for flow of information, for flow of munitions, and flow of foreign fighters. Since we talked last, two additional tier- two members have been killed or captured, both in Mosul -- the emir of Mosul and the chief of Mosul security. Since we talked last, 15 additional tier-three members have been killed or captured. These are the individuals who control cells, local cells -- both Iraqis and foreign fighters - serving as cell leaders.

The chart lists 38 "Tier 2" and 71 "Tier 3" operatives killed or captured. According to the US military, the influence of foreign fighters was most predominant in the tier-three. Speaking about the new developments, Lynch said: "we have great success at killing or capturing his leaders, his cell leaders, his coordinators and his lieutenants, and this chart just continues to expand, and eventually, he's going to be on this chart."^{ccxlii}

US officials believe they have been close to catching Zarqawi before. In the past, US forces have stormed restaurants and hospitals after receiving reports about Zarqawi sightings. The US military believes it came closest to capturing Zarqawi in February 2005, when the insurgent leader jumped out of a truck as it approached a US checkpoint outside Ramadi. Zarqawi's driver and bodyguard were captured, and a large amount of cash along with Zarqawi's laptop computer was seized.

There have been other near misses. According to a senior US intelligence official: "Several times we have showed up at places where we know he was hours or days earlier. But the intelligence we get is never fresh enough." US officials believe Zarqawi has slipped in and out of Iraq during the past few years, traveling to Jordan, Syria and Iran to raise funds and recruits for the insurgency.^{ccxliii}

US assertions that they were getting closer to Zarqawi intensified in the fall of 2005. In late November, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told CNN, "His days are numbered-he is going to be ultimately found...Either he will be brought to justice or he will die in the battle to capture him, but we are getting closer to that goal every day. A lot of coalition forces and experts are working hard on this...It's not a question of whether but when."^{ccxliv}

On November 19, US and Iraqi forces surrounded a two-storey house in the mostly Kurdish area of eastern Mosul, after receiving intelligence that Zarqawi might be hiding there. Coalition troops encountered fierce resistance by the insurgents, heightening suspicion that a high-value target like Zarqawi was inside the house. Three of the eight insurgents killed during the three-hour raid blew themselves up rather than be captured alive. Immediately following the raid, US forces sealed the house.

Speculation that Zarqawi might have been killed in the raid grew after Iraqi Foreign Minister Hohshyar Zebari told the Jordanian Petra news agency that DNA tests were being carried out on the bodies. But the governor of Nineveh

province, Duraid Kashmoula, told the Washington Post on November 21 that there was only a 30 percent chance that one of the bodies was that of Zarqawi, adding: "We've had dry holes before."^{ccxlv}

US officials, however, remained cautious. On November 22, a top US commander in Iraq said there was "absolutely no reason" to believe Zarqawi had died in the raid and Ambassador Khalilzad echoed that assessment, saying, "I do not believe that we got him. But his days are numbered...We're closer to the goal, but unfortunately we didn't get him in Mosul."^{ccxlv} The following day, Al Qaida in Mesopotamia issued a statement on an Islamic web site denying their leader had been killed. The statement said the group had waited to respond to the rumors of Zarqawi's death "until this lie took its full length to let Muslims know the extent of [the media's] stupidity and shallow thinking."^{ccxlvii}

As of late November 2005, US officials believed the best intelligence showed Zarqawi was operating in western Baghdad. But Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told ABC News in mid-November that the Iraqi government had evidence that Zarqawi had been injured in Ramadi sometime in October or early November, suggesting Zarqawi remained as elusive as ever in the fall of 2005.^{ccxlviii}

US officials also claimed that more and more Iraqis were coming forward with tips about his whereabouts following the November 9 bombings in Amman.^{ccxlix}

But while the military's elite Task Force 145 continued to hunt the elusive leader of the insurgency, the public disowning of Zarqawi by his own tribe after the November 9 bombings may ultimately do more to hasten his capture than the almost two years of US searching.

Zarqawi and “Weapons of Mass Media”

Zarqawi's movement has been extremely effective at striking at targets with high media and political impact, particularly in the form of suicide bombings and beheadings.^{ccl} In the summer of 2005, Zarqawi's group attacked several Muslim diplomats in an effort to stymie relations between the new Iraqi government and foreign governments. Egypt's Ihab Sherif, tapped to become the first Arab ambassador to Iraq, was kidnapped and then killed by the Jordanian terrorist's Al Qa'ida movement.

An Internet statement released by the group suggested that he might have been beheaded and stated that he had been killed for Egypt's recognition of the Iraqi government, for the country's fostering of disbelief in Islam, for 'waging war against Muslims' by cracking down on Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, and by sending an ambassador to Iraq at US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's bidding.^{ccli}

Soon afterwards, Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Younis Khan and Bahraini charges d'affaires Hassan Malallah Ansari were targeted by Zarqawi's group. In separate attacks, both Khan's and Ansari's convoys were hit with gunfire in what were described as attempted kidnappings. Ansari suffered a minor gunshot wound and Pakistan quickly relocated Khan to Jordan. Not long after, two of Algeria's diplomats to the new Iraqi government was kidnapped in Baghdad and later killed.

Although some of Zarqawi's deputies have been apprehended and the Syrians delivered up Saddam Hussein's brother-in-law, much of the group's leadership has survived US and Iraqi assaults. US officials believe the insurgent leadership is so well informed by its intelligence network that it can stay ahead of US and Iraqi forces, fleeing towns before Coalition forces arrive and slipping in and out of the country.^{cclii}

Ironically, jihadist websites often list complaints detailing a lack of press coverage for some of their attacks.^{ccliii} The militant groups have largely been viewed as very successful manipulators of Arab and Western media outlets, able to tailor their attacks for maximum media coverage and psychological effect. The proliferation of groups could be an indication that there has developed competition for press coverage, media exhaustion, or of a reduced capacity of the insurgents to launch attacks that grab headlines.

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia group started an online Internet magazine entitled *Zurwat al Sanam*, in an effort to wage a more effective propaganda and recruiting campaign. Other insurgent groups on the Web have mirrored this effort, and some analysts believe that it is a defensive tactic to counter the perceived inroads made by the January 30th elections and the capture of important terrorist lieutenants in the months that followed.^{ccliv}

A group allied to Zarqawi issued a statement on the Internet in May 2005 claiming that he had been injured during an exchange with Iraqi troops. The

group affirmed that he was alive and well, but the information could not be independently verified.

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Iraq group took their attempted manipulation of the news media to new heights in June 2005. In an Internet statement, the organization severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had "sided" with the US over Iraq.

In what may be a new trend, Zarqawi has begun to issue "retractions" or "clarifications" after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of "total war" on Shiites (discussed below) received a very cool response from the larger jihadi community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Many Sunnis rejected Zarqawi's declaration and Al Qaida's Zawahiri warned attacks on Shiites would hurt the group's level of popular support. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman (also discussed below). The backlash from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the target of the attacks. Instead, Zarqawi claimed Israeli and American intelligence officials meeting in the hotels were the real targets. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may be on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.

Zarqawi Ties to Bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups

The Zarqawi group has strengthened its ties to outside terrorist groups. In October 2004, Zarqawi publicly pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and changed the name of his organization from Al Tawhid wal Jihad (Unity and Holy War) to Al Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers.^{cclv} While there is no evidence that the two men have ever met or even directly communicated, Bin Laden issued a statement in December 2004 confirming Zarqawi as the "Emir" of Al Qa'ida in Iraq.

Movements like the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which claimed responsibility for the attack on the US mess tent in Mosul in December 2004 and for many other suicide attacks, seem to have a mix of links to Zarqawi and possibly Al Qa'ida. They seem to be largely Iraqi, but their mix of Sunnis and Kurds is uncertain, as is the extent to which the group and its cells are at least partly a legacy of Ansar al-Islam – an active Islamist group that reportedly provided sanctuary for Zarqawi before the war. In November 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed that it had twice collaborated with Zarqawi's group and another group known as the Islamic Army in Iraq.

In February 2005, a leaked US intelligence memo indicated that an intercepted communication, reportedly from bin Laden to Zarqawi, encouraged Iraqi insurgents to attack the American homeland.^{cclvi} Even so, US intelligence analysts view bin Laden and Zarqawi as separate operators, and it remains unclear as to what – if any – organizational or financial support Bin Laden provides Zarqawi's organization.^{cclvii}

According to US intelligence officials, Zarqawi has surpassed Bin Laden in raising funds: "Right now, Zarqawi is fighting the war, and [Bin Laden] is not...Who would you give money to?" But a Justice Department official downplayed the money issue, saying:^{cclviii}

It's not like John Gotti running around Manhattan in fancy suits and limousines...We are talking about a man who is operating in an area that is extremely primitive, in a very clandestine manner and with a huge network of people that do his communications for him and surround him and protect him.

That Zarqawi is financially independent from Bin Laden was seemingly confirmed in a 2005 letter to Zarqawi purported to be from Al Qaida's No. 2, Ayman Al Zawahiri. In the letter, discussed in detail below, Zawahiri asks Zarqawi to send funds to the Al Qaida leadership.

Another "Zarqawi letter," written on April 27, 2005 by one of his associates (Abu Asim al Qusayami al Yemeni), seemed to reflect Zarqawi's complaints about the failure of some of his volunteers to martyr themselves, typical of the kind of complaints and calls for more support that he has used both to try to lever more support from Bin Laden and gain more support from Arabs outside Iraq.^{cclix}

Some analysts believe that Bin Laden made a strategic error by declaring Zarqawi the "emir" for operations in Iraq. Iraqis are deeply distrusting of outsiders and, in particular, neighbors in the region. Bin Laden's declaration could be seen by Iraqis in highly nationalistic terms as a Saudi ordering a Jordanian to kill Iraqis. These analysts believe that this will motivate those Iraqis who were previously unsure of whether to offer their support to the elected government.

Zarqawi appears to have made some efforts to remake his organization's reputation to reduce tensions with Iraqi Sunnis, and possibly Iraqi Shi'ites as well. The website pronouncements claimed that the group had tried to avoid Muslim casualties with the notable exception being the Iraq military and security forces. They quickly denounced attacks on civilians like the massive suicide car bombing in Hilla in March 2005.^{cclx} Zarqawi has, however, advocated attacks on Shi'ites and said he views them as apostates. It was clear that many bloody suicide bombings and other attacks had support from elements loyal to Zarqawi, and that many were sectarian attacks on Shi'ites or ethnic attacks on Kurds. It is now unclear that any Shi'ite element, including many of Sadr's supporters, are willing to cooperate with such Sunni extremist groups.

A tape attributed to Zarqawi in May 2005, was anything but reticent.^{cclxi} In the one hour and 14 minute tape, he explained why Muslim civilians were being killed in his attacks and justified the killing on the basis of research by "Abu Abdullah al Muhajer". He claimed that many operations were cancelled because they were going to kill large numbers of Muslims, but mistakes were made and "we have no choice...It's impossible to fight the infidels without killing some Muslims." He stated that Muslims were killed in 9/11, Riyadh, Nairobi, Tanzania, and if these were considered illegitimate then it would mean stopping jihad in every place.

He said that Iraq's geography made through direct combat with the enemy difficult, and the only way was to intensify combat was suicide operations. He

compared Iraq to Afghanistan with its mountains, and to Chechnya where there were woods, and said it was easier for the “mujaheddeen” to have a safe place to hide and plan after fighting with the enemy. He stated that it was difficult for the “mujaheddeen” to move in Iraq because of the checkpoints and the US bases, therefore suicide operations are easy to carry out and to effectively force the enemy to leave the cities for places where it would be easier to shoot them. “These operations are our weapon...If we stop them jihad will be weaker...If the enemy gets full control of Baghdad it will implement its plan and control the whole nation. The whole world saw what they did in Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca and prisons in Qut, Najaf and Karbala...that’s when they did not have full control, so what would happen if they do?”

He heavily attacked Iraq’s Shiites and Shiites in general. He claimed his group never attacked other sects in Iraq who are not considered Muslims, but fought the Shiites because they assist the enemy and are traitors. According to Zarqawi, the Shiites pretend they care about civilian casualties...he mentioned operations carried out by Failaq Badr (with dates, locations, numbers of people killed) during the 1980s and 1990s. He also claimed there was a plan to eliminate the Sunnis in Iraq, and that Sunni mosques were being handed over to Shiites and that Sunni clerics, teachers, doctors and experts were being killed. He claimed that Sunni women were being kidnapped and that Shiite police participated in raping women at Abu Ghraib.

He claimed there were problems at Iraqi government-run prisons in Iraq, including one in Qut which he said was being run by Iranian intelligence and a prison in Hilla run by a Shiite major general called Qays, who “cuts Muslims’ bodies and rapes women.” He mentions a specific story where Qays threatened to rape the wife of one of the fighters (evidently Major General Qays Hamza, chief of al Hillah police). He says his fighters tried to kill Qays but he survived (There was a web statement dated March 30th about a suicide bombing in Hilla that targeted Major General Qays).^{cclxii}

Another tape -- attributed to Zarqawi -- aired on July 6, 2005. In the tape, Zarqawi reaffirms that targeting Iraqis is legitimate and he dubs the Iraqi security forces apostates. He calls on Iraqi clerics who disapprove of targeting Iraqis to reconsider their views.

The Jordanian asserts in the message that the US went to war with Iraq in order to advance Israel’s interests and refers to the conflict in Iraq as a ‘quagmire.’ He declares that the US will soon invade the lands of Sham (Greater Syria) on the pretext of stopping insurgent infiltration, and that this had not yet happen due to the ferocity of the militant attacks. He also announced the creation of a new brigade charged with killing the members of the Failaq Brigade, a Shi’ite militia.

On September 14, 2005, Al Qaida in Iraq released another audiotape by Zarqawi. Its release marked the first time the leader of the insurgency in Iraq had been heard from since May 2005 when a message from a man purporting to be Zarqawi said he had been wounded. On the tape, which surfaced on a day when insurgent attacks killed more than 150 people and wounded more than 500, Zarqawi declared “all out war” against Shiite Muslims in Iraq.

In a letter released earlier in the day, the organization said the upsurge in violence was in response to the ongoing US operation against insurgents in Tal Afar. Zarqawi accused the US military and Shiites of using poisonous gas and rapping women in Tal Afar and appealed to Iraqi sects to renounce the Al-Ja'fari government and its crimes. In addition to Shiites, Zarqawi also threatened violence against Coalition troops and Iraqi government officials, calling on them to "come out of their lairs in the Green Zone."

Zarqawi's declaration began:^{cclxiii}

Days go by, and events follow one after the other. The battles are many, and the names used are varied. But the goal is one: a Crusader-Rafidite [a derogatory term for Shia] war against the Sunnis....

The interests of the Crusaders have converged with the desires of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites, and the outcome was these crimes and massacres against the Sunnis-from Al-Falluja to al-Madain, Al-Diyala, Al-Samarra, and Al-Mosul, through Al-Ramadi, Hit, Haditha, Al-Rawa, Al-Qaim and other places, and recently-but not last-at Tel'afar....

This is an organized sectarian war, whose details were carefully planned, against the will of those whose vision has been blinded and whose hearts have been hardened by Allah. Beware, oh Sunni scholars-has your sons' blood become so cheap in your eyes that you have sold it for a low price? Has the honor of your women become so trivial in your eyes? Beware. Have you not heard that many of your chaste and pure sisters from among the Sunnis of Tel'afar had their honor desecrated, their chastity slaughtered, and their wombs filled with the sperm of the Crusaders and of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites? Where is your religion? Moreover, where is your sense of honor, your zeal, and your manliness?

According to Zarqawi, the timing of the operation in Tal Afar had been planned to "cover up the scandal of Allah's enemy, Bush, in his dealing with what was left behind by one of Allah's soldiers-the devastating Hurricane Katrina."^{cclxiv} Zarqawi also claimed that US forces numbering 4,000 and Iraqi forces numbering 6,000 converged on Tal Afar in order to do battle with a "small group of believers, which number[ed] no more than a few hundred."

In the speech, Zarqawi singled out Iraqi government officials and members of the Iraqi security forces, as well as other "collaborators" for denunciation:

Behold the Rafidites' lackey, [Iraqi Defense Minister] Sa'doon Al-Dulaimi, may Allah keep him miserable, bragging about their victories at Tel'afar. If only I knew what victory they are talking about-these cowards, none of whom dares to leave his lair unless he is shielded by the women of the Marines. Does this traitor believe that bombing houses, with women and children inside, constitutes a victory? By Allah, what a miserable victory....

This lackey [Al-Dulaimi], who betrayed his religion and his nation, and agreed to serve as a tool of the Crusaders and Safavids threatens that he and his angels of destruction are advancing towards Al-Anbar, Al-Qaim, Rawatha and Samarra. To him we say that the mujahedeen have prepared for you and for your soldiers, by Allah's virtues, a slashing sword and lethal poison. Allah willing, you will be given to drink from the various goblets of death, and the lands of the Sunnis will contain your rotting corpses. Come, if you want, now or later.

...whoever is proven to belong to the Pagan [National] Guard, to the police, or to the army, or whoever is proven to be a Crusader collaborator or spy-he shall be killed. Furthermore, his house shall either be destroyed or burned down, after the women and

children are taken out of it. This is his reward for betraying his religion and his nation, so that he shall serve as a clear lesson and a preventive warning to others.

...any tribe, party, or association that has been proven to collaborate with the Crusaders and their apostate lackeys-by God, we will target them just like we target the Crusaders, we will eradicate them and disperse them to the winds.

The statement ended with Zarqawi's declaration of "total war" against the Shiites:

This is a call to all the Sunnis in Iraq: Awaken from your slumber, and arise from your apathy. You have slept for a long time. The wheels of the war to annihilate the Sunnis have not and will not halt. It will reach the homes of each and every one of you, unless Allah decides otherwise. If you do not join the mujahedeen to defend your religion and honor, by Allah, sorrow and regret will be your lot, but only after all is lost.

Based on all that I have mentioned, and after the world has come to know the truth about this battle and the identity of its true target, the Al-Qaeda organization in the Land of the Two Rivers has decided: First, since the government of the descendant of Ibn Al-'Alqami and the servant of the Cross, Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari, has declared a total war against the Sunnis in Tel'afar, Ramadi, Al-Qaim, Samarra, and Al-Rawa, under the pretext of restoring rights and eliminating the terrorists, the organization has decided to declare a total war against the Rafidite Shiites throughout Iraq, wherever they may be....

Immediately following the release of the statement, Shiite leaders and journalists called upon Iraqi Sunnis to condemn Zarqawi's declaration. One of them, Abdulhadi al-Darraj, a representative of Muqtada al-Sadr, insisted that the Sunni Muslim Clerics Association "issue a fatwa (religious edict) forbidding Muslims from joining these groups that deem others infidels."^{cclxv}

Sunni responses to Zarqawi's declaration of war against the Shia were mixed. Some leaders did accept Darraj's call for a Sunni rejection of Zarqawi. The Association of Muslim Scholars [AMS] in Iraq called on Zarqawi to renounce violence against Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq who were involved in the political process, saying: "Al-Zarqawi must retract his threats because they hurt jihad and would cause the shedding of the blood of more innocent Iraqis."^{cclxvi} The Muslim Clerics Association also urged Zarqawi to retract his statement. The most surprising response came from a gathering of members of the Salafi Higher Committee for Da'wah, Guidance, and Fatwa, who rejected Zarqawi's declaration as "unacceptable" and said the spilling of Muslim blood was religiously forbidden.^{cclxvii}

Zarqawi reacted to these calls by retracting part of his earlier statement. On September 19, 2005, he issued another statement as a follow-up to his declaration of war, saying: "It has become known to our group that some sects, such as the Sadr group...and others, have not taken part in the massacres and not helped the occupier....So we have decided not to hurt these groups in any way, as long as they do not strike us."^{cclxviii} But Zarqawi accused six Shiite and Kurdish groups (Al-Dawa Party, The Higher Revolutionary Party, National Conference Party, Al-Wifaq Party, Kurdistan Democratic Party, and Kurdistan United National Party) of helping the US occupation forces and said attacks against them would continue.^{cclxix}

Zarqawi's retraction was seen by some as a sign of a rupture between his group and other insurgents. In the summer of 2005, a statement allegedly written by

Zarqawi revealed a strained relationship with the militant Islamist preacher (and former cellmate of Zarqawi's) Islam Mohammed al-Barqawi. Zarqawi had long been identified with Al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, and often referred to him as his 'sheik' and spiritual guide.^{cclxx}

In an interview with Al Jazeera television in July, Al-Barqawi admonished Zarqawi, saying suicide bombings in Iraq had resulted in the deaths of too many Iraqis and that the militants should not target Shi'ite Muslims.^{cclxxi} Zarqawi's statement was a direct response to al-Barqawi's interview. In it, he questioned al-Barqawi's statements implored the preacher to not 'turn against the Mujahedeen.'^{cclxxii} If authentic, the posting seems likely to confirm what Zarqawi's letter to Bin Laden suggested: that the font of support Zarqawi expected to come forth in Iraq and the Middle East has yet to materialize on the scale he envisioned. Moreover, the posting against Barqawi and the partial retraction of the declaration of war against Shi'ites suggests that Al Qaida in Iraq's leadership is sensitive to Muslim public opinion. New York University professor of Islamic Studies Bernard Haykel believes Zarqawi's war on Shiites is deeply unpopular in some quarters of his own movement and is contributing to a schism within the jihadi movement.^{cclxxiii}

Further evidence of this appeared in October 2005 when the US government published a letter purported to be from Ayman Al Zawahiri to Zarqawi. In the letter, dated July 9, 2005, Zawahiri asks for news from Iraq and urges Zarqawi's organization to think about their long-term strategic objectives. Calling the struggle in Iraq "the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era," Zawahiri writes:^{cclxxiv}

...we must think for a long time about our next steps and how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals:

The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or amirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate-over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraq, i.e. in Sunni areas, is in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exist and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void, whether those whom the Americans will leave behind them, or those among the un-Islamic forces who will try to jump at taking power...

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.

After having outlined the four stages of the conflict, Zawahiri addressed the group's level of popular support. Zawahiri said the organization's goals "will not be accomplished by the mujahed movement while it is cut off from public support." Moreover, maintaining and increasing public support was "a decisive factor between victory and defeat," in the absence of which the Islamic mujahed movement would be "crushed in the shadows" and the struggle between the Jihadist elite and the authorities "confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day." Zawahiri urged Zarqawi to avoid any action that Iraqis did not understand or approve and to involve them in his planning by "bring[ing] the

mujahed movement to the masses and not conduct[ing] the struggle far from them.”^{ecclxxv}

Zawahiri also warned that the scenes of slaughter emerging from Iraq were having a damaging effect on the wider jihadi movement. He warned Zarqawi, “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...[W]e are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma.”^{ecclxxvi}

He also said the following about targeting Shi'ites:

...many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques...My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.

Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahedeen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shia at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable? Or, is it something can be put off until the force of the mujahed movement in Iraq gets stronger? And if some of the operations were necessary for self-defense, were all of the operations necessary? Or, were there some operations that weren't called for? And is the opening of another front now in addition to the front against Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shia lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shia, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar? And if the attacks on Shia leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shia? Won't this lead to reinforcing false ideas in their minds, even as it is incumbent on us to preach the call of Islam to them and explain and communicate to guide them to the truth? And can the mujahedeen kill all of the Shia in Iraq? Has any Islamic state in history ever tried that? And why kill ordinary Shia considering that they are forgiven because of their ignorance?And do the brothers forget that both we and the Iranians need to refrain from harming each other at this time in which the Americans are targeting us?

Zawahiri's final theme in his thirteen-page letter was the issue of political versus military action. Zawahiri stressed the need for Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action” and suggests that in addition to force, “there be an appeasement of Muslims and a sharing with them in governance.” Once more, Zawahiri cautioned the Al Qaida in Iraq leader about the use of excessively violent acts saying they risked alienating the Muslim masses, whose enthusiasm is critical to the overall success of the enterprise.

The letter, which seems to reflect the broader strategic perspective of the Al Qaeda leadership, was the clearest blueprint of Al Qaeda's plans for Iraq yet. Less than a week after the US released the letter, however, Al Qaida in Iraq issued a statement on an Islamist website rejecting the letter's authenticity. Their statement read: “We in Al Qaeda Organization announce that there is no truth to these claims, which are only based on the imagination of the politicians of the Black [i.e. White] House and their slaves.”^{ecclxxvii}

As with most other Al Qaeda statements though, US experts were divided over the authenticity of the letter. The Congressional Research Service's Kenneth Katzman said the letter contained elements that raised doubts about its authenticity: “The purported letter has Zawahiri admitting to certain things that it's not realistic for him to admit, because he would know there's a potential this

letter might be intercepted.” Others, like Mike Scheuer, a retired CIA analyst, disagreed and said the letter was most likely authentic.^{cclxxviii}

Al Qaida in Mesopotamia's media response following the November 9 bombings in Amman (discussed below) was unusual in that the group issued three statements relatively quickly. One frequent commentator to a jihadi website complained Al Qaida had been too hasty in issuing the statements, including the claim of responsibility, alerting Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Criticism of Zarqawi's attack was also apparent on other Internet jihadi websites. Postings on websites showed that the killing of “innocent Muslims” upset Zarqawi's traditional base of supporters and sympathizers. Many criticized the selection of the target, the timing of the attack as well as the means of the attack. Some even urged the Al Qaida in Mesopotamia leader to abandon any future military operations that might harm Muslims. One such posting by a writer calling himself “Al-Murshid” or “the guide” read:^{cclxxix}

This is both a (religious) task and a pragmatic tactic...Acts where many innocent Muslims lose their lives make us lose a lot of popular support...The death of the innocent Muslims in this attack...was a fact that lived with each Jordanian. Now people say al-Qaida kills innocent Muslims.

The backlash against Zarqawi's group in the aftermath of the Amman bombings and the declaration of war against Shiites point to an on-going and not yet resolved internal dispute among the jihadists as to their tactics, specifically whether or not the group should target civilians and/or fellow Muslims.

Zarqawi and Syria

Experts differ in opinion as to how much of Zarqawi's operations have taken place in Syria and with Syrian backing. There are reports that Zarqawi and top lieutenants met in Syria in the spring of 2005, but these have yet to be confirmed by US officials. In fact, US intelligence assessments expressed doubt in June 2005 that Zarqawi had crossed into Syria earlier in the year, stating that such an event was inconsistent with Syria's, and Zarqawi's, pattern of behavior. US, British, and Iraqi experts do believe, however, that a substantial number of recruits pass through Syria, and with Syrian tolerance or deliberate indifference – if not active support.^{cclxxx}

Expanding the Battle: Operations Outside Iraq

It is too early to generalize about Zarqawi's influence outside Iraq, but he has orchestrated a number of attacks in Jordan, and has discussed broadening his operations to include other Arab and Islamic countries.

In some ways, this may be more a matter of personal ambition and a pre-Iraq war agenda than a real effort to broaden the war. Zarqawi is a Jordanian who served a seven-year sentence for efforts to overthrow the Jordanian government, and began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. Attacks against Jordanian targets in recent years have included:^{cclxxxi}

- January 17, 1998: Masked men raid a dinner party at the hillside mansion of wealthy Iraqi businessmen in Amman, slitting the throats of a top Baghdad diplomat and seven other people.
- March 28, 1998: A crude bomb explodes in an elite English-language school in Amman in what one senior government official calls an apparent attempt to instigate attacks against Americans. The explosion shatters windows but causes no injuries.
- October 28, 2002: An American diplomat, Laurence Foley, is assassinated in front of his house in Amman, gunned down in the first such attack on a US diplomat in decades.
- August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, including two children. More than 50 people are wounded.
- August 19, 2005: Attackers fire at least three rockets from the hills above the Jordanian port city of Aqaba, with one narrowly missing a US Navy ship docked in the port and another hitting a taxis outside an airport in nearby Israel. A Jordanian soldier is killed.

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq. Zarqawi seems to have played a role in the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad on August 7 2003. This attack killed 17 and wounded 50.

There are indications that Zarqawi's group began planning and attempting attacks outside Iraq in late 2003. It is clear that one major attempt did occur in the spring of 2004. Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004. Jordanian officials said they had halted an attack using three trucks loaded with 20 tons of explosives and chemicals. The three trucks were halted in Irbid, and Jordanian sources claimed they could have killed 80,000 people and wounded 160,000 others within a two square kilometer area. The cell was one of two cells in place, and its members had a variety of forged Jordanian, Syrian and other Arab passports

Zarqawi acknowledged the attempt in an audiotape circulated on April 30, 2004, but denied any effort to use chemical weapons. The tape made available on an Islamist website said his goal was to "totally destroy the building of the Jordanian intelligence services" with "raw materials which are sold on the market...The Jordanian security services have lied in claiming to have foiled a plan to kill innocent Muslims."^{celxxxii}

He accused Jordan of "creating an outcry and presenting the Jordanian people as a victim targeted at the hands of terrorism ... in order to hide the sordid face of the Jordanian intelligence services..." and of the "evil Jordanian services" of "fabricating (the affair) of the chemical bomb." Zarqawi went on to say "If we had such a bomb -- and we ask God that we have such a bomb soon -- we would not hesitate for a moment to strike Israeli towns, such as Eilat, Tel Aviv and others...We have scores to settle with this (Jordanian) government which will turn children's hair white."

Some sources say Zarqawi halted further attack attempts after that time. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005.^{cclxxxiii}

Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, however, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Jordan has for years been considered a safe place, nestled between the ongoing violence of the *intifida* in the Palestinian territories and, more recently, the insurgency in Iraq. In recent years, however, this has begun to change. According to experts like Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group, "[Jordan] was always a fragile oasis...It was only a matter of time before somebody got through."

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi's organization struck three US owned hotels in Amman. Neither the attack nor the targets should have come as a surprise to Jordanian officials however. Zarqawi had previously attempted to blow up western hotels in Amman-including the Radisson SAS-as part of millennium celebrations in late 1999. That attack, however, was thwarted by Jordanian intelligence and Zarqawi later fled to Afghanistan.^{cclxxxiv}

The November 9 bombings at the Radisson SAS, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels killed at least 60 people and wounded more than a hundred others. The bombers-all Iraqis-deliberately targeted Jordanians-including a Jordanian-Palestinian wedding party. Four Palestinian officials, including Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security, as well as other foreigners, were also among the casualties.

The first bombing occurred shortly before 9 p.m. inside the Philadelphia ballroom of the Radisson hotel. Right before detonating his 22-pound explosive packed belt, the bomber and the apparent leader of the cell, Ali Hussein Ali al-Shamari, jumped onto a table. The explosion brought parts of the ceiling down onto the more than 300 wedding guests assembled in the ballroom and sprayed ball bearings contained inside the vest across the room.

Moments after the first bombing, 23 year-old Rawad Jassem Mohammed detonated his bomb in the coffee shop of the Grand Hyatt. Seconds later, the third bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, also 23, detonated his explosives outside the Days Inn hotel. Jordanian officials believe that, like Mohammed, Ali planned to detonate the bomb inside the coffee shop. But after a suspicious waiter called security, Ali fled. Once outside the hotel, he knelt on the ground and detonated his explosives, killing three members of a nearby Chinese military delegation.^{cclxxxv}

Immediately following the attack, rumors began circulating that there had been a fourth bomber and that a husband and wife had carried out one of the attacks. On November 13, the alleged fourth bomber and wife of the ringleader-Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi appeared in a video confession on Jordanian television. Rishawi said her husband had pushed her out of the Radisson ballroom after her

own bomb failed to detonate and that she had then fled the scene in a taxi. Her whereabouts for the three days between the attacks and her capture by Jordanian police have not yet been confirmed. Jordanian officials say she went to her sister's husband's family in the nearby city of Salt, but witnesses claim to have seen her in the Tlaa' Ali neighborhood of Amman where one of the cell's safe houses was located.^{cclxxxvi}

From Rishawi's televised statement, we know that much of the attack was assembled outside of Jordan. Shamari and his wife, both natives of Anbar province, left Iraq on November 5. The couple were picked up by two men in a white car and driven across the border, apparently using fake passports under the name of Ali Hussein Ali and Sajida Abdel Kader Latef to enter Jordan. The explosive belts used in the bombings appear to have entered the country with them.

Two days later, on November 7, the group rented an apartment in the Tlaa' Ali neighborhood of Amman. The apartment, located in an area with a large Iraqi community, was one of at least two safe houses the cell used before the attack. On the evening of the 9 the bombers took taxis to their targets, which according to Rishawi, had been selected in advance.

There are clear links between Zarqawi's group and the attack in Jordan. At least two of the bombers - Ali Hussein Ali Shamari and his wife - seem to have been part of Zarqawi's operation in Fallujah. Three of Rishawi's brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq.^{cclxxxvii} One, Samir Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi was Zarqawi's top lieutenant in Anbar province and was killed by a US strike on his pickup truck during operations in Fallujah in 2004. According to the US military, another bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, may have been in their custody briefly in 2004. The US military said it detained an Iraqi with the same name as Ali in November 2004 but released him after two weeks because they lacked grounds to hold him. As of this writing, US officials are unsure if the Ali they had in their custody was the same one who struck the Days Inn hotel on November 9.

Although all four bombers were Iraqi nationals, it is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the November 9 attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan.

Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis. Perhaps the strongest evidence of a Jordanian connection comes from the city of Salt, 17 miles northeast of Amman. As already mentioned, many reports say Rishawi fled to the home of her brother-in-law's family there after the bombings.

Sometime in 2002 or 2003, Rishawi's sister Fatima married Nidal Arabiyat, a 30-year-old unemployed Jordanian from Salt who had joined the salafi jihadi network several years earlier. Arabiyat had joined Raed Khreisat, a religious leader, in the late 1990s and gone to train with the Kurdish Islamic group, Ansar

al-Islam in northern Iraq. After American forces invaded Iraq in 2003, Arabiyat joined forces with Zarqawi.

When Arabiyat was killed fighting US forces in Iraq, it was Rishawi's husband, Shamari, who called Arabiyat's family in Salt to tell them he had become a martyr.^{ccxxxviii} The Rishawi-Arabiyyat link, although fascinating is hardly unusual. Strong tribal and family ties exist between Jordanians and Iraqis. Locals say at least 30 men from Salt have died in Iraq fighting the Americans.^{ccxxxix} Many are connected by more than family ties or loyalty to their clan; they are motivated by a shared belief in Salafi Jihadism.

The Jordanian reaction to the November 9 bombings was notably different from past reactions to Zarqawi attacks. In the days following the triple bombing, tens of thousands of Jordanians marched against Zarqawi and pledged their allegiance to King Abdullah. Jordanians seem to have been shocked by the knowledge that Zarqawi, a fellow Jordanian, deliberately sought out Jordanian targets and Jordanian victims. Even Zarqawi's own Khalayleh clan joined the public backlash, taking out ads in the country's leading newspapers denouncing their infamous relative and pledging to remove any tribal protection he may have been benefiting from.^{ccxc} For his part, Zarqawi responded to the public backlash by releasing an audiotape on November 18. Earlier statements from Al Qaida in Mesopotamia had alerted Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Zarqawi's 26-minute November 18 statement began:^{ccxci}

All the world has heard the noise made by the Jordanian Government that the Jordanians are the victims of terrorism and that those terrorists like to shed blood, all this came after three lions have left their lair in Baghdad making their way to the center of Amman to target three hideouts of the crusaders and the Jews.

The Qaeda has made the blessed step for the coming reasons:

1. The Jordanian government has announced its infidelity and clearly battled against God.
2. The Jordanian army has become the guard of the borders of the Israeli borders, they have banned the Mujahedeen from breaking into the depth of the blessed lands to fight the (brothers of the monkeys and the pigs). How many of the Mujahedeen [have been] killed by a bullet in the back from the Jordanian soldiers securing the borders?
3. The Jordanian government has spread vice and corruption. The state has become like a swamp of pornography-the hotels and the refreshment resorts are widely spread on Aqaba and the Dead Sea-we feel pity [for] the harm caused by this corrupted family of both its men and women.
4. This state has permitted the Zionist enemy to infiltrate in the Jordanian society socially, economically, and politically. The best ever example given is the Hassan industrial city, where all the capitals are in the hands of the Jews.
5. The American's secret prisons in Jordan, working under the supervision of the American intelligence itself, said that there are tens of Mujahedeen in them, going under all different colors of torture done [at] the hands of the Jordanian intelligence members. The Los Angeles Times newspaper has mentioned earlier that the best ally

for the CIA in the region now is the Jordanian intelligence, and that part of the CIA budget goes to train the members of the Jordanian intelligence members in Amman.

6. Concerning Iraq, Jordan has become the rear base for the Americans in their war against the Islamic nation, the American airplanes flies from the Jordanian lands to attack the Mujahedeen, and lest we forget the army of translators (the Infidels). The fleet of vehicles that supplies the American army with food supplies all driven by the Jordanians.

A message to the Moslem people in Jordan, we assure you that we are the earnest ones about your safety, we know that you were the prey of the criminal regime, they have lied when they say that you become the victims of the Mujahedeen, it is a lie.

Zarqawi continued:

We have targeted these hotels after two months of surveillance and basing on information collected from inside and outside the hotels from our trusty sources.

The Radisson Hotel was the gathering point of the Israeli tourists and intelligence members, also the Day's Inn hotel. It is also the residence of all the Israeli embassy employees.

The Hayat Amman [sic. Grand Hyatt] is the centre of the American, Israeli and the Iraqi intelligence. The Israeli spy Azzam Azzam was meeting the Mosad members in the Hayat Amman hotel...it is a lie that the martyr has blown up himself in the middle of the wedding crowds...

The government that was able all these years to double cross people that they are enemies of the Zionists can convert the truth easily, we ask God's mercy for all Moslems killed in this operation, as they were not the target, the martyrs have targeted the hall that had the meeting of the intelligence officers, the killing was due to collapsing of the secondary ceiling, it was not done with intention.

...the brother of the groom has said according to the Quds press, it was unlikely that the blast was due to a suicide attack, as there were no signs of something wrong going [on].

He also added that the ceiling has fallen with all components, cement, iron bars and the decoration, on the heads of the wedding attendees, the dust has covered all over the place ... he think[s] the cause was a bomb planted in the ceiling as there was no fire.

The two other hotels were embracing [a] number of American and Jewish figures. The brothers have succeeded in knowing the place and time of their meeting, after frequent surveillance for the place, so the brothers knew for sure their targets.

Zarqawi justified the attack by claiming that Israeli and American secret agents had been meeting at the three hotels. Zarqawi also repeatedly asserted that Jordanians had not been the targets. Near the end of his statement, he threatened King Abdullah, stating: "Your star is fading. You will not escape your fate, you descendant of traitors. We will be able to reach your head and chop it off..."^{ccxcxi}

Some experts believe the November 9 triple bombings in Amman may have been the first example of Zarqawi coming through on his pledge to spread jihad outside Iraq. In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning more out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that Al Qaida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks-one in Yemen and the other in Egypt-against foreigners and Americans. Jabr also claimed that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. As proof, he offered several passports

the ministry had seized in recent months. Among the nationalities represented were the countries most often associated with foreign fighters in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Algeria. But also seized were passports from France, South Africa, Azerbaijan, India and Pakistan.^{ccxciii}

It is too early to say whether the Amman bombings signal Zarqawi is widening the jihad and taking the Iraqi insurgency abroad. Rather than see Iraq as spilling over into other countries, or as some kind of magnet for terrorism, it is wise to consider Zarqawi's history, and the fact his attacks on Jordan may be more a logical extension of his personal history and connection to that country.

The Issue of Foreign Volunteers^{ccxciv}

It is unlikely that foreign volunteers make up even 10% of the insurgent force, and may make up Less than 5%. While the number of foreign volunteers has increased through the spring of 2005, US experts feel they have since declined, largely as a result of US and Iraqi government military operations in Western Iraq and improvements in security in the Syrian-Iraqi border area. While some estimates of the total number of such volunteers have gone as high as 3,000, others go from the high hundreds to over 1,000.^{ccxcv} The fact is that there is no basis for even a credible guesstimate, and the numbers keep fluctuating over time.

Foreigners made up less than 600 out of some 14,000 detainees as of June 2005. Coalition experts estimated that they had made up less than 5% of insurgent casualties and detainees to date.^{ccxcvi} US experts and top level Iraqi officials estimated in November 2005 that at least 90% of the Sunni fighters were Iraqi and the total might be closer to 94% to 96%. Coalition sources reported that only 3.8% of some 13,300 detainees held in November 2005 were foreign. These percentages of foreigners were lower than estimates made in the early winter of 2005, and marked a sharp contrast to claims that the insurgency was being driven by large numbers of foreign volunteers.

The reliance given insurgent organizations place on foreign volunteers is also uncertain. While Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia has become virtually synonymous with foreign volunteers, its membership may well be largely Iraqi. US authorities believed Zarqawi commanded as many as 1,000 fighters and a much larger group of sympathizers, as of November 2005, but did not believe they came close to being a majority.^{ccxcvii} The US-Iraqi operations in Tal Afar focused on attacking Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia in September 2005. It led to the capture of 1,000 suspected insurgents, but none proved to be foreigners.^{ccxcviii}

There also are foreign volunteers in other Sunni Islamist extremist groups like Ansar al-Islam (also known as Ansar al-Sunnah), and the Islamic Army of Iraq. At least six other smaller terrorist groups are operating in Iraq that may rely on foreign volunteers, and many of the groups supporting the "Ba'ath" seem to have foreign volunteers as well.

Intelligence analysis – corroborated by information from Internet chat rooms and web sites run by Islamists – indicates that such groups have established terrorist training camps for both foreign volunteers and Iraqi volunteer in the mountains of

northern Iraq and in the country's western desert along its 450-mile border with Syria. There are also reports of staging facilities and indoctrination centers inside of Syria.

In any case, foreign volunteers have had a special impact on the insurgency because they have used such extreme methods to try to provoke a civil war between Iraq's Arab Sunnis and its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities. Foreign Sunni Islamist extremist volunteers do seem to have carried out most of the suicide car and pedestrian bombings since 2003. These are among some of the bloodiest and most-publicized insurgent attacks.

One US defense official estimated that as of July 2005, Iraqis had directly carried out less than 10% of more than 500 suicide bombings.^{ccxcix} These attacks also accelerated sharply in the spring and summer of 2005; the Associated Press counted at least 213 suicide attacks as of July. US Air Force General, and MNF-I spokesperson, Don Alston stated, "The foreign fighters are the ones most often behind the wheel of suicide car bombs, or most often behind any suicide situation," and Gen. Abizaid stated that the Coalition had seen a rise in suicide bombers coming from North Africa, particularly Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.^{ccc}

The fact that young men are being recruited from countries in North Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries does not, however, mean that Iraqi Islamist extremist organizations are dominated by foreign fighters. Recruiting smaller numbers of outsiders as cannon fodder, sacrifice pawns, or "martyrs" has become all too easy in a region where religious extremists have learned how to exploit religious feelings. This does not, however, mean that those directing the efforts of such groups, carrying out the support activity, or doing much of the day-to-day fighting.

There is limited evidence that Iraq is a unique magnet for foreign volunteers. Iraq is scarcely only center of such activity, and foreign volunteers also operate in the West, in North Africa and the Levant, in the Gulf, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia. Nations as diverse as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Indonesia, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the Sudan also have training centers, staging and support facilities, or internal conflicts involving neo-Salafi extremists. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict does as much to fuel Arab and Islamic anger as the Iraq conflict, and such extremists capitalize on political, economic, and social problems and tensions throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Nevertheless, Iraq has become a critical center for Sunni Islamist extremist activity, and currently presents the greatest threat that such extremists could destabilize a major state, and drive it towards a major civil war. They have at least partially displaced the struggle between Iraqis, and they certainly drive it towards violence and away from political competition and accommodation. They are fighting a war to create a civil war in Iraq; one that would make an effective secular or moderate government impossible and trigger a conflict between Sunni and Shiite that could spread to divide Islam and the Arab world. More broadly, they seek to make Islam a captive to a kind of violent, intolerant, and ruthlessly

exclusive ideological movement that would deprive it of a future by driving it back towards an imaginary and perverted vision of the past.

Number and National Origin of Foreign Volunteers

No one knows where most of the foreign volunteers present come from, and estimates differ from source to source. For example, the US military reported that 375 foreigners so far had been detained in Iraq in 2005 as of late October. Among those detained were: 78 Egyptians; 66 Syrians; 41 Sudanese; 32 Saudis; 17 Jordanians; 13 Iranians; 2 Britons; and one each from France, Israel, Ireland and the United States.^{ccci}

Reuvan Paz, a respected Israeli analyst attempted to calculate the composition of foreign volunteers in Jihadi-Salafi insurgent groups by examining the national origin of 154 insurgents killed in the fighting after the battle of Fallujah and through March 2005. He estimated that 94 (61%) were Saudi, 16 (10.4%) were Syrian, 13% (8.4%) were Iraqi, 11 (7.1%) were Kuwaiti, 4 came from Jordan, 3 from Lebanon, 2 from Libya, 2 from Algeria, 2 from Morocco, 2 from Yemen, 2 from Tunisia, 1 from Palestine, 1 from Dubai, and one from the Sudan. He estimated that 33 of the 154 were killed in suicide attacks: 23 Saudis, 5 Syrian, 2 Kuwaiti, 1 Libyan, 1 Iraqi, and 1 Moroccan. These figures are drawn from a very small sample, and are highly uncertain, but they do illustrate the diversity of backgrounds.^{ccci}

The Saudi National Security Assessment Project estimated that there were approximately 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq (See Figure V.4). These figures, and a breakdown by nationality, were rounded "best estimates," based on reports of Saudi and other intelligence services. They drew upon the interrogations of hundreds of captured militants and a comprehensive analysis of militant activities. This included interviews and analysis of activities by both Saudi and non-Saudi militants. Also consulted were intelligence reports prepared by other regional governments, which provided not only names of militants, but also valuable information on the networks that they relied upon to enter Iraq and conduct their activities.

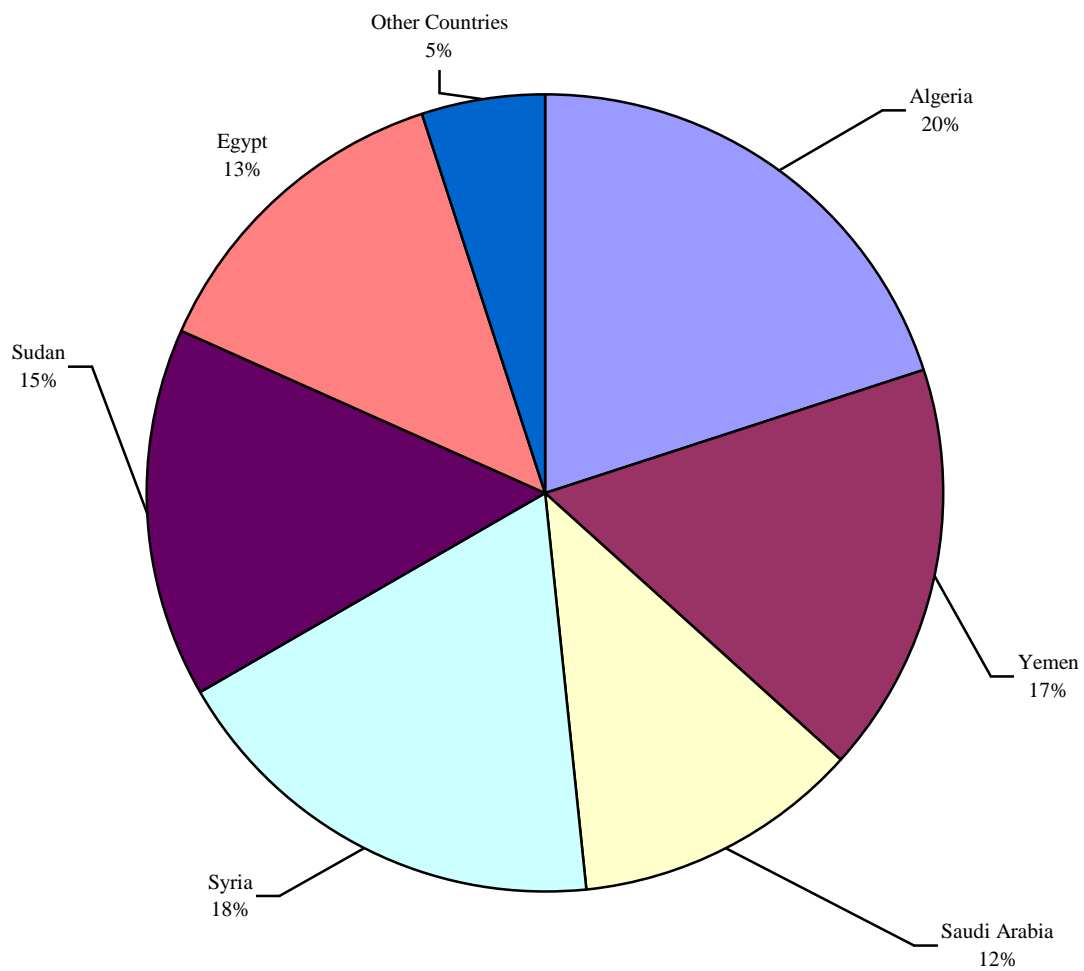
The conclusion of the Saudi investigation was that the number of Saudi volunteers in August 2005 was around 12% of the foreign contingent (approximately 350), or 1.2% of the total insurgency of approximately 30,000. Algerians constitute the largest contingent at 20%, followed closely by Syrians (18%), Yemenis (17%), Sudanese (15%), Egyptians (13%) and those from other states (5%). Discussions with US and Iraqi experts indicated that they felt that Saudi estimates were roughly correct, although they cautioned that they did not have reliable numbers for either the total number of volunteers or their origin by country.

Anything like 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq would pose a serious threat, and the numbers may be largely irrelevant. All it may take is enough volunteers to continue to support suicide attacks and violent bombings, and seek to drive Iraqi Sunnis towards a major and intense civil war. They also pose a threat because their actions gave Bin Laden and other neo-Salafi extremist movements publicity and credibility among the angry and alienated in the Islamic world, and because

many were likely to survive and be the source of violence and extremism in other countries.

Nevertheless, even the highest estimate of foreign volunteers pales beside the estimates of Iraqi insurgents. US experts still put the total number of full time insurgents at around 20,000-30,000 in December 2005. Virtually all reports, the insurgency remained largely homegrown.

Figure V.4: Foreign Militants in Iraq
(3,000 Total)



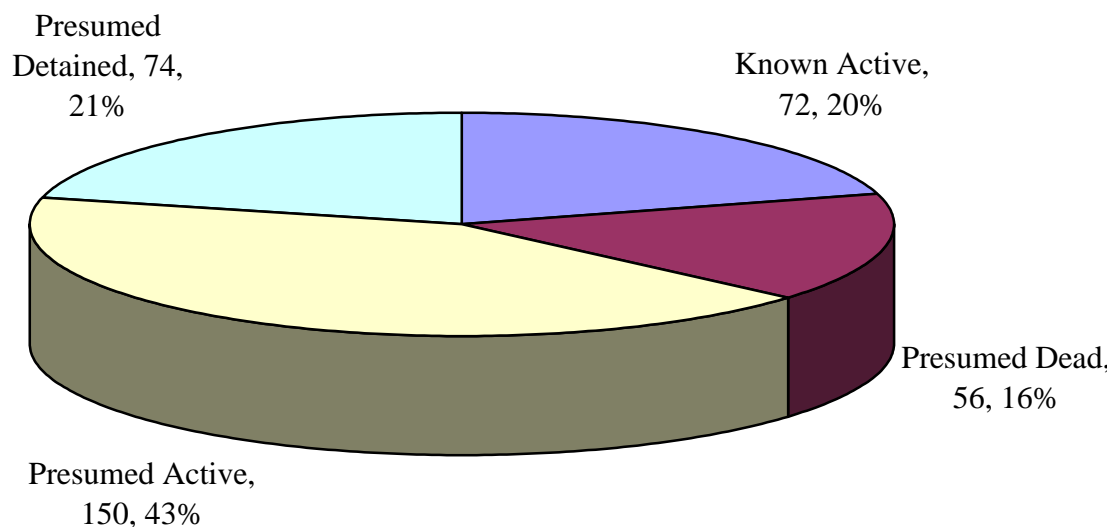
Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study

The Coalition and Iraqi government have not released any significant details on their estimates of the number of foreign volunteers, their origin, or their motives. The Saudi intelligence services have, however, made a major effort to estimate the number of Saudi infiltrators that move across the Saudi border – or far more often transit through third states like Syria.

As of August 2005, approximately 352 Saudis were thought to have successfully entered Iraq (and an additional 63 had been stopped at the border by Saudi security services). Of these, 150 were thought to be active, 72 were known from al-Qaeda compiled lists to be active in Iraq,^{ccciiii} 74 were presumed in detention (a maximum of 20 in US custody and 3 in Kurdish), and 56 were presumed dead (See Figure V.5).

Interrogations and other Saudi intelligence gathering operations revealed that these individuals did not come exclusively from a single geographical region in Saudi Arabia, but from various areas in the Kingdom, especially from the South, Hijaz, and Najd. They were usually affiliated with the most prominent conservative tribes and were generally middle class. Most are employed, many are educated, and all were Sunni.^{ccciiv} (For more background, see “Case Studies” in Appendix I.)

Figure V.5: Saudi Militants in Iraq as of September 2005



As part of a massive crackdown on Saudi militants attempting to enter Iraq, the Saudi government has interrogated dozens of nationals either returning from Iraq or caught at the border. The average age of these fighters was 17-25, but a few were older. Some had families and young children. In contrast, other fighters from across the Middle East and North Africa tended to be in their late 20s or 30s.

The Saudi infiltrators were also questioned by the intelligence services about their motives for joining the insurgency. One important point was the number who

insisted that they were not militants before the Iraq war. Of those who were interrogated, a full 85% were not on any government watch list (which comprised most of the recognized extremists and militants), nor were they known members of al-Qaeda.

The names of those who died fighting in Iraq generally appear on militant websites as martyrs, and Saudi investigators also approached the families of these individuals for information regarding the background and motivation of the ones who died. According to these interviews as well, the bulk of the Saudi fighters in Iraq were driven to extremism by the war itself.

Most of the Saudi militants in Iraq were motivated by revulsion at the idea of an Arab land being occupied by a non-Arab country. These feelings were intensified by the images of the occupation they see on television and the Internet – many of which come from sources intensely hostile to the US and war in Iraq, and which repeat or manipulate “worst case” images.

The catalyst most often cited was Abu Ghraib, though images from Guantanamo Bay were mentioned. Some recognized the name of a relative or friend posted on a website and feel compelled to join the cause. These factors, combined with the agitation regularly provided by militant clerics in Friday prayers, helped lead them to volunteer.

In one case, a 24-year-old student from a prominent Saudi tribe -- who had no previous affiliation with militants -- explained that he was motivated after the US invasion, to join the militants by stories he saw in the press, and through the forceful rhetoric of a mid-level cleric sympathetic to al-Qaeda. The cleric introduced him and three others to a Yemeni, who unbeknownst to them was an al-Qaeda member.

After undergoing several weeks of indoctrination, the group made its way to Syria, and then was escorted across the border to Iraq where they met their Iraqi handlers. There they assigned to a battalion, comprised mostly of Saudis (though those planning the attacks were exclusively Iraqi). After being appointed to carry out a suicide attack, the young man had second thoughts and instead, returned home to Saudi Arabia where he was arrested in January 2004. The cleric who had instigated the whole affair was also brought up on terrorism charges and is expected to face a long jail term. The Yemeni al-Qaeda member was killed in December 2004 following a failed attack on the Ministry of Interior.

There are other similar stories regarding young men who were enticed by rogue clerics into taking up arms in Iraq. Many were instructed to engage in suicide attacks and as a result, never return home. Interrogations of nearly 150 Saudis suspected of planning to join the Iraqi insurgency indicate that they were heeding the calls of clerics and activists to “drive the infidels out of Arab land.”

Like Jordan and most Arab countries, the Saudi government has sought to limit such calls for action, which inevitably feed neo-Salafi extremist as the expense of legitimate interpretations of Islam. King Abdullah has issued a strong new directive that holds those who conceal knowledge of terrorist activities as guilty as the terrorists themselves. However, many religious leaders and figures in Arab

nations have issued fatwas stating that waging jihad in Iraq is justified by the Koran due to its “defensive” nature. To illustrate, in October 2004, several clerics in Saudi Arabia said that, “it was the duty of every Muslim to go and fight in Iraq.”^{cccv}

On June 20, 2005, the Saudi government released a new list of 36 known al-Qaeda operatives in the Kingdom (all but one of those released on previous lists had been killed by Saudi security forces, so these individuals represented the foot soldiers of al-Qaeda, and they were considered far less dangerous). After a major crackdown in the Kingdom, as many as 21 of these low-level al-Qaeda members fled to Iraq.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef commented that when they return, they could be even “tougher” than those who fought in Afghanistan. “We expect the worse from those who went to Iraq,” he said. “They will be worse and we will be ready for them.” According to Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former Saudi Intelligence Chief and the new Ambassador to the US, approximately 150 Saudis are currently operating in Iraq.^{cccv}

Unlike the foreign fighters from poor countries such as Yemen and Egypt, Saudis entering Iraq often brought in money to support the cause, arriving with personal funds between \$10,000-\$15,000. Saudis are the most sought after militants; not only because of their cash contributions, but also because of the media attention their deaths as “martyrs” bring to the cause. This is a powerful recruiting tool. Because of the wealth of Saudi Arabia, and its well-developed press, there also tends to be much more coverage of Saudi deaths in Iraq than of those from poorer countries.

In contrast, if an Algerian or Egyptian militant dies in Iraq, it is unlikely that anyone in his home country will ever know. For instance, interrogations revealed that when an Algerian conducts a suicide bombing, the insurgency rarely has a means of contacting their next of kin. Saudis, however, always provide a contact number and a well-developed system is in place for recording and disseminating any “martyrdom operations” by Saudis.

Syria and Foreign Volunteers

The Saudi government had some success in its efforts to seal the border between the Kingdom and Iraq. However, several other countries provided relatively easy passage to Saudi and other foreign volunteers, and have repeatedly been accused by Iraqi authorities of not doing enough to prevent foreign fighters from entering Iraq.

Iraqi, Jordanian, and Saudi officials have all identified Syria as the biggest problem, but preventing militants from crossing its 380-mile border with Iraq is daunting. According to The Minister of Tourism, Syria was fast becoming one of the largest tourist destinations in the Middle East. In 2004, roughly 3.1 million tourists visited the country; the number of Saudis arriving in just the first seven months of 2005 increased to 270,000 from 230,000 in the same period in 2004.^{cccvii}

Separating the legitimate visitors from the militants is nearly impossible, and Saudi militants have taken advantage of this fact (See Appendix 1: Case Studies).

Most militants entering Iraq from Syria do so at a point just south of the mountainous Kurdish areas of the north, which is sparsely inhabited by nomadic Sunni Arab tribes, or due east from Dair al-Zawr into Iraq's Anbar province. Crossing near the southern portion of the border, which is mainly desert and is heavily occupied by Syrian and U.S. forces, is seldom done.

The crossing from Dair Al-Zawr province was the preferred route through the summer of 2005, because the majority of the inhabitants on both sides of the border were sympathetic to the insurgency, the scattering of villages along the border provides ample opportunity for covert movement, and constant insurgent attacks in the area are thought to keep the U.S. forces otherwise occupied. According to intelligence estimates, the key transit point here – for both Saudis and other Arabs – is the Bab al-Waleed crossing.

Even if Syria had the political will to completely and forcefully seal its border, it lacked sufficient resources to do so (Saudi Arabia has spent over \$1.2 billion in the past two years alone to Secure its border). As a result, it relies heavily upon screening those who enter the country. A problem with this method, however, is the difficulty of establishing proof of residency in Syria as well as the difficulties with verifying hotel reservations. Moreover, there is no visa requirement for Saudis to enter the country. Syria does, however, maintain a database of suspected militants, and several dozen Saudis have been arrested at the border. However, pressuring the Syrians additionally to tighten security could be both unrealistic and politically sensitive.

An April 2003 report by Italian investigators described Syria as a “hub” for the relocation of Zarqawi's group to Iraq. According to the report, “transcripts of wiretapped conversations among the arrested suspects and others paint a detailed picture of overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money between Europe and Iraq.”^{cccviii}

At the same time, there are those who claim the Syrian authorities are being *too* forceful in their crackdown of Saudis in the country. There have been recent reports that Syria has engaged in the systematic abuse, beating and robbery of Saudi tourists, a charge that Syria denies. According to semi-official reports published in *al-Watan*, released prisoners alleged that Syrian authorities arbitrarily arrested Saudis on the grounds that they were attempting to infiltrate Iraq to carry out terrorist attacks.

The former detainees maintained that they were “targeted for arrest in Syria without any charges.” They went on to say that, “if they had intended to sneak into Iraq, Saudi authorities would have kept them in custody when they were handed over to that country.” According to the Syrian Minister of Tourism, Saadallah Agha Kalaa, “no Saudi tourists have been harassed in Syria or subjected to unusual spate of robberies. Those who are spreading these rumors are seeking to harm Syria, which is a safe tourist destination.” In the murky world of the Syrian security services, it is difficult to discern the truth. Suffice it to say that

the problem of successfully halting the traffic of Saudis through Syria into Iraq is overwhelmingly difficult, politically charged, and operationally challenging.

Iran and Foreign Volunteers

Iraq also shares a long and relatively ungarded border with Iran, however, as a non-Sunni non-Arab country. Few Saudi and other Sunni extremists seem to use it as a point of entry. Saudi authorities have, however, captured a handful of militants who have gone through Iran and four were apprehended after passing from Iran to the United Arab Emirates.

Iran is also a major source of funding and logistics for militant Shiite groups in Iraq (mainly SCIRI). According to regional intelligence reports, Iran is suspected of arming and training some 40,000 Iraqi fighters with a view towards fomenting an Islamic revolution in Iraq. Most of these Iraqi Shiites are former prisoners of war captured during the Iran-Iraq war.^{cccix}

Sunni Iraqi Nationalist versus Sunni Islamic Extremist, or De Facto Cooperation?

Opinions differ sharply as to whether the different Sunni elements that make up the insurgency are dividing or coalescing. Many analysts suggest that Ba'athists and their former adversaries, such as the Salafists and the Kurds, are finding a common cause with foreign fighters.^{cccix} Yet, there are also reports of fighting between the more secular native Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremists and some executions of such extremists by the more secular groups. The level of communication and cooperation between the various movements remains unclear.

While not common, there have been growing reports of Iraqi Sunni executions of foreign Sunni Islamic extremists since November 2004.^{cccxi} One such case took place on August 13, when Sunni Iraqis in Ramadi took up arms against Abu Musab Zarqawi's forces in defense of their Shiite neighbors. The fighting came on the heels of a proclamation by Zarqawi that Ramadi's 3,000 Shiites leave the city of some 200,000 residents. The order was given in retaliation for supposed expulsions of Sunni minorities by Shiite militias in the mostly Shiite south of Iraq. Yet in Ramadi, members of the Sunni Dulaimi tribe, formed security cordons around Shiite homes and fought Zarqawi's men with grenade launchers and automatic weapons. All told, five foreign fighters and two local tribal fighters were killed.^{cccxi}

The inability to reliably characterize many Islamist movements--and the fact that successful suicide bombings and other attacks can have a major political and media impact even if they serve little clear military purpose--illustrates the fact that outside threats must be measured in terms of effectiveness and not numbers. In practice, the insurgents can choose the place and time of the attack, focus on targets with key political and media impact, and have an effect even if they fail to achieve the purpose of their attack but create visible explosions or kill innocent civilians.

In contrast, the insurgents often have excellent intelligence from sources within the Iraqi government, Iraqi forces, the Iraqis supporting Coalition forces and government activities, and Iraqi industry. This enables them to locate soft targets, hit at key points in terms of Iraq's economy and aid projects, and time their attacks to points of exceptional vulnerability. In practice, it also allows them to pick weak and vulnerable elements of the Iraqi military, security, and police forces and often produce significant casualties. At the same time, in many areas they can use intimidation, threats, kidnappings, and selective murders and assassinations to paralyze or undercut Iraqi units. This means a comparatively small number of core insurgents can bypass or attack the developing Iraqi forces with considerable success.

Like the Iraqi Sunni Arab insurgents, outside groups have improved their ability to take advantage of the fact that media coverage of the fighting, particularly by Arab satellite television, provides a real time picture of what tactics and weapons work, what strikes have most media and political impact, and often what targets are vulnerable. This "Al Jazeera Effect" substitutes for many elements of a CI system. At the same time, confronting this confusing array of threats is made more difficult without general Iraqi loyalty and stand-alone Iraqi forces.

These groups pose a special threat because they have no clear boundaries that limit them to Iraq, and so few restraints and limits on the kinds of violence they use. In their eyes, Iraq is a theater of operation for far broader causes. Their core beliefs are based a vision of Sunni Islam that rejects Shi'ites and even rejects Sunnis that dissent from the extremists.

Until September of 2005, such groups were generally careful to avoid any open claims of a split with Iraqis Shi'ites, and some cooperated with Sadr and his militia. They have, however, carried out mass attacks and bombings on Shi'ites, and they have repeatedly shown that they place few -- if any -- limits on the means of violence against those they regard as enemies of Islam. If anything, they ultimately gain the most if the Sunni and Shi'ite worlds divide, if Iraq becomes the continuing scene of violence between the US and Arabs, if US forces remain tied down, and if their actions create as much regional instability as possible.

This helps explain why Sunni insurgent movements, and particularly Islamist extremists, made Iraq's political process a primary target before and after the January 30, 2005 elections. Insurgents feared that a relatively secure and successful election would cement Shi'ite dominance in Iraq and would signal the demise of both the Islamist and Ba'athist visions for the future of Iraq.

On December 29, 2004, Ansar al-Sunna declared, "All polling stations and those in them will be targets for our brave soldiers."^{cccxi} Similarly, the Islamic Army in Iraq warned in mid-January 2005, "Do not allow polling stations in your neighborhood because they put your lives in danger. Do not also interfere with the employees who work in these voting centers, as they will be killed. Keep away from these places as they will be attacked." On January 23, 2005, Zarqawi released an audiotape saying, "We have declared an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology."^{cccxi}

Another disturbing aspect of this extremism is that it increasingly accuses the US of "dehumanizing" Muslims, Arabs, and Iraqis by its invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and actions in the war on terrorism. It cites episodes like the very real American abuses of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, and US strategic writing on the use of precision weapons and the use of specialized nuclear weapons like "bunker busters." The corollary of this argument is that Islamic extremists are justified, in turn, in "dehumanizing" Americans and all of their allies, and using tactics such as high casualty attacks like suicide bombings and the use of chemical and biological weapons. This again ignores all of the core teaching of Islam to justify virtually any act of violence, no matter how extreme.^{cccxv}

Assessing the Future Potential of the Sunni Insurgency

The future of the Sunni insurgency is dependent largely on whether the Iraqi political process succeeds in becoming truly inclusive or Iraq moves towards sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflict that divide it and create a state of civil war. The evidence remains mixed, although there are some positive indicators. Many Sunnis fell their self-imposed exclusion from the electoral and constitutional process before the January 30, 2005 elections backfired. Sunnis then saw the political future of the country unfolding with only limited Sunni input in the summer and fall of 2005. This led some Sunni leaders to reach out to the government and join in the effort to draft a new constitution. It led to compromises over the draft a constitution, and much stronger Sunni participating in the campaigns and voting for the December 2005 election.

The CIA placed Iraq's population at 26,074,906 as of July 2005, with Sunnis accounting for about 34.5 percent of the total, or about 8,995,843 people.^{cccxvi} Assuming the Sunni insurgency in Iraq is actually more in line with historical numbers, using the average of 2.4 percent (see Figure V.2), the Iraq insurgency would measure anywhere from about 215,900 people (2.4 percent of the Sunni population) to about 625,798 people (2.4 percent of the *total* Iraqi population). These numbers also do not account for the unknown foreign element.

A poll conducted by the Coalition in summer 2005 indicated that nearly 45 percent of the population supported the insurgent attacks.^{cccxvii} An insurgent-friendly population can expand the definition and scope of the insurgency when accounting for the multi-level aiding and abetting implicit in popular support. This also raises the possibility that the insurgents are currently only drawing on a small portion of their available manpower pool. Hundreds of thousands of Sunni men are former members of Saddam Hussein's security forces and military apparatus, and the poll numbers suggest that many in this population could remain willing to join in the fight.

Despite potentially large Sunni support, the Sunni elements of the insurgency have continued to lack the ideological cohesion and operational coordination necessary to mobilize these numbers with optimal effect. Leading figure Abu Musab Al Zarqawi only represents a minority within the minority Sunni community. Zarqawi sometimes seems to have faced hostile fire from Sunnis in Iraq as they defended Shiite neighbors from Zarqawi's men. Zarqawi's fighters

have increasingly taken aim at the Iraqi government during the constitutional process, which could prove a strategic error. Popular support for an uprising against Western powers could dwindle with Zarqawi's increased use of violence toward Iraqis.^{cccxviii} Indeed, in November of 2005, there were signs that this may have already begun to happen.

No insurgent group has been able to establish long-term control over "safe havens" from which to operate. Sunni insurgents have exerted considerable sway--at various points--in Fallujah, Rawa, Anna, Haditha, Ramadi, Rutbah, Qaim, Ubaydi, Karabilah, Haqliniyah, Barwanah, Tal Afar, and others. However, Coalition assaults have so-far disrupted continuous control.

In early September 2005, for example, US and Iraqi forces began "Operation Restoring Rights" on the insurgent stronghold of Tal Afar. It was the largest to-date urban assault since Fallujah. Troops faced little resistance, suspecting that most insurgents fled the city during the pre-assault evacuation of civilians. Developments in the fight for Tal Afar as of fall 2005:

- 157 terrorists were killed, 291 others were arrested. One Iraqi serviceman and six civilians were killed.
- In al-Sarai district of Tal-Afar, explosives were planted in most of the houses, which led to the destruction of 10-12 houses in the area.
- Around 10-12 houses have been destroyed cause of the explosives planted in them by the terrorists. Dozens of other houses were destroyed in the last three months during combat operations. 10-15 thousand USD will be paid for the families who lost their homes.
- 20 trucks of supplies have arrived to Tal-Afar from Baghdad. Ten ambulances were sent from Mosul to the nearby town. About 1,000 tents have been provided for the refugees who fled their town of Tal-Afar and seven medical facilities have been set on the outskirts of the northern town.
- The Iraqi government has said it will deploy peace-keeping forces into the town of Tal-Afar after the combat operations in the region are over. In addition to that, 1,000 residents of the town will be trained to maintain security in the long run. The tribes based in area will also play a major role in maintaining security and stability.^{cccxix}

Many experts saw the Zarqawi orchestrated attacks against three US-owned hotels in Amman on November 9 as a sign that the insurgency was expanding beyond Iraq. It is too early, however, to generalize about Zarqawi's influence outside Iraq. Rather than see Iraq as spilling over into other countries, or as some kind of magnet for terrorism, it is wise to consider Zarqawi's history, and the fact his attack on Jordan may be more a logical extension of his past focus on that country.

VI. The Uncertain Status of the Shi'ites

While domestic and foreign Sunni Islamists now dominate the insurgency, there is a risk of civil war, and that the conflict could escalate to include other ethnic and sectarian groups. This risk is most serious between Iraqi Arab Sunni and Iraqi Arab Shi'ite, although ethnic divisions play a major role as well. The tensions between religious Iraqi Arab Shi'ites and Sunni Islamist extremist groups are particularly dangerous and there are growing indicators that Shi'ites are taking revenge for Sunni insurgent attacks.

A major civil war in Iraq still seems avoidable, but the risk is all too real and can scarcely be dismissed. Iraqi Arab Shi'ites resent the US presence, but most seem to realize that the fact they are 60% of the population will give them political dominance *if* Iraq is secure enough so that its new political system divides up power according to the size of given factions. Not all recognize the need to forgive their past treatment, to include Sunnis in the government and military, or to resist the continuing provocation of Sunni extremist attacks.

The good news is that past public opinion polls have shown that Arab Shi'ites, like Arab Sunnis, favor a unified Iraq and a strong central government. Such polls also showed, however, that Iraqi Shi'ites tended to be more religious in terms of support for recognition that Iraq should be an "Islamic state" than Sunnis. In addition, leading Iraqi clerics have not supported anything approaching Iran's concept of a supreme leader, and key figures like the Grand Ayatollah Sistani have strong oppose direct clerical participation in the government or politics.

Key Shi'ite political parties like Al Dawa and SCIRI do have a strong religious character, but have so far been largely secular in their goals and actions. Although Al Dawa and SCIRI operated in Iran from 1980 onwards, they remain Iraqi nationalists, and their "gratitude" to Iran is often limited – particularly because of Iran's history of treating them on an opportunistic basis before the fall of Saddam Hussein. Members of Al Dawa can privately be sharply critical of Iran, and members of both parties resent past pressure to recognize the authority of Iran's supreme leader.

The bad news is that many Shi'ites seem to have reacted to the debate over federalism during the drafting of the constitution by coming to support a Shi'ite federation in the south. Shi'ite support for nationalism in no way means that Shi'ites do not feel it is "their turn" to have control over Iraqi politics, power, and wealth. Many Shi'ites feel that former Ba'athists should be punished for their actions in the previous regime. Most important, an increasing number seem to support revenge or "payback" for attacks by the Sunni insurgents.

Shi'ite Factions and the Various Militias

The years following Saddam's fall have led to growing tensions between Shi'ite and Sunni. The seriousness of these tensions has grown since late 2003 because of repeated Sunni insurgent attacks on Shi'ite targets. They have also been a reaction to Sunni politics. For example, both Iraq's Sunni interim president, Ghazi al-Yahwar, and King Abdullah of Jordan, sounded warnings about the risks of

Shi'ite dominance and possible Iranian influence before the January 30, 2005 elections.^{ccccx}

Arab Shi'ites, in contrast, have been increasingly polarized by the Sunni suicide attacks on Shi'ite targets, kidnappings, over killings and disappearances described in previous chapters, and which have intensified since the January 2005 elections. They are all too aware that figures like Zarqawi have threatened jihad against Shi'ite and have said they are not legitimate followers of Islam.

The main Shi'ite leaders in the government have continued to seek an inclusive political solution and read out to the Sunnis, but many of their followers have increasingly reacted to Sunni attacks by taking revenge or seeking to exclude Sunnis from their neighborhoods, government jobs, contracts, and the security services.

Although the CPA tried to establish legal barriers to maintaining militias by issuing Order 91 in April 2004, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the faction of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim still have large militia elements. These are forces that Sunni groups have increasingly accused of committing atrocities against them since the spring of 2005. Al Dawa, the Badr Organization, and the Iraqi Hezbollah remain potential security problems, and Sunnis feel particularly threatened by the Badr Organization.

The Bush Administration summarized the risks posed by Shi'ite militias as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:"

More than a dozen militias have been documented in Iraq, varying in size from less than a hundred to tens of thousands of members. Some were organized in loose cellular structures, while others had a more conventional military organization. Some were concentrated around a single locale, while others had a more regional footprint. Some of them were wholly indigenous, while others received support such as training, equipment, and money from outside Iraq.

Typically, the militias were armed with light weapons and operated as cells or small units. Even if they do not take up arms against the government, militias can pose a long-term challenge to the authority and sovereignty of the central government. This was the driving force behind the creation of Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 and the Transition and Re-Integration Committee. For the same reason, Article 27 of the Transitional Administrative Law and Article 9 of the draft Iraqi Constitution prohibit armed forces or militias that are not part of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

The realities of Iraq's political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term. Provided the constitution is ratified in October, the government elected in December will have a four-year term of office, and it will have the task of executing the militia-control provisions of the constitution. Although it is often referred to as an Iraqi militia, the Jaysh al Mahdi (or "Mahdi Army") of radical Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr fought Coalition Forces and Iraqi forces in April and August of 2004. The Peshmerga and the Badr Organization are viewed as militias by the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces, while the Mahdi Army is viewed as a potentially insurgent organization.

- Badr Organization. Officially known as the Badr Organization for the Reconstruction and Development, it is the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iran (SCIRI), the largest Shi'ite party in Iraq. It is reported to have links with both

Iranian and Iraqi intelligence services and provides protective security for many Shi'ite religious sites as well as religious and secular leaders. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is protected by the Badr militia. The Badr Organization has been implicated in the revenge killings of Ba'athists and has also been involved in combat and street fighting with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

- Jaysh al Mahdi. The Mahdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr engaged in open combat with Coalition and Iraqi forces in April and August of last year, most notably in the battles in and around Najaf. The Mahdi Army has continued to exist after an October 2004 ceasefire agreement, although the Iraqi government has made repeated calls for its disbandment. The exact size of the organization is unknown. There is evidence that they are supplied from sources outside of Iraq, most notably Iran.

These militias were supposed to have been abolished under the guidelines set out by the CPA in the interim government. Iraqi officials state that they now are nominally under the control of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior. However, Iraq's leaders have been ambiguous about the role the militias actually play. In early June 2005, Prime Minister Jafari held a press conference in which he lauded the Kurdish Pesh Merga and the Badr Organization, formerly the Badr Brigade. Iraqi President, and Kurd, Jalal Talibani joined the prime minister as well as the founder of the Badr Organization and SCIRI head, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, at Hakim's headquarters to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Badr group.^{cccxix}

The president applauded what he, and presumably Jafari, viewed as the militias' positive contributions to Iraq. Talibani stated, "[The Badr Organization] and the Pesh Merga are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq."^{cccxix} Addressing a variety of allegations against the two militias, Talibani remarked, "It [Badr Organization] is a patriotic group that works for Iraq's interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of struggle."^{cccxiii} Jafari went on to dub the Badr Organization a "shield" protecting Iraq.

Shi'ites and Kurds see the militias an important aid in fighting the insurgency. In contrast, Sunnis accuse the militias – particularly the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army, and police and elements of the special security forces dominated by these militias -- of killings, intimidation and a host of other crimes. In contrast, This has led to steadily rising tension, and divisions between Sunni and Shi'ite, over the roles the Shi'ite militias and government forces with large numbers of former militia are playing in any revenge killings.

Many Sunnis have vehemently condemned the Badr Organization. The Badr Organization, and its precursor the Badr Brigade, was created by SCIRI and trained by the Iranian military. What influence the Iranians may have over the Badr is unclear. Once more, Sunnis assert that the Badr are the ones responsible for the targeting and assassination of a number of senior Sunni clerics, many from the Muslim Scholars' Board. The Coalition has yet to find evidence of such activity on part of the Badr Organization, but such charges are virtually impossible to disprove.

While it is far from clear how much the Badr Corps or other Shi'ites are to blame, some Sunnis feel that the Badr Corps has been responsible for targeting Sunni

leaders and figures, killing them and dumping their bodies. Baghdad's central morgue began to detect such killings shortly after the new government was formed on April 28, 2005, and claimed that at least 30 cases had been found by late June.

The killers were said to have worn police uniforms while seizing some victims. Police uniforms can be bought cheaply in much of Iraq, but they also had Toyotas and Glock pistols, which are more difficult to obtain. There have also been mass abductions and killings of ordinary Sunnis, like 14 Sunni farmers who were taken from a Baghdad vegetable market on May 5, 2005. It is possible that insurgents have done this to try to foment sectarian tension, but the frequency and location of many revenge killings and acts of intimidation raises questions about whether this is a credible explanation for many incidents.^{ccccxiv}

Many Sunnis opposed the appointment of Bayan Jabr as Minister of the Interior in April 2005, claiming that, as a member of SCIRI, he was a pawn of the Iranians and that the ministry's Wolf Brigade, led by Abdul Waleed, was responsible for some of the assassinations of Sunni figures.^{ccccxv} By the fall of 2005, many Iraqis saw Iraq's Interior Ministry and the police were being classified as predominantly Shiite in orientation. The Army, meanwhile, was seen as being predominantly Sunni in makeup.^{ccccxvi}

There were more and more reports of revenge killing and anti-Sunni strikes by both the Shi'ite militias and Shi'ite elements in the security forces and police during 2005.^{ccccxvii} There are credible reports that hundred of Sunni bodies have been found in locations like rivers, desert roads, open desert, sewage disposal facilities, and garbage dumps since the new government was formed that April.

The Baghdad morgue reported growing numbers of corpses with their hands bound by police handcuffs, and that it processed 7,553 corpses between January and September 2005, versus only 5,239 for the same period in 2004. Sunni groups like the Moslem Scholars Association have published pictures of such corps and lists of the dead, and have claimed there are Shi'ite death squadrons. The Inspector General of the Ministry of the Interior, General Nori Nori said that, "There are such groups operating -- yes this is correct." In November, a raid on a secret MOI detention facility in southeastern Baghdad, that was operated by former members of the Badr Brigade, was linked to the death of 18 detainees reported to have died under torture. Some 220 men were held in filthy conditions and subject to torture.^{ccccxviii}

Minister of Interior Jabr denied any government involvement, and claimed that if MOI security forces and police uniforms and cars have been seen, they were stolen. Other sources, however, confirmed that some of the killings of an estimated 700 Sunnis between August and November 2005 involved men who identified themselves as Ministry of Interior forces.^{ccccxix} This increased the risk that Iraqi forces could be divided by factions, decreasing their effectiveness and leading to the disintegration of Iraqi forces if Iraq were to descend into full-scale civil war.

The killing of at least 14 Sunnis could be clearly traced to MOI arrest records several weeks earlier.^{cccxix} US sources also noted that large number of members of the Bader Organization had joined the MOI forces, including the police and commando units, since the new government was formed in April 2003, and the lines between some MOI units and the Badr Organization had become increasingly blurred.

The police expanded from some 31,000 men in July 2004 to nearly 95,000 in July 2005, sometimes with only limited background checks. In the process, substantial numbers of men from both the Bader Organization and the Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army joined the force. In the case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of MOI and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Bader Organization tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police, but there were no rigid divisions. While both the Iraqi government and Coalition claimed things were improving, a September 2005 report by the ICG suggested that the process of drafting a constitution had helped exacerbate the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions between Iraqis.^{cccxixi}

By late 2005, US officials and military sources were complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations. They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units, and that they were carrying out illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. It had recruited larger numbers of new Shi'ite members after the new government was formed in April 2005, however, and its commander, General Rashid Flaih Mohammed was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brigadier General Mohammed Ezzawi Hussein Alwann, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.^{cccxixii}

The discovery of some 169 Sunnis held in horrible conditions in a bunker in Baghdad in November 2005 raised further issues. Many were tortured, and the Special Investigative Unit carrying out the detentions was an MOI unit run by an MOI brigadier general and colonel. The colonel was an intelligence officer said to be reporting directly to Jabr.

There were, however, many cases where Sunni Islamic insurgents had every reason to try to implicate the security services. Some of the killings in late November involved key Sunni politicians like Ayad Alizi and Al Hussein, leading members of the Iraqi Islamic Party which was a member of the Sunni coalition competing in the December 15th elections. Shi'ites seemed to have little reason to strike at such targets.^{cccxixiii}

The Role of Moqtada al-Sadr

Unlike most Iraqi religious leaders, who are "quietists," and do not believe the clergy should play a direct role in politics, the Moqtada al-Sadr is an activist related to two of Iraq's greatest activist clerics: Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Al-

Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr -- both of whom were killed by Saddam Hussein.

Sadr has played a divisive role in Iraq since the first days after the fall of Saddam Hussein. He has been accused of playing a role in the murder of rival Shi'ite clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid al-Khoi on April 10, 2003. He attacked the US presence in Iraq almost immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein and denounced the members of the Iraqi interim government as puppets in a sermon in Najaf as early as July 18, 2003.

Sadr's militia began playing a role in the intra-sect Shiite power struggle as early as October 13, 2003, when al-Sadr's men attacked supporters of moderate Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani near the Imam Hussein shrine.^{cccxixiv} His Mahdi (Mahdi) Army presented a serious threat to Coalition and government forces in Najaf, in Sadr City in Baghdad, and in other Shi'ite areas in the south during much of the summer and early fall of 2004. Moqtada al-Sadr called on his followers in Iraq to rise up and attack US forces on August 5th, and broke out in three cities between his supporters and US and Iraqi security forces, especially in Najaf and Sadr City in Baghdad. US officials indicated that US forces faced up to 160 attacks per week in Sadr City between August and September 2004 of varying severity.

The defeat of Sadr's forces, and a series of political compromises, led Sadr to turn away from armed struggle in the late fall and early winter of 2004. US officials indicated that the number of attacks dropped significantly to between zero and five a week in early 2005, and they remained at or below this level through November 2005. More important, Sadr joined the Shi'ite coalition in the election campaign and his supporters play a role in the new National Assembly and government.

General John Abizaid remarked in March 2005, however, "we have not seen the end of Muqtada Sadr's challenge."^{cccxv} Although Iraqi government forces have been able to move in to the area, Sadr's movement still plays a major political role in Sadr City in Baghdad, and remains active in poorer Shi'ite areas throughout the country.

Sadr's supporters sponsored demonstrations calling for US forces to leave Iraq in April 2005, and top Sadr aides in his Independent National Bloc issued warnings to Ibrahim Jafari, then the prime minister designate, that he must pay more attention to these demands or that the Sadr faction might leave the United Iraqi Alliance and become an active part of the opposition. The group also demanded the release of some 200 Sadr activists arrested during earlier fighting and that all criminal charges against Sadr be dropped.^{cccxvi}

Sadr was able to exploit the political weakness and divisions of other Shi'ite movements in the ^{cccxvii} south and their lack of ability to govern, as well as the fact other hard-line Islamist movements won significant numbers of seats in local governments in key areas like Basra.^{cccxviii} In summer 2005, Sadr attempted to collect one million signatures on a petition that asked the Coalition to leave Iraq in what appeared to be his burgeoning attempts to recast himself as a major

political force within Iraq. Sadr's Council for Vic and Virtue launched at least one attack on secular students in Basra for having a mixed picnic.^{cccxxxix}

Sadr revived the Mahdi Army, which was again beginning to be openly active in parts of Southern Iraq such as Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah, and still had cells in Najaf and Qut as well. While some US official sources stated the army was relatively weak, it began to hold parades again, and while only limited numbers of arms were displayed, it was clear that such weapons were still available in the places where they had been hidden during the fighting the previous year.^{cccxi}

By the late spring of 2005, the Mahdi (Mahdi) Army seemed to be the largest independent force in Basra, played a major role in policing Amarah, and had effectively struck a bargain with the government police in Nasiriyah that allowed it to play a major role. By the late fall of 2005, some sources estimated that some 90% of the 35,000 police in Northeast Baghdad had ties to Sadr and the Mahdi forces. They were reported to be playing a major role in pushing Sunnis out of Shi'ite neighborhoods.^{cccxi}

Unlike most militias, the Mahdi Army had the active participation of Shi'ite clergy, mostly "activists" who strongly supported Sadr. One reason for their rebirth was the lack of effective action by the government. For example, the government police in Nasiriyah had 5,500 men, but was 2,500 men short of its goal.^{cccxi} In August 2005, Basra police Chief Hassam Sawadi said that he had lost control over three-quarters of his police force, and that men in his ranks were using their power to assassinate opponents.^{cccxi}

Sadr has remained publicly supportive of the political process in Iraq, and has urged Shiites to avoid sectarian fighting with the Sunni population. Yet, while Sadr urged his followers not to be drawn into sectarian fighting, his organization was accused of a rash of political assassinations and kidnappings in the Shiite south in the summer of 2005. On August 24, 2005, seven people died in an attack on Sadr's office in Najaf, which led to unrest among Shiite populations there and in other cities. Sadr's movement also began to publicly reassert in the late in late summer of 2005, capitalizing on the release of Hazem Araj and other Sadr leaders from prison.

Sadr did, however, continue to call for calm and continued his public support of non-reprisal. He sided with anti-federalist Sunni leaders during the drafting and review of the Iraqi constitution.^{cccxi} He supported continued Shiite political involvement in the new government, although many fear that he eventually wants to see a fundamentalist government appear.

The strength of his militia remains a concern. Since the fall of 2005, his organization and other Shi'ite groups with similar beliefs have been accused of political assassinations and kidnappings, as have Kurdish forces in the North. Sadr's Mahdi Army maintains control over certain areas in cities like Basra and Sadr City, and creates an environment of fear according to local accounts.^{cccxi}

His organization staged several large demonstrations as a show of strength. In mid-September, militiamen from the Mahdi Army in Basra directly engaged in battles against US and British troops. Shootouts between supporters of Sadr and

Coalition forces also erupted in Sadr City during the last week in September. On October 27, members of the Mahdi army clashed with Sunni gunmen outside of Baghdad. The fighting, which occurred in the village of Bismaya in the Nahrawan area south of Baghdad, claimed more than thirty lives.^{cccxlvi} The militia battles in October proved to be the deadliest in months.

In a new twist and as a sign of his enduring power, Sadr entered into a new political alliance with the two largest Shiite parties in the country on the very same day his forces battled militias in Bismaya. The alliance brought together Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari's Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and Sadr's supporters. The move made Moqtada Sadr an even larger player in Iraqi politics. Because of the deal, Sadr-backed candidates would appear on the same ticket alongside members of the Shiite-led government in the December elections. Sadr had earlier pledged to support the elections but said he would not be supporting any particular list of candidates.

Although US officials were encouraged by Sadr's pledge to support the December 15 elections, they remained cautiously optimistic in the fall of 2005. Sadr has continuously refused to disband his militia, which continued to grow in power and influence in the fall of 2005. There were also reports that many Mahdi members have joined the police and other government security forces, contributing to the already fragmented nature of the Iraqi security forces.

Internal Shiite Divisions

Shi'ite splits are possible, as are sectarian and ethnic splits. Moreover, few Shi'ites can forget that Sadr is believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Al Khoi right after the fall of Saddam Hussein and for the killing of Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim's brother, in August 2003.

Basra was effectively taken over by a local government after the January 30, 2005 election that was much more of a Shi'ite fundamentalist government than the mainstream of al Dawa or SCIRI. The local police was intimidated or pushed aside by such elements in May, and Shi'ite militia joined the police and took over. While some of those accused of being involved – such as police Chief Lt. Colonel Salam Badran --were affiliated with SCIRI in the past, most such "Islamists" seem more fundamentalist than SCIRI's leadership. There have been reports of threats, beatings, and killings affecting liquor stores, male doctors who treat women, and even barbers cutting hair in "non-Islamic" ways. Individuals in plain clothes have also made threats and put pressure on local businesses. Even if such cases do not divide Iraq's Arab Shi'ites – and serious issues do exist about how "Islamic" the future government should be in Shi'ite terms and who should rule – they may well cause even greater fear among Sunnis and increase the risk of civil conflict.^{cccxlvii}

Divisions among Shi'ite groups could put new burdens on Iraq's forces, and/or potentially paralyze or divide key elements of the government. It is not clear that Sadr and other Shi'ite elements will hold together, or that other splits will not occur during 2005. Iraq must deal with forging and approving a constitution and with moving towards general elections at the end of the year without any clear

picture of what political leaders, political parties, and power sharing arrangements will emerge in the process.

The risk also exists that the Kurds and Shi'ites might split in ways that could lead to civil conflict or that Shi'ite politics may begin to react far more violently to Sunni insurgent bombings and attacks, and striking back at the Sunnis rather than seeking to include them. Shi'ite political leaders have generally been careful to avoid this so far, but the preaching in mosques has become more polarized, and popular tension is growing. Attacks like the bombings in Karbala and Najaf on December 20, 2004 have been followed up by many similar anti-Shi'ite attacks since the elections. At least some Sunni Arab and Islamist extremist insurgents are certain to continue to try to provoke sectarian Sunni versus Shi'ite rift using any means possible, no matter how bloody and violent.

Insurgent Pressure on the Shi'ites to Move Toward Civil War

While the election turnout initially dealt an apparent blow to the Sunni insurrection, much of the post-election insurgent activity has been directly targeted at Shi'ite clergy and political leaders, Shi'ite civilians, and Shi'ite institutions. Attacks have also been targeted for key Shi'ite holidays like the February 19th Ashura holiday and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. While most Shi'ite leaders strongly resisted any calls for reprisals against Sunnis, other Shi'ites called for such action, and there do seem to have been Shi'ite killings of Sunni clergy and civilians.^{ccclviii} Some top leaders also called for bringing key militias like the Shi'ite Badr Corps and Kurdish Pesh Merga actively into the struggle.

Some US officials, however, were optimistic in the summer of 2005. Brig. Gen. John Custer stated, "The incredible violence that the Shi'a community has endured over last year leads me to believe that they are smart enough and understanding of the big picture enough to back away from civil war at all costs. The specter of the dark cloud of civil war has moved away. It is much less evident than it was last year."^{ccclxix}

The single deadliest day for Iraqi Shi'ites was August 31 when almost 1,000 Shi'ite pilgrims were killed in a stampede in Baghdad. The pilgrims were crossing the al-Aima bridge en route to the shrine of Moussa al-Kadhim when rumors began to spread that there were Sunni suicide bombers in their midst. The resulting panic ended in 953 Shi'ites dead, according to the Iraqi interior ministry. Moqtada al-Sadr vowed vengeance against Sunnis, who he believed organized the pandemonium. Later in a sermon, Sadr spoke out against the Coalition's presence in Iraq, as it hampered a sectarian war, which he asserted had already begun.^{cccl} Prior to the stampede, Moqtada al-Sadr had publicly opposed Shi'ite participation in sectarian warfare.

As already mentioned, on September 14, Iraq's Al-Qaeda leader and Sunni insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi declared war on Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq. The declaration was made by through an audio file on the Internet. According to the

recording, the declaration came in response to the recent joint U.S.-Iraqi offensive in the town of Tal Afar, a Sunni insurgent stronghold. Zarqawi referred to the assault as an “organized sectarian war.” Earlier that day, the Sunni-Muslim al Qaeda said in an Internet posting it was waging a nationwide suicide bombing campaign to avenge the military offensive against Sunni rebels in Tal Afar. Following Zarqawi’s declaration, Baghdad erupted in violence:

- September 14, 2005:
 - At least 167 people die and more than 570 injured as more than a dozen bombs explode throughout Baghdad. Marks the single worst day of killing to hit the capital since the US-led invasion of March 2003.
 - A suicide bomber in a car blew himself up in Baghdad, killing 11 people who lined up to refill gas canisters, police said. The blast in northern Baghdad, which also wounded 14, came hours after what appeared to be a series of coordinated blasts, including one that killed at least 114 people.
 - Gunmen wearing military uniforms surrounded the village of Taaji north of Baghdad and executed 17 men, police said. The dead were members of the Tameem tribe, al-Hayali said. The gunmen looted the village before leaving.
 - Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded in the Uruba Square in the Zahra district of northwest Baghdad. The terrorist attack killed at least 75 Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 130. The wounded were evacuated to the Al-Shulla Hospital in central Baghdad where another suicide VBIED detonated, causing more civilian casualties.
 - Suicide Car bomb attack in Kadimiya in market area. At least 80 killed, 150+ injured. North of Centre of Baghdad.
 - Task Force Baghdad unit reported striking a VBIED in west Baghdad. The Soldiers established a cordon and began searching the area for triggermen. Several Iraqi civilians were wounded in the attack. There were no U.S. casualties.
 - VBIED detonated on a U.S. convoy in east Baghdad. The suicide bomber was reportedly driving against traffic before detonating on the convoy. Two U.S. Soldiers received non-life-threatening wounds in the attack. Ten minutes later, a suicide VBIED detonated near a U.S. convoy in southeast Baghdad with no injuries to U.S. personnel or damage to equipment.
 - VBIED attack against U.S. forces in central Baghdad failed when the terrorist struck an M1 Abrams tank but did not detonate his explosives. The tank crew reported the driver was still alive and trapped inside the vehicle with a 155-millimeter round. The Task Force Baghdad unit secured the site and called for assistance from an explosive ordnance disposal team.
- September 15, 2005:
 - Suicide bombers continued to strike Baghdad, killing at least 31 people, 23 of them Iraqi police and Interior Ministry commandos.
 - A suicide bomber killed 15 police commandos in the Dora district of Baghdad, police said. Five civilians were also killed. The blast wounded 21 people. Hours later, two more bombs detonated in the same area. Ten more policemen died in the explosion and ensuing gun battle with insurgents.
 - Two police officers were killed and two wounded in Kirkuk.
 - Three civilians were killed in an attack on a Ministry of Defense bus east of Baghdad.

- Three bodies of people who had been shot dead were found in the Shula district of Baghdad, police said.
- Three bodies were found in the New Baghdad district. Police said they had been shot dead.
- Gunmen in northern Baghdad killed three Shi'ite pilgrims on route to Karbala for a religious festival.
- Three workers were killed and a dozen wounded in east Baghdad in a drive-by shooting by unidentified gunmen. The attack occurred in an area where laborers gather each day for work.

Violence continued to escalate throughout September, with insurgents killing more than 100 Iraqi civilians on the last two days of the month alone in the predominantly Shiite town of Balad, in the Sunni region of Salah ad Din, north of Baghdad.^{cccli} September 2005 was the bloodiest month yet in terms of multiple-fatality insurgent bombings, with 481 Iraqis killed and 1,074 wounded.^{ccclii} The wave of deadly attacks launched by Zarqawi continued into October, suggesting there would be no immediate end in sight to the violence. Citing the terrorists' history of increasing attacks before major Iraqi political milestones, President Bush warned that the violence would further intensify in the run-up to the October 15 referendum and December elections.^{cccliii} Not surprisingly, as violence in Iraq increased in the fall of 2005 so too did the number of sectarian incidents. In one six-week period, more than 30 Iraqis died as part of sectarian attacks in the Ghazaliya neighborhood of Baghdad. Sectarian violence in Baghdad's mixed neighborhoods began accelerating sharply in the summer of 2005 and continued to do so throughout the fall of 2005. According to Iraqi government statistics, the number of sectarian targeted killings almost doubled in 2005, in spite of the increased presence of Iraqi security forces on the streets.^{cccliv}

In many cases, such as the Ghazaliya murders, the victims were randomly selected based on their religion and had little if any involvement in politics. The ongoing violence also caused many Iraqis to relocate to areas where they constitute the majority. According to Edward Joseph of the Woodrow Wilson Center, "Once displacement starts, it is a never-ending cycle." Joseph believes the key question will be how the minority community reacts after the murder of one of its own: "If they don't flee, if they just hang around and then order up some reprisal killing a little later...it's probably less likely to be civil war." But, Joseph also notes that the current pattern of displacement in Iraq today loosely resembles the departure of Bosnian Muslims in the mid-1990s following attacks by Serbian militias, a development that ended up increasing, not decreasing, the level of violence in that region.

As in 2004, Shiite-Sunni violence continued during the holy month of Ramadan in 2005. On the first day of the month long holiday, a suicide car bomber targeting an Interior Ministry official blew himself up outside Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding several civilians.^{ccclv} That same day, an Internet message posted by Al Qaida in Iraq called for additional attacks during the holy month as well as a boycott of the October 15 referendum. The following day, October 5, a suicide car bomb exploded outside the Husseinayat Ibn al-Nama Mosque in Hillah as

Shiite worshippers gathered to pray, killing at least 24 and wounding several dozen.^{ccclvi}

According to Aya Abu Jihad, the owner of a store in Baghdad, "People are being killed because they are Shiites, and others are killed because they are Sunnis." Some senior Iraqi government officials believe that the recent wave of sectarian violence poses a greater threat to stability than does the possible rejection of the draft constitution by a majority of Iraqis: "The government now is so inefficient at controlling the situation that the security situation has deteriorated, and so the political situation has deteriorated...They have to get security under control, otherwise [the constitution] is not going to matter." A former general in the Iraqi army known as Abu Arab echoed that sentiment, saying, "People don't want a constitution-they want security."^{ccclvii}

VII. The Kurds and Other Minorities

The Kurds represent a faction that the January 2005 elections made far more powerful relative to other Iraqi factions in military and security terms than their 15% of the population might indicate. Iraqi security and stability depends on finding a power-sharing arrangement that gives the Kurds incentives to be part of the political process just as much as it does on developing such arrangements for the Arab Sunnis.

There is no basic political or economic reason such a compromise cannot be found. Unfortunately, however, Iraq has a long history of not finding such compromises on a lasting basis and Saddam Hussein's legacy left many areas where Kurds were forcibly expelled and Sunni Arabs and minorities were given their homes and property.

Kurdish politics also include large numbers of Kurds who favor independence over political inclusiveness. This helps explain why the Kurdish turnout in the October referendum on the constitution varied widely. In predominantly Kurdish provinces, participation was much lower than in the January election. Some analysts have suggested the lower turnout was a result of increased voter apathy among a Kurdish population who felt assured the Constitution would pass.

Others note the increase in dissatisfaction with the central government and remaining in Iraq among Kurdish populations. Riots and demonstrations protesting the shortages of gas, fuel and power have become more common in Kurdish cities in recent months.^{ccclviii} Some Kurds may also have felt let down by a Constitution that did not specifically address the status of Kirkuk or lay out a clear path to secession.^{ccclix}

Kurdish Parties and the Kurdish Militias

The two major Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) headed by Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Jalal Talibani, retain powerful militias, known collectively as the Pesh Merga. Their current strength is difficult to estimate, and some elements are either operating in Iraqi forces or have been trained by US advisors. The Iraqi Kurds could probably assemble a force in excess of 10,000 fighters – albeit of very different levels of training and equipment.

The Kurdish Pesh Merga trace their origins to the Iraqi civil wars of the 1920s. They fought against the Saddam Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq war and supported U.S. and Coalition military action in 2003. The Peshmerga groups of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) serve as the primary security force for the Kurdish regional government. The PUK and KDP claim that there are 100,000 Peshmerga troops, and they have insisted on keeping the Peshmerga intact as guarantors of Kurdish security and political self-determination.

Tensions Between the Kurds and Other Iraqis

There are serious tensions between the Kurds, the Turcomans, and Assyrian Christians, as well as between Kurds and Arabs. At a local level, there are many small tribal elements as well as numerous “bodyguards,” and long histories of tensions and feuds. Even if Iraq never divides along national fracture lines, some form of regional or local violence is all too possible.

Insurgent activity in the Kurdish areas was particularly intense in the city of Irbil, which has been the site of several suicide bombings. In summer 2005, Kurdish security officials and the KDP intelligence service announced the arrest of approximately six insurgent suspects who, the authorities believe, came from six separate and previously unheard of militant organizations. The head of the Irbil security police, Abdulla Ali, stated that there was evidence that the groups had links to international terror groups, established jihadi groups in Iraq like Ansar al-Sunna, and even links to intelligence services from nearby countries.^{ccclx} This evidence was not made public, but the Kurdish authorities stated that it appeared as though various groups were working together and that, to the anger and disappointment of the Kurdish authorities, that local Kurds were assisting them.

Tension between the Kurds and Iraqi Arabs and other minorities has also been critical in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul. The Kurds claim territory claimed by other Iraqi ethnic groups, and demand the return of property they assert was seized by Saddam Hussein, during his various efforts at ethnic cleansing from 1975 to 2003.

The future of Kirkuk and the northern oil fields around it is the subject of considerable local and national political controversy between the Kurds and other Iraqis. The Kurds claim that over 220,000 Kurds were driven out of their homes by Saddam in the 1970s and fighting in the Gulf War, and that over 120,000 Arabs were imported into “Kurdish territory.” The Kurds see control of Kirkuk as their one chance to have territorial control over a major portion of Iraq’s oil reserves, but Kirkuk is now roughly 35% Kurd, 35% Arab, 26% Turcoman, and 4% other. This makes any such solution almost impossible unless it is violent.

There has been some armed violence between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans, as well as struggles over “soft” ethnic cleansing in the North, and there may well be more violence in the future. Many experts feel that the only reason Kirkuk has been relatively peaceful, and still has something approaching a representative government, is that the Kurds have not been strong enough relative to the other factions in the city to impose their will by intimidation or force.

According to US government documents and interviews with Turcoman families, Kurdish security forces abducted hundred of Turcoman from Kirkuk in the spring and summer months of 2005 and put them in prisons deep within acknowledged Kurdish territory.^{ccclxi} This was an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority in order to lend greater legitimacy to the Kurds claim on Kirkuk.

Reports in August 2005 indicated that government police and military forces in the Kurdish north were using their power to intimidate Arabs through abductions

and assassinations. Such activity poses the threat of deepening regional fissures. Likewise, the misuse of power by Coalition-sponsored forces could foreseeably deepen resentment toward Coalition forces, particularly among the Sunni population.^{ccclxii}

Other Kurdish actions have exacerbated ethnic tension in a struggle for the control of Kirkuk. There are reports that the KDP and PUK systematically kidnapped hundreds of Arabs and Turcomans from the city and transported them to prisons in established Kurdish territory.^{ccclxiii} This activity allegedly spread to Mosul as well. While some of the abductions had occurred in 2004, reports indicated that there was a renewed effort following the January 30th elections that solidified the two parties' primacy in the Kurdish areas. According to a leaked State Department cable in mid-June 2005, the abducted were taken to KDP and PUK intelligence-run prisons in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah without the knowledge of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of the Interior, but sometimes with US knowledge. In fact, the Emergency Services Unit, a special Kirkuk force within the police, was both closely tied to the US military and implicated in many of the abductions, along with the Asayesh Kurdish intelligence service.^{ccclxiv} It should be noted that the head of the Emergency Services Unit is a former PUK fighter.

Kirkuk province's Kurdish governor, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, stated that the allegations were false. However, the State Department cable indicated that the US 116th Brigade Combat Team had known about the activity and had asked the Kurdish parties to stop.^{ccclxv} According to Kirkuk's chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40% of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions despite his orders and that they followed the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, "The main problem is that the loyalty to the police is to the parties and not the police force. They'll obey the parties' orders and disobey us."^{ccclxvi} According to Abdel-Rahman, the provincial police director, Sherko Shakir Hakim, refused to retire as ordered by the government in Baghdad once he was assured that the KDP and PUK would continue to pay him if he stayed on. The various factions in Kirkuk do seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continues to present a serious risk of future conflict.

Uncertain Kurdish Unity

Kurdish unity is always problematic. The Kurds have a saying that, "the Kurds have no friends." History shows that this saying should be, "the Kurds have no friends including the Kurds." The Barzani and Talibani factions have fought on several occasions, and there was a state of civil war between them during 1993-1995. PUK forces were able to take control of Irbil in 1994, and put an end to the first attempt to create a unified and elected government that began in 1992. Barzani's KDP collaborated with Saddam Hussein in 1995, when Hussein sent a full corps of troops into Irbil and other parts of the area occupied by Talibani. Tens of thousands of Kurds and anti-Saddam activists fled the area, and the US did not succeed in brokering a settlement between the two factions until 1998.^{ccclxvii}

The present marriage of convenience between the KDP and PUK has not unified the Kurdish controlled provinces in the north. There were minor clashes between their supporters in 1995, and these political divisions could create future problems for both Kurdish political unity and any agreement on some form of autonomy.

The Problem of Resources and Oil

The Kurds also face the problem that at present they have no control over Iraq's oil resources or revenues, and no access to any port or lines of communication that are not subject to Iraqi, Turkish, or Iranian interdiction. They also have a very uncertain economic future since they have lost the guaranteed stream of revenue provided by the UN Oil-For-Food program, Iraq can now export oil through the Gulf and reopen pipelines to Syria as a substitute for pipelines through Turkey, and there is far less incentive to smuggle through Kurdish areas now that trade is open on Iraq's borders. The Kurds also face the problem that Iran, Syria, and Turkey all have Kurdish minorities that have sought independence in the past, and any form of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy or independence is seen as a threat.

The Turkish Question

All these problems are still further compounded by the rebirth of Kurdish insurgency in Turkey, and acute Turkish pressure on the Iraqi government, Iraqi Kurds, and MNSTC-I to both deny Turkish Kurdish insurgents a sanctuary, and set any example that would encourage Kurdish separatism in Turkey. The Turkish Kurdish Worker Party (PKK) is a movement that has often used northern Iraq as a sanctuary, and which led to several major division-sized Turkish military movements into the area under Saddam Hussein. While estimates are uncertain, some 6,000 PKK forces seemed to be in Iraq in the spring of 2005, with another 2,000 across the border.^{ccclxviii} These same factors help explain why Turkey has actively supported Iraq's small Turcoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq's Kurds.

The Role of Crime and Criminals

The vast majority of Iraqi criminals have limited or no ties to the insurgents, although some are clearly "for hire" in terms of what they target or in being willing to take pay for sabotage or acts of violence that help create a climate of violence in given areas. Many US and Iraqi intelligence officers believe that some criminal networks are heavily under the influence of various former regime elements or are dominated by them, and that some elements of organized crime do help the insurgency. The US Defense Intelligence Agency stated in July 2005 that some aspect of insurgent financing was derived from kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling and the counterfeiting of goods and currency.^{ccclxix} Furthermore, at least some Shi'ite criminal groups and vendettas use the insurgency or Sunnis as a cover for their activities.

The Bush Administration summarized the impact of crime in Iraq as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," and made it clear that corruption was in many ways as important a criminal activity as the threat outside government, and that the development of an effective

judicial and police structure for dealing with crime was still in the initial stages of progress:

The most obvious indicator of success in establishing rule of law in Iraq is probably the crime rate. Unfortunately, data on criminal activity in Iraq are unreliable. If such statistics become available, they will be included in future reports.

All 869 judges in Iraq have been reviewed and 135 removed because of substantial evidence of corruption or Ba'ath Party affiliation. All Iraqi provincial criminal courts are also now operational, although the number of trials proceeding in these courts varies. In some areas, relatively few cases are tried. In general, the primary impediment to prosecuting more cases is the ability of police and prosecutors to collect evidence and prepare cases for trial. The Coalition has therefore trained 99 judicial investigators, who in Iraq assume some of the investigative duties performed by detectives in American police departments.

Training of Iraqi judges is ongoing, with 351 Iraqi judges having received at least some training. The Coalition has also established a witness protection program and a judicial security program to protect judges and courthouses. In addition, the Coalition is engaged in ongoing efforts to build Iraqi prisons and train corrections officers and to encourage the Iraqi government to assume full responsibility for security internees.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq is the court that tries defendants accused of terrorism and crimes against the Coalition, among other crimes. Since its inception, it has conducted 544 trials and handed down 522 convictions. (Some of the trials involved multiple defendants.)

The Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) has begun the process of prosecuting Saddam Hussein and other top officials of his regime. Under the Iraqi system, a defendant is given a separate trial for each event that constitutes a crime. Saddam is therefore likely to face multiple, different trials. The first of these trials is currently scheduled to begin on October 19. The U.S. Department of Justice-supported Regime Crimes Liaison Office continues to assist with preparing the IST, providing training and other support for IST attorneys and judges.

Like most aspects of the insurgency, it is difficult to know the strength of criminal elements and the extent to which they are and are not tied to insurgent groups. The collapse of Saddam's regime, massive unemployment, the disbanding of a wide range of military and security elements, the destruction of Iraq's military industries, de-Ba'athification, and sheer opportunism have all combined to make organized and violent crime an endemic part of Iraqi society even in many areas where the insurgents have little real strength. They also are a powerful force behind local vigilante and militia efforts that at least indirectly challenge the legitimacy of the central government.

Crime also has virtually the same the impact as sabotage even when there is no deliberate intent to support the insurgency. It adds to the image of ineffective governance by acts like wire and equipment thefts that limit the government's ability to distribute electric power. It deprives the government of oil revenues through oil thefts, and adds to Iraq's fuel problems by the endemic theft of gasoline.

While most kidnappings are almost certainly decoupled from any political motive, some may have been done for hire at the bidding of various insurgent groups. At best, the end result is a climate of cumulative violence, with some elements of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension. At worst, crime vastly compounds the government

and Coalitions security problems, offers insurgent groups yet another kind of informal network, helps block investment and development, compounds the problem of hiring security forces, and undermines legitimacy.

The fact that the Ministry of Interior stopped reporting meaningful crime statistics in mid-2004 makes trend analysis almost impossible. The same is true of the casualties involved. The Ministry of Health reported in the spring of 2005 that some 5,158 Iraqis had died from all forms of criminal and insurgent activities during the last six months of 2004, but most experts felt such reporting might only include about half the real total. The Baghdad Central Morgue counted 8,035 deaths from unnatural causes in Baghdad alone in 2004, a major increase from 6,012 in 2003 and a figure that compared with 1,800 in 2002 -- the last year of Saddam Hussein. The morgue reported that 60% of those killed were killed by gunshot wounds and were unrelated to the insurgency, and were largely a combination of crime, tribal vendettas, vengeance killings, and mercenary kidnappings.^{ccclxx}

It is also all too clear that the focus on defeating active insurgents has not been matched by similar efforts to develop effective police forces and prison system, eliminate corruption, create a working and efficient judicial system, or create an effective system for prosecution. The end result is that day-to-day security even in areas without active insurgent activity is often poor to non-existent, dependent on local forces or militias, and/or dependent on bribes and protection money. This makes it easier for insurgents to infiltrate, allows them to become the de facto security force or intimidate the population in some Sunni areas, alienates some of the government's potential supporters, and leads to widespread distrust of the police and criminal justice system. The situation has not been helped by the relatively limited staffing of the Ministry of the Interior, the Sunni perception that it is Shi'ite dominated, and the fact that the Coalition advisory effort remained limited and understaffed through October 1, 2005 -- when it was reorganized and put under the MNSTC-I.

Financing the Insurgency

Analysts believe that elements of Saddam Hussein's regime sought refuge in the UAE, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria at various points before, during, and after major combat operations in Iraq. Those elements were then able to establish a financial base from which to send funds to the insurgents on the ground.

In July 2005 a senior intelligence officer in the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Caleb Temple, testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities and the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Temple stated that the insurgents' financiers had the connections and enough money to fund their activities, perhaps even increase the violence, for some time. He stated:^{ccclxxi}

We believe terrorist and insurgent expenses are moderate and pose little significant restraints to armed groups in Iraq. In particular, arms and munitions costs are minimal—leaving us to judge that the bulk of the money likely goes towards international and local travel, food and lodging of fighters and families of dead fighters; bribery and payoffs of

government officials, families and clans; and possibly into the personal coffers of critical middlemen and prominent terrorist leaders.

Temple and Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser asserted that various criminal activities as well as certain Islamic charities also contributed to the flow of funds to insurgents in Iraq. Vital to strangling the insurgency, Temple stated, was the ability to staunch the flow of money. He asserted, "Drying up money and stopping its movement degrades terrorist and insurgent operations. It hinders recruitment and impedes couriers, disrupts procurement of bomb components, and creates uncertainty in the minds of suicide bombers regarding whether their families will receive promised compensation."^{ccclxxii}

In July 28, 2005 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Glaser listed some of the most common methods of funding the insurgency:^{ccclxxiii}

- Funds provided by charities, Iraqi expatriates, and other deep pocket donors, primarily in the Gulf, but also in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and Europe;
- Criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, possible narcotics trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling, and counterfeiting (goods and currency).

Glaser also reviewed some of the efforts underway to help stanch these cash flows:

- Since March 2003, the U.S. Government has focused on the need to locate, freeze, and repatriate Iraqi assets from around the world, as well as to find cash and other assets within Iraq that were stolen and hidden by Former Regime Elements.
- In May 2003 the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1483, which calls on U.N. Member States to identify, freeze and transfer to the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) assets of senior officials of the former Iraqi regime and their immediate family members, including entities owned or controlled by them or by persons acting on their behalf. The President subsequently issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13315, which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to freeze the assets of former regime elements. To date, under E.O. 13315, the Department of the Treasury has designated scores of Iraq-related entities and individuals (including 55 senior Iraqi officials who were named by the President in issuing E.O. 13315, and 47 administrative or "derivative" designations.) The U.S. Government, in turn, submits these names to the United Nations for listing by the UN 1518 Committee under UNSCR 1483.
- Only a week ago, the Department of the Treasury designated six of Saddam Hussein's nephews (sons of Saddam's half brother and former presidential advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan Al-Tikriti), and we understand that their names have now been accepted at the UN. Four of the designated individuals provided financial support (and in some cases, weapons and explosives) to Iraqi insurgents. Similarly, on June 17, 2005, we designated, Muhammad Yunis Ahmad for providing funding, leadership and support from his base in Syria to several insurgent groups that are conducting attacks in Iraq.
- On June 9, 2005, we also designated two associated Syrian individuals, General Zuhayr Shalish and Asif Shalish and a related asset, the Syria-based SES International Corporation for their support to senior officials of the former Iraqi regime. SES also acted as false end-user for the former Iraqi regime and facilitated Iraq's procurement of illicit military goods in contravention of UN sanctions.
- Just as there is a U.N. Security Council Resolution requiring countries to freeze the assets of former Iraqi regime elements, so too are there U.N. Security Council Resolutions requiring countries to freeze the assets of individuals and entities related to al Qaida,

Usama bin Laden, and the Taliban (UNSCR 1267) and other global terrorist groups (UNSCR 1373). The U.S. implements its obligations under these resolutions through E.O. 13224. To date, the Treasury Department has designated over 400 individuals and entities under E.O. 13224. These actions include individuals and entities tied to jihadist insurgency groups: -- Sulayman Khalid Darwish (January 25, 2005) (Syria-based Zarqawi supporter/financier), also designated by the UN, pursuant to UNSCR 1267; Syria joined the U.S. in co-designating Darwish at the UN.

- U.S. outreach efforts to countries in the Gulf region are manifold, both bilaterally and multilaterally. For example, just this calendar year I have personally traveled to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait, and have led the U.S. delegation to the Middle East/North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF) - a new multilateral body that works to ensure the implementation of comprehensive anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems throughout the region. Launched in November 2004, this 14-member body held its first plenary session in Bahrain in April 2005 and is preparing for its second plenary session in September of this year, currently scheduled to take place in Beirut. This body has the potential to be effective in persuading its members to implement systems to freeze assets in a timely and effective manner.
- We also have extensive outreach efforts to Europe - most prominently the US-EU Counter-Terrorist Financing Working Group, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Anthony Wayne. Through this and other mechanisms, we are working to ensure the effective and aggressive implementation of targeted financial sanctions throughout Europe.
- The full range of U.S. efforts against terrorist financing are coordinated by the Terrorist Financing Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), which is chaired by Deputy National Security Advisor Juan Zarate, and includes representatives from the Departments of the Treasury, State, Justice, and Defense, as well as representatives from the law enforcement and intelligence communities.

VIII. The Role of Outsiders in the Insurgency

The pressure for civil war can also expand to involve outside states. Syria very clearly tolerates and supports Sunni neo-Salafi extremist operations on its territory in spite of its Alawite controlled government. A broader and more intense civil conflict could lead other Arab states to take sides on behalf of the Sunnis -- although Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are just a few of the states that have deep sectarian divisions of their own. Any major divisions within Iraq could reopen the Kurdish issue as it affects Turkey, and possibly Iran and Syria as well.

Creating a "Shi'ite Crescent"?

The most serious wild card in Iraq's immediate neighborhood is Iran. Iran already plays at least some role in the political instability in Iraq and may take a more aggressive role in trying to shape Iraq's political future and security position in the Gulf. Some believe that the Iranians have abandoned their efforts to export their "Shi'ite revolution" to the Gulf. This view has changed since the invasion of Iraq. Officials across the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, have expressed reservation over the right of Iraqi Sunnis, Kurdish and Shi'ite dominance over the Iraqi government, and a new "strategic" Shi'ite alliance between Iran and Iraq.

Jordan's King Abdullah has claimed that that more than 1 million Iranians have moved into Iraq to influence the Iraqi election. The Iranians, King Abdullah argued, have been trying to build pro-Iranian attitudes in Iraq by providing salaries to the unemployed. The King has also said that Iran's Revolutionary Guards are helping the militant groups fighting the US in Iraq, and warned in an interview with the *Washington Post* of a "Shi'ite Crescent" forming between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. He was quoted as saying:^{ccclxxiv}

It is in Iran's vested interest to have an Islamic republic of Iraq.

If Iraq goes Islamic republic, then, yes, we've opened ourselves to a whole set of new problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq. I'm looking at the glass half-full, and let's hope that's not the case. But strategic planners around the world have got to be aware that is a possibility.

Even Saudi Arabia is not immune from this. It would be a major problem. And then that would propel the possibility of a Shi'ite-Sunni conflict even more, as you're taking it out of the borders of Iraq.

The same sentiment has been echoed by the former interim Iraqi President, Ghazi Al-Yawar, a Sunni and a pro-Saudi tribal leader. "Unfortunately, time is proving, and the situation is proving, beyond any doubt that Iran has very obvious interference in our business -- a lot of money, a lot of intelligence activities and almost interfering daily in business and many [provincial] governorates, especially in the southeast side of Iraq." Mr. Al-Yawar, however, asserted that Iraq should not go in the direction of Iran in creating a religious oriented government. He was quoted in a *Washington Post* interview as saying "We cannot have a sectarian or religious government... We really will not accept a religious state in Iraq. We haven't seen a model that succeeded."^{ccclxxv}

Both Iran and Iraqi Shi'ites rejected these comments. Iran called King Abdullah's comment "an insult" to Iraq. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, also called on Ghazi Al-Yawar to retract his statement and accusing King Abdullah II and Al-Yawar of wanting to influence the election against Iraqi Shi'ites. Asefi said "Unfortunately, some political currents in Iraq seek to tarnish the trend of election there and cause concern in the public opinion...We expect that Mr. al-Yawar takes the existing sensitive situation into consideration and avoids repeating such comments."^{ccclxxvi}

Iraqi Shi'ites also reacted to King Abdullah's comment about the fear of a "Shi'ite Crescent." Jordan's King Abdullah was asked to apologize by Shi'ites. The Najaf Theological Center issued a statement, in which they accused the King of meddling in Iraq's internal affairs.^{ccclxxvii}

Distorting the truth and blatantly interfering in Iraqi affairs, provoking tribal sentiments in the region against Iraqi Shi'ites, provoking great powers against Iraqi Shi'ites, intimidating regional countries and accusing them of having links with Iran, displaying a great tendency for ensuring Israel's security and expressing worries about the victory of Shi'ites in the upcoming elections tantamount to insulting millions of people in Iran, who have been insulted just because they follow a religion that the Jordan's king is opposed...

Najaf Theological Center is hopeful that the Jordanian monarch will apologize to the Shi'ites of the region and Iraq, and their religious authorities, because of the inaccurate remarks made against them.

The Views of the Arab Gulf States

The Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have also made their views known regarding the unity of Iraq and their fear of Shi'ite dominance of an Arab country that allies itself with Iran. Saudi Arabia has pushed for more Sunni inclusiveness in the constitution writing process, especially after their lack of participation in the January 2005 elections.

When a draft constitution did not acknowledge Iraq's Arab and Muslim identity, the General Secretary of the GCC called the Iraqi constitution "a catastrophe." The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also warned that if the constitution does not accommodate the Iraqi Sunni community, it would result in sectarian disputes that may threaten the unity of Iraq.^{ccclxxviii}

Prince Saud al-Faisal later urged the US to pressure Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurdish government leaders to work to bring the Iraqi people together. He said, "[Americans] talk now about Sunnis as if they were separate entity from the Shi'ite." al-Faisal reiterated his fear of an Iraqi civil war and the danger of it. He said, "If you allow civil war, Iraq is finished forever."^{ccclxxix}

According to al-Faisal, a civil war in Iraq could have dire consequences in the region. He reiterated the Kingdom's fear of an Iran-Iraq alliance. The Saudi Foreign Minister asserted "We (US and Saudi Arabia) fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait." He added that the US policy in Iraq is "handing the whole country over to Iran without reason." Iranians have established their influence within Iraq, al-Faisal said, because they "pay

money ... install their own people (and) even establish police forces and arm the militias that are there."^{ccclxxx}

A Clash within a Civilization?

One should not exaggerate Iraq's role in any clash within a civilization, and the more dire predictions of a clash between Sunni and Shi'ite that polarizes the Gulf and Middle East may well be exaggerated. The fact remains, however, that this is what Bin Laden, Zarqawi, and other neo-Salafi extremists are seeking. The battle in Iraq is only part of the much broader struggle by neo-Salafi extremists to capture the Arab and Islamic world. The outcome in Iraq will be critical but only part of a much broader struggle.

The Problem of Syria

Both senior US and Iraqi officials feel that Syria may overtly agree to try to halt any support of the insurgency, but allow Islamic extremist groups to recruit young men, have them come to Syria, and then cross the border into Iraq – where substantial numbers have become suicide bombers. They also feel Syria has allowed senior ex-Ba'athist cadres to operate from Syria, helping to direct the Sunni insurgency. As has been touched upon earlier, these include top level officials under Saddam Hussein such as Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, one of Saddam's Vice Presidents.

General George Casey, the commander of the MNF, has been careful not to exaggerate the threat of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Casey has warned that Syria has allowed Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein to provide money, supplies, and direction to Sunni insurgents, and continues to be a serious source of infiltration by foreign volunteers.^{ccclxxxi} General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2005. He stated:

There are former regime leaders who come and go from Syria, who operate out of Syria, and they do planning, and they provide resources to the insurgency in Iraq. I have no hard evidence that the Syrian government is actually complicit with those people, but we certainly have evidence that people at low levels with the Syrian government know that they're there and what they're up to.^{ccclxxxii}

The US State Department spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:^{ccclxxxiii}

I think that what we've seen, again, are some efforts, but it certainly isn't enough. We do believe the Syrians can do more. We do believe there's more they can do along the border to tighten controls.

We do believe that there's more that they can do to deal with the regime elements that are operating out of Syria itself and are supporting or encouraging the insurgents there.

And so, again, it's not simply a matter of them not being able to take the actions, at least from our perspective. Part of it is an unwillingness to take the actions that we know are necessary and they know are necessary.

In late February 2005, the Baghdad television station al-Iraqiya aired taped confessions of insurgents captured in Iraq. Many of the men, from Sudan, Egypt

and Iraq, claimed that they were trained in Syria – at least three said they had been trained, controlled and paid by Syrian intelligence officials. They were instructed to kidnap, behead and assassinate Iraqi security forces. The majority of the men expressed remorse for their actions and said they were driven almost exclusively by monetary rewards; there was almost no mention of religious or nationalistic motivation.

Syria has repeatedly and emphatically denied that it supports or harbors any persons involved in the insurgency in Iraq. After months of American pressure and accusations, however, Syrian authorities delivered a group suspected of supporting the insurgency from Syria to Iraqi officials in February 2005. Among the captives handed over was Sabawi Ibrahim Hassan, Saddam Hussein's half-brother and a leading financier for the insurgency. Syria's Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharaa stated that Syria was doing all that it could, but that it needed equipment tailored to policing the borders, such as night vision goggles.^{ccclxxxiv}

There have also been reports that Zarqawi obtains most of his new young volunteers through Syria, and that they are recruited and transited in ways that have to be known to Syrian intelligence. There have also been media reports that Zarqawi's top lieutenants, and perhaps Zarqawi himself, have met in Syria for planning sessions.^{ccclxxxv} These reports were called into question by US intelligence assessments in June 2005.

US officials and commanders, as well as Iraqi officials, acknowledge that Syria has made some efforts to improve its border security and reduce infiltration. In summer 2005, Syrian security forces fought suspected militants, possibly former bodyguards of Saddam Hussein, for two days near Qassioun Mountain, and a sweep of the border area with Lebanon led to the arrest of some 34 suspected militants. In a high profile case, Syria arrested a man and his brother's wife who they accused of facilitating militants' passage into Iraq. The woman admitted on Al Arabiya satellite television that the brothers had crossed into Iraq to join Saddam's Fedayeen prior to the Coalition invasion.^{ccclxxxvi}

US Central Command director of intelligence, Brigadier General John Custer acknowledged in July 2005 the moves that Syria had made as well as the problems in patrolling the border. Custer stated that Syria had bolstered the forces along the eastern border with units relocated from Lebanon. In comments that seemed to contradict what other intelligence officials had said, Custer stated:^{ccclxxxvii}

I think Syria is intent on assisting the US in Iraq. . . .[I have] no information, intelligence or anything credible [that Syria] is involved or facilitating in any way [the flow of insurgents into Iraq]. . . .Could they do more? Yes. Are they doing more? Yes. They are working very hard. As troops have been pulled out of Lebanon, we've seen some of those troops go to the border. I am convinced that they are not only doing it along the border but are arresting people as they transit.

The British military attaché in Damascus, Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis, inspected the Syrian efforts at the border and agreed with Custer's assessment. Custer suggested that the border interacted with a tradition of lawlessness and lack of Syrian ability to create a greater impression of Syrian complicity than there

actually was. He stated, “It’s not a question of intent—it’s simply capacity and capability. You’ve got a 600-kilometer border there, some of the toughest desert, and you have a thousand-year-old culture of smuggling. Smuggling men now is no different than smuggling men a 1,000 years ago. It’s all a smuggling economy.”^{ccclxxxviii} Syria faces problems because its border forces are relatively weak, they lack training and equipment, and much of the border is only demarcated by an earthen beam. At the same time, they feel Syria deliberately turns a blind eye towards many operations, and the large number of Islamist extremist volunteers crossing the border.

Cash couriers bring unknown sums of cash across the border. Because Iraq’s formal financial system is still maturing, and because porous borders allow for the easy transfer of money carried across by human mules, this is an effective and preferred method for financing the insurgency from abroad. Syria is a particular concern in this regard, as identified by Daniel L. Glaser. Through various sanctions programs, the Treasury Department has targeted Syrian individuals, entities, and officials for a range of issues, including harboring assets of the former Iraqi regime, interfering in Lebanon, inadequately policing the flow of cash across its borders, and failing to implement money laundering and terrorist financing controls.^{ccclxxxix}

Some analysts have suggested that the regime in Damascus may view the insurgency in Iraq as a means to ‘export’ their own Islamist extremists who might otherwise take aim at Assad’s secular regime (led by an Allawite minority). However, such a view, analysts say, is extremely near-sighted as it is quite possible that extremists in Iraq could return the very way that they came and cross back into Syria, bringing practical guerilla warfare experience with them much like the Mujahedeen who fought in the Afghan war brought back to their countries of origin. Such hardened and trained militants could then pose a very serious threat to the ruling regime. As one commentator stated, “They [militants and Syria] may have slept in the same bed to fight the Americans, but what’s important for al Qa’ida is that it has entered the bedroom [Syria] and secured a foothold there.”^{ccccxc}

Indeed, such views were supported by classified CIA and US State Department studies in summer 2005. Analysts referred to the return of experienced and trained militants to their country of origin or third party country as “bleed out” or “terrorist dispersal.”^{ccccxi} The studies sought to compare the returning Mujahedeen from Afghanistan to those who fought in Iraq. Like Syria, those countries could be threatened by the fighters who return with advanced warfare skills.^{ccccxii} A Marine Corps spokesman pointed out that if nothing else, certain techniques such as the use of IEDs had already been transferred from Iraq to combat zones like Afghanistan. Experts, however, point to the fact that while the Afghan war attracted thousands of foreign fighters, Iraq has yet to do so, meaning that the potential number of returning veterans would be much less.^{ccccxiii}

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef echoed the conclusions of the CIA and State Department studies, pointing out that many of the terrorists that operated in Saudi from May 2003 on were either veterans of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, or

had trained in the camps that operated until Operation Enduring Freedom eliminated them. Nayef and other Saudi officials believe that the Saudis that return from the conflict in Iraq will have skills that are even more lethal than those exhibited by the Afghan war veterans. Nayef stated, “We expect the worst from those who went to Iraq. They will be worse, and we will be ready for them.”^{ccccxciv}

In a speech before the UN Security Council in May 2005, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari asked that Iraq's neighboring states do more to prevent terrorists from crossing into Iraq. Syria figured prominently in his speech, in which he acknowledged the efforts by the government but implored the regime to make greater efforts. Zebari stated, “We have learned recently that Syria has stopped more than a thousand foreign fighters from entering Iraq from Syria. We welcome this action but note that it confirms our long-held view that Syria has been one of the main transit routes for foreign terrorists as well as for remnants of the previous regime.”^{ccccxcv} Reportedly, another Iraqi official handed a list over to the Syrians that contained the names, addresses, and specific roles in planning attacks in Iraq of individuals living in Damascus. According to the Iraqi official, the Syrians ignored the list.^{ccccxvi}

One senior US intelligence official echoed the foreign minister, stating, “There's no question that Syrian territory plays a significant role with regard to how outside figures [move] into the insurgency in Iraq. The problems with the regime are a mixture of willingness and capability.”^{ccccxcvii} A Washington Post article that ran in early summer 2005 featured an interview with a proclaimed insurgent sympathizer/organizer within Syria. The man, Abu Ibrahim, made several claims about the insurgency and its relation to Syria. He dubbed Syria a “hub” for organizing insurgents, and claimed that when the US pressured the Syrian government in late 2004, men like him were taken into custody by Syrian agents only to be released several days later.^{ccccxcviii}

He openly admitted to ferrying men, weapons, and money into Iraq, as well as possibly fighting on one occasion, and stated that he was routinely tailed by Syrian agents but that they did not interfere with his activities. Ibrahim stated that in the early days of the war, Syrian border guards waved busloads of would-be insurgents through checkpoints and into Iraq.^{ccccxcix} He claimed that he had seen a rise in the number of Saudis coming to Syria to be transported to Iraq to join the insurgency. Purportedly, Ibrahim and others were inspired by a radical Syrian preacher named Abu Qaqaa. When he asked a sheik why the Syrian government had not arrested them for their activities, “He would tell us it was because we weren't saying anything against the government, that we were focusing on the common enemy, America and Israel, that beards and epaulets were in one trench together.”^{cd} Though it may be impossible to verify Abu Ibrahim's claims, they do not appear to differ greatly from the public statements and assessments of the US military and intelligence community.

Iraq's Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, repeated the prime minister's call to neighboring countries in July 2005. Jabr met with the interior ministers from Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in Istanbul, and reiterated

that the Iraqi government wanted the neighboring countries to do more to staunch the flow of weapons and insurgents into Iraq.^{cdi} The ministers released a communiqué that condemned the murder of Egypt's ambassador, pledged to prevent terrorists from using their territories as bases and recruitment centers for terrorists, and called for the rapid exchange of information on terror suspects and their movements. Jabr, commenting before meeting with the ministers, stated, "I will say clearly in my speech about the countries – maybe without names but they know themselves – the countries who support directly or indirectly the insurgents. I will talk to these countries to stop these activities and to cut short these terrorists."^{cdii}

In July 2005, the US Treasury Department announced that information obtained from Saddam Hussein's half brother and former advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hasan al-Tikriti, (who had been captured in a raid in Tikrit four months earlier) indicated that the Tikriti family was responsible for supplying money, arms, explosives and other support to the insurgents in Iraq from bases in Syria. Shortly thereafter, the US Treasury Department announced it was blocking the assets of six of Saddam Hussein's nephews, all sons of al-Tikriti.^{cdiii} Stuart Levey, the US Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence stated, "This action targets the money flows of former regime elements actively supporting attacks against Coalition forces and the Iraqi people."^{cdiv} Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Danier Glaser asserted that cash couriers from the region, Syria in particular, were the primary method for funnelling money to insurgents. He stated that large sums belonging to former Iraqi officials who are now in Syria, or who are now controlled by Syria, are responsible for much of the financing.^{cdv}

A number of al-Tikriti's sons have been particularly active in financing the Iraqi insurgency. One son, Ayman Sabawi was captured in Tikrit in May. In late September Iraqi authorities announced he had been sentenced to life in prison for his role in funding the Iraqi insurgency and for bomb making. Iraqi authorities had not announced the trial had begun and the verdict, the first against a family member of Saddam Hussein, took many by surprise.^{cdvi} Tareq Khalaf Mizal, an Iraqi militant arrested alongside Sabawi was sentenced to six years in prison for his role. Having allegedly confessed to other crimes while in detention, Sabawi is due to stand trial again in November.

A second son, Yasir Sabawi Ibrahim was arrested by Iraqi security officials in Baghdad on October 19, 2005. In a surprise twist, Damascus had "pushed" Sabawi out of Syria only a few days before. Although Syrian authorities did not hand Sabawi over to Iraqi authorities, they promptly informed US authorities about his presence in Baghdad. US officials passed the information onto the Iraqi Defense Ministry whose security forces then carried out the raid on Sabawi's apartment. Believed to be second-in-command of the Iraqi-led insurgency (behind Younis al-Ahmad), Yasir is accused of using money from the Ba'ath Party in Syria, Jordan and Yemen to fund the insurgency in Iraq.^{cdvii} A third son, Omar, is suspected of being behind several attacks against US forces in Mosul.^{cdviii}

Despite Damascus' role in the capture of Yasir (largely seen as a goodwill gesture towards Washington at a time of increased tensions between the two countries), a

number of former Ba'ath Party leaders, including al-Ahmad, are believed to still be in Syria. But the capture of yet another nephew of the former Iraqi dictator confirmed the strong ties between members of the former President's family and the Iraqi insurgency.

US officials commented that as of summer 2005, some intelligence showed that Syrians were providing weapons, training, money, and perhaps even "barracks-like housing" for volunteers who had made their way from Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the intelligence indicated that the makeshift staging areas for militants preparing to cross the border into Iraq had become more complex.^{cdix} A series of *Financial Times* interviews with would-be militants and their families in summer 2005 revealed the extent to which Syria might be aiding the insurgency. A mother of one fighter stated, "...you go to a mosque to make initial contact. Then you are sent to a private home and from there for a week's intensive training inside Syria."^{cdx} The militants who were interviewed claimed that they were trained in remote Syrian territory, close to the Iraqi border, with a focus on how to use Kalashnikovs, RPGs, and remote detonators. The fighters claimed that some attacks were even planned from Syrian territory.^{cdxi}

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both made it clear in mid-2005 that they felt that Syria continued to allow both Iraqi Ba'athist and Islamist extremist elements to operate inside Syria and across the Syrian-Iraqi border.^{cdxii} US Lt. Gen. John Vines estimated in summer 2005 that about 150 fighters crossed into Iraq from Syria each month.^{cdxiii} This presented problems for both Iraqi and Coalition forces because Iraq had comparatively few border posts and many isolated posts had been attacked and some had been destroyed or abandoned.^{cdxiv} A major effort was underway to rebuild them and strengthen the Iraqi border forces, but it so far has made limited progress, and the morale and effectiveness of these border forces is often still low.

Washington's warnings to Damascus over border security intensified during the fall of 2005. On October 7, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Hayat*: "They (Americans) have no patrols at the border, not a single American or Iraqi on their side of the border...We cannot control the border from one side."^{cdxv} Assad's comments came a day after President Bush and Prime Minister Blair both issued renewed warnings against continued Syrian and Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs. Both countries accused Syria and Iran of giving shelter to Islamic extremists.

A senior US official also suggested that the war may have spread beyond Iraq's borders, telling the *Financial Times* "We are concerned that Syria is allowing its territory to be part of the Iraqi battlefield. That's a choice the Syrians made. We think that is an unwise choice."^{cdxvi} In his interview with *Al Hayat*, Assad said the absence of security along the border was hurting Syria and maintained "controlling it will help Syria because the chaos in Iraq affects us." Assad said his country had arrested more than 1,300 infiltrators from that country since the war began.^{cdxvii} The following day, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch responded by saying the US was "ask[ing] the Syrian government not to interfere in such

matters.” Welch went on to say, “It appears that they are not listening and it seems this behavior is not changing.”^{cdxviii} The rhetorical exchanges, however, did not prevent the Syrian Airlines Company from flying its inaugural post-Saddam era flight between Damascus-Baghdad on October 11. It was the first regular flight to operate between the two capitals in a quarter of a century.^{cdxix}

On September 12, 2005, in a State Department briefing, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said that Syria was the “number one offender” in the Middle East working to impede the success of Iraq. Khalilzad said Syria was knowingly allowing terrorists to use its territory for training exercises and permitting them to transit across Syria into Iraq and kill Iraqis.^{cdxx} This followed the September 10, 2005 announcement by Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr that Iraq would close its border with Syria at the Rabiah crossing point near the city of Mosul, beginning the following day.

The border area around Huasaybah (Qusaybah) in Iraq has long been a center for smuggling and criminal activity. Two Muslim tribes in the area – the Mahalawis and Salmanis – have long controlled illegal trade across the border and seem to permit insurgent activity with at least Syrian tolerance. The Iraqi government also proved unable to secure the area. A 400 man Iraqi unit sent in to try to secure Huasaybah in March 2000 virtually collapsed and was forced to hide out in a local phosphate plant.^{cdxxi}

The route along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha to Ubaydi, Qaim, KIRbilah, Qusaybah, and Abu Kamal in Syria has been a center and partial sanctuary for insurgent forces and a conduit for volunteers and supplies coming in from Syria. By the spring of 2005 it became so serious a center for some of the insurgents who fled from the fighting in Ramadi and Fallujah that the US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive since Fallujah against insurgent forces in the area, sometimes meeting stiff resistance from both Iraqi Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremist groups.^{cdxxii}

At the same time, the insurgents do not need major shipments of arms, virtually anyone can go in and out moving money and small critical supplies, and volunteers can simply enter as ordinary visitors without equipment. US Customs and Border Protection officers are working to train their Iraqi counterparts and have had moderate success in detaining potential insurgents and arms suppliers, and in breaking up smuggling rings. Another US CBP team of officers and border agents was deployed in Iraq on February 1, 2005, to assist further in the training of Iraqis.

This may help, but Iraq's border security forces have so far been some of its most ineffective units. Many of its new forts are abandoned, and other units that have remained exhibit minimal activity. Yet, even if Iraq's border forces were ready and its neighbors actively helped, border security would still be a problem.

This illustrates a general problem for both Iraq and its neighbors. Iraq's borders total 3,650 kilometers in length. Its border with Iran is 1,458 kilometers, with Jordan 181 kilometers, with Kuwait 240 kilometers, with Saudi Arabia 814 kilometers, with Syria 605 kilometers, and with Turkey 352 kilometers. Most of

these borders are desert, desolate territory, easily navigable water barriers, or mountains. Even Iraq's small 58-kilometer coastline is in an area with considerable small craft and shipping traffic, which presents security problems.

It is also important to note that Syria plays a role in dealing with some of Iraq's Shi'ites as well as its Sunnis. While it may tolerate and encourage former Iraqi Ba'athist operations in Syria, and transit by Islamist extremists, Syria also maintains ties to elements of formerly Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'ite groups like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da'wa and Al-Da'wa - Tanzim al-Iraq that it first developed during the Iran-Iraq War. Syria has an Alawite-led regime that is more Shi'ite than Sunni, and while it sees its support of Sunni insurgents as a way of weakening the potential threat from a US presence in Syria, it also maintains ties to Shi'ite factions as well.

The Problem of Iran

The role Iran plays in the Iraqi insurgency is highly controversial. Iran certainly has an active presence in Iraq and has ties to several key Shi'ite political parties. These include key elements in the Shiite-based United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that emerged as Iraq's most important political coalition in the January 2005 elections: the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da'wa and Al-Da'wa - Tanzim al-Iraq. The Revolutionary Guard and Iranian intelligence have been active in southern Iraq since the early 1980s, as well as other areas. They almost certainly have a network of active agents in Iraq at present. There are also some indications that the Lebanese Hizballah have established a presence in Iraq.^{cdxxiii}

Prime Minister Allawi repeatedly expressed his concern over Iran's actions during 2004 and early 2005, as did other senior officials in the Interim Iraqi Government who see Iran as a direct and immediate threat.

Iraqi interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan claimed in July 2004 that Iran remained his country's "first enemy," supporting "terrorism and bringing enemies into Iraq...I've seen clear interference in Iraqi issues by Iran...Iran interferes in order to kill democracy." A few months later Sha'alan -- a secular Shiite who is one of Iran's most outspoken critics in Iraq -- added that the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy, and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq."^{cdxxiv} Sha'alan made the following points in a briefing on September 22, 2004:

- Iranian intervention and support of Sadr pose major threats; and some infiltration has taken place across the Syria border.
- Iran is behind Sadr. It uses Iranian pilgrims and sends arms, money, and drugs across the border.
- Iraq must have strong border defence forces. "If doors and windows are empty, no amount of cleaning will ever get rid of the dust."

In a study of Iran's role in Iraq, the International Crisis Group noted that an Iranian cleric and close associate of Ayatollah Sistani warned in November 2004 that: "Iran's policy in Iraq is 100 per cent wrong. In trying to keep the Americans busy they have furthered the suffering of ordinary Iraqis...We are not asking them to help the

Americans, but what they are doing is not in the interests of the Iraqi people; it is making things worse. We [Iranians] have lost the trust of the Iraqi people [*Mardom-e Aragh az dast dadeem*].^{cdxxxv}

In contrast, King Abdullah of Jordan has made a wide range of charges about Iranian interference in Iraq and went so far as to charge during the period before the Iraqi election that Iran was attempting to rig Iraq's election with up to 1,000,000 false registrations. He has since talked about the risk of an Iraqi-Syrian-Lebanese Shiite "axis" or "crescent."

In an extraordinary interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein's "Army of Muhammad," claimed that his group regularly received arms and money from both Syria and Iran. "Many factions of the resistance are receiving aid from the neighboring countries," he said. "We got aid primarily from Iran."^{cdxxvi}

In early October 2005, the British government publicly blamed Iran for the deaths of eight British soldiers in southern Iraq. Although British officials had complained to Tehran about ongoing arms smuggling across the porous Iran-Iraq border earlier in the year, this marked the first time London officially implicated Tehran in the deaths of Coalition troops. British officials accused Iran's Revolutionary Guard of supplying advanced technology—"shaped charges" capable of penetrating even the toughest armor—to insurgents in Iraq, and of trying to further destabilize the country.^{cdxxvii}

One week later, on October 13, the Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that Iraqi security forces had arrested 10 Iranian "infiltrators" trying to enter the country illegally. A total of 88 suspected insurgents were arrested in the raid, including one Somali citizen. Iraqi security forces also seized a number of weapons and ammunition caches.^{cdxxviii} In a similar incident in July 2005, Iraqi border guards exchanged fire with gunmen crossing into Iraq from Iran. The Iraqi security forces also uncovered a cache of explosives, timers and detonators.^{cdxxix} Such incidents, in addition to growing allegations of Iranian involvement by Baghdad and Washington, suggest that Iran may have moved from having the ability to create unrest and violence in Iraq to actively supporting insurgents.

According to what several newspapers claim are classified intelligence reports, British intelligence officials suspect insurgents led by Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani are responsible for the deaths of at least 11 British soldiers in southern Iraq.^{cdxxx} An investigation of Iranian involvement in Iraq in August of 2005 by *Time Magazine* identified al-Sheibani as the leader of the insurgency in the south. According to the magazine, the IRGC had been instrumental in creating the al-Sheibani group and providing it with weapons and training. US intelligence officials also believe the group, estimated to number almost 300 militants, is responsible for at least 37 bombs against US troops in 2005 alone.^{cdxxxi} British officials accused a second Tehran-backed militia group, the Mujahedeen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (MIRI), of having killed six British Royal Military Police in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.^{cdxxxii}

The London Times in September 2005 identified at least a dozen active Islamic groups with ties to Tehran. Eight were singled out as having considerable cross-border influence:^{cdxxxiii}

- Badr Brigades: A Shia militia force of 12,000 trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and blamed for a number of recent killings of Sunni Muslims. Thought to control several cities in southern Iraq.
- Islamic Dawaa Party: Shia party that has strong links to Iran. Its leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the present Prime Minister, has vowed to improve ties between the two neighbours.
- Mahdi Army: Received arms and volunteers from Iran during its battle against US and British troops last year. The group's commander in Basra-Ahmed al-Fartusi- was arrested by British forces in mid-September 2005.
- Mujahidin for Islamic Revolution in Iraq: Tehran-backed militia blamed for the murder of six British Royal Military Police soldiers in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.
- Thar Allah (Vengeance of God): Iranian-backed terror group blamed for killing former members of the ruling Baath party and enforcing strict Islamic law.
- Jamaat al-Fudalah (Group of the Virtuous): Paramilitary group that imposes Islamic rules on Shi areas; attacks shops selling alcohol and music.
- Al-Fadilah (Morality): Secret political movement financed by Iran. Thought to have many members among provincial officials.
- Al-Quawaid al-Islamiya (Islamic Bases): Iranian-backed Islamic movement that uses force to impose Islamic law.

A number of experts believe that Tehran-backed militias have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. In September 2005, Iraq's National Security Adviser, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, admitted that insurgents had penetrated Iraqi police forces in many parts of the country, but refused to speculate about the extent of the infiltration.^{cdxxxiv}

Some reports suggest that between 70 and 90 percent of Basra's police force has been infiltrated by religious and political factions. The Mahdi Army in particular, is believed to have almost de facto control over the police. Not surprisingly, corruption and violence is on the rise within the force. More than 1,300 murders were documented in Basra during the first nine months of 2005, many of them allegedly by men in police uniform.^{cdxxxv} A second Tehran-backed group, the Badr Brigades, controlled the city's bureau of internal affairs up until Spring 2005.^{cdxxxvi} All in a city not considered a Sadr stronghold.

There are also reports of Iranian backed-groups exerting influence over the lives of everyday Iraqis. Achieving a government job in Basra today is almost impossible without the sponsorship of one of these groups. Teaching posts in local schools and universities are increasingly filled only by those deemed ideologically loyal to Iran.^{cdxxxvii} Iranian goods flood local markets and Farsi is becoming the area's second language.^{cdxxxviii}

The increasing frequency of such reports in the summer and fall of 2005 led some US and British officials to conclude that Iran was backing the insurgency in

southern Iraq. The exact level of Iranian influence over the Iraqi insurgency is still unknown however. Whether the Tehran regime, or elements of it, is encouraging or merely allowing attacks against Coalition troops stationed in southern Iraq is unclear.

It should be noted, however, that Iran has repeatedly denied these charges and that some American experts are more concerned with the potential role Iran could play in any Iraqi civil conflict, or once a Shi'ite political majority takes office, than with direct Iranian support of a Shi'ite insurgency.

As General George Casey put it, "I don't see substantial Iranian influence on this particular government that will be elected in January. I see Iran as more of a longer-term threat to Iraqi security...a long-term threat to stability in Iraq. If you look on the other side, I think Syria is a short-term threat, because of the support they provide to Ba'athist leaders operating inside and outside of Iraq."^{cdxxxix}

The nature of Iranian involvement in Iraqi politics is multifaceted. Many of the Iraqi exile groups and militia members that lived in Iran before the fall of Saddam Hussein were never particularly grateful to Iran during the time they had to remain in exile and are not pro-Iranian now. The Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's pre-eminent Shi'ite religious leader -- as well as virtually all of the influential Iraqi clergy except Sadr -- is a quietest who opposes the idea that religious figures should play a direct role in politics.

Moreover, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani has rejected the religious legitimacy of a *velayat-e faqih* or supreme religious leader like Iran's Khameni. The major Iraqi Shi'ite parties that did operate in Iran before Saddam's fall did endorse the idea of a *velayat-e faqih* while they were dependent on Iran, but have since taken the position that Iraq should not be a theocratic state, much less under the control of a *velayat-e faqih*. But Iran's aims in Iraq may not be to secure a religious theocracy akin to its own, but merely to assure a Shiite backed Baghdad government friendly to Tehran.

The analysis of the International Crisis Group, and of many US experts in and outside Iraq interviewed for this report do not support the existence of any major Iranian effort to destabilize or control Iraq through June 2005.^{cdxli} However, the present and future uncertainties surrounding Iran's role, however, can scarcely be ignored. Iran does seem to have tolerated an Al Qaeda presence in Iran, or at least transit through the country, as a means of putting pressure on the US, in spite of the organization's hostility toward Shiites. Iran may have been active in supporting groups like Al Ansar in the past, or at least turning a blind eye, and may allow cross border infiltration in Iraq's Kurdish region now.

In July 2005, Kurdish intelligence officials asserted that Ansar was based primarily in Iran and that attacks in the Kurdish areas could only have occurred with Iranian support. According to an Iraqi Kurdish reporter, the Iranian cities of Mahabad and Saqqiz are centers where Ansar recruited among the Iranian Kurds. Such claims cannot be independently verified.

Iran has not been, and never will be, passive in dealing with Iraq. For example, it sent a top-level official, Kamal Kharrazi, to Iraq on May 17, 2005 -- only 48

hours after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had left the country. Kharrazi met with Prime Minister al-Jaafari and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. He also met with other top officials and key members of the Shi'ite parties, and his visit was at a minimum a demonstration of Iran's influence in an Iraq governed by a Shi'ite majority, even though some key Iraqi Shi'a parties like Al Dawa have scarcely been strong supporters of Iran. Kharrazi also gave an important message at his press conference, "...the party that will leave Iraq is the United States because it will eventually withdraw...But the party that will live with the Iraqis is Iran because it is a neighbor to Iraq."^{cdxli}

In summer 2005, the Iraqi and Iranian ministers of defense, Sadoun Dulaimi and Adm. Ali Shamkhani, met and concluded a five point military agreement. The meeting, however, produced conflicting statements as to what had been agreed upon. The Iranian minister, Shamkhani, asserted that as part of the deal Iran would train a number of Iraqi troops. His counterpart, Dulaimi, however, stated that the Iraqi government was satisfied with the Coalition efforts and that Iran would not be training Iraqi troops. Iran would, however, be providing \$1 billion in aide that would go towards reconstruction. Dulaimi conceded that some would go to the Ministry of Defense.^{cdxlii}

Iran faces a dilemma. It benefits from US support for Iraq to help it deal with the insurgency and provide economic aid. Yet, it fears the US presence in Iraq, and the risk of being "encircled" by the US presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Iranian officials have threatened to destabilize Iraq if the US brings military pressure against Iran because of its activities in nuclear proliferation. A split in Iraq's government could lead some Shi'ite factions to actively turn to Iran for support, and the divisions in Iran's government create the ongoing risk that hard-line elements might intervene in Iraq even if its government did not fully support such action. At this point in time, however, these seem to be risks rather than present realities.

The Problem of Turkey

The Kurdish issue in Northern Iraq has two major implications for Turkey. First, Ankara is concerned about activities of Kurdish separatist groups in Northern Iraq, whose chief objective is an independent Kurdistan in and around Turkey. Turkey is engaging in heavy diplomacy with both the US and Iraqi administrations to crack down on these organizations and eliminate the Kurdish rebels which are launching attacks into Turkish territory. This long-standing concern is the primary reason for the presence of Turkish intelligence and military units in Northern Iraq since the Gulf Operation.

In summer 2005, Kurdish PKK rebels launched a series of attacks on Turkish forces allegedly from bases in northern Iraq. In two months, more than 50 Turkish security forces were killed in attacks, mostly in the form of planted IEDs, a weapon utilized widely by Iraqi insurgents.

In July 2005, the Turkish Prime Minister threatened cross-border action against the rebels if the attacks did not stop, though such action is generally regarded as

extremely provocative and even illegal. Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, however, that “There are certain things that international law allows. When necessary, one can carry out cross border operations. I hope that such a need will not emerge.”^{cdxliii}

Perhaps exacerbating the debate about cross border operations were the conflicting reports that the US, who considers the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the military to capture the organization's leaders. A member of the Turkish military claimed that the US had agreed to seize the leaders while US military spokesmen were unaware of such an agreement.

The official US position seemed to be that the US opposed any cross-border action as an infringement on sovereignty and likely to incite further violence between the Kurds and the various sects opposed to their independence or autonomy. Furthermore, the US made it clear that any discussion over the PKK should center on the Iraqi government. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated, “I think the difference now is that they [Turkey] are dealing with a sovereign Iraqi government, and a lot of these discussions will have to occur between Turkey and Iraq, not between Turkey and the United States.”^{cdxliv}

Second, Turkey has consistently opposed strong autonomy for a Kurdish zone within Iraq, out of the fear that it would create unrest and aspirations for independence among Turkey's own Kurdish population. Given the rich water supplies in the Kurdish populated regions of Turkey and the colossal irrigation project (the Southeast Anatolian Project) that Turkey invested in for over four decades, an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan is out of the question for Turkish policy-makers.

Despite the present tension in U.S. and Turkish ties, and Turkey's relations with Iraq, Turkey is significantly involved in post war reconstruction in Iraq. Turkey also offered to assist with the training of Iraqi police forces. The most recent example of Turkish effort to help the creation of a stable and unified Iraq was the meeting held in April 2005 in Istanbul where all Iraq's neighbors, Egypt and Bahrain convened to address issues related with cross border insurgency and terrorist infiltration.

The Problem of Jordan

Jordan shares a border with Iraq and some analysts believe that a limited number of insurgents may cross into Iraq from that border. Most Arab Jordanians are very much opposed to the rise of a Shi'ite dominated Iraq.

While commentators focus on the fact that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is himself a Jordanian, it should be noted, however, that the Jordanian government has sentenced Zarqawi to death in absentia. Though there may be some Jordanians involved in the insurgency, Jordan has been very cooperative in its efforts to train Iraqi police and to monitor its borders.

The Jordanian government has trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces and is very much concerned with extreme Islamist elements within its own

territory. There have, however, been incidents. In spring 2004, a plot to create a massive chemical-laced explosion over Amman by radical Islamists was uncovered and disrupted by the Jordanian security forces.

On August 19, 2005, Katyusha rockets were fired at two U.S. warships in Jordan's Red Sea Aqaba port. None of the rockets struck the ship. One hit a warehouse, killing a Jordanian soldier; another exploded near a Jordanian hospital, resulting in no casualties; and the third landed outside of Eilat airport in neighboring Israel, but failed to explode. The Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda, linked to Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack. Four days later, Jordanian officials arrested a Syrian man, Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly, who they accused of carrying out the attack. Police said three accomplices slipped across the border into Iraq.^{cdxlv} Jordanian Interior Minister Awni Yirfas confirmed his government was working with Iraqi authorities in order to capture the militants.^{cdxlv}

In summer 2005, Jordanian forces broke up an alleged recruitment ring in Amman. According to the main defendant, Zaid Horani, he and several other Jordanians crossed into Syria and boarded buses in Damascus, Syria that were bound for Iraq as the Coalition forces invaded. Horani apparently returned home and helped to organize a recruitment pipeline for Jordanians interested in joining the insurgency in Iraq. Figuring prominently in the case was a Syrian, Abu al-Janna, who was allegedly the point of contact in Iraq for the Jordanians. Al-Janna is reportedly a central figure in the regional terror network.^{cdxlvii}

A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, is the main suspect in the suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, considered the single deadliest attack to date with more than 125 killed.^{cdxlviii} On August 21, 2005, Laith Kubba, spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari, accused Jordan of allowing the family of Saddam Hussein to finance the insurgent campaign in Iraq in an effort to reestablish the Ba'ath Party in that country.^{cdxlix}

As already discussed, none of the bombers involved in the November 9 hotel bombings in Amman were Jordanian. But although all four bombers were Iraqi nationals, it is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan. Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis.

IX. Iraqi Views of the Threat

There is no single Iraqi view of any major issue that affects Iraq. Iraqis disagree on details regarding almost all of the issues covered in this analysis, and sometimes presented very different views of how serious they took the threat from Syria and Iran, how and whether they quantified various threat forces, and how serious they saw given extremist, terrorist, and insurgent elements.

There is no agreement on whether the Sunni insurgent threat is getting better or worse. There are also disturbing signs of steadily growing tensions between Arab Sunni, Arab Shi'ite, Kurd, and other minorities within both the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces. This growth in ethnic and sectarian tension since the new Iraqi government came to office in the spring of 2005 is one of the most disturbing recent trends in the insurgency, because it presents a growing risk that the country could move towards some form of hostile division or civil war.

Iraq's View of the Threat

Iraqi officials feel MNSTC-I estimates of the insurgent threat are misleading because they seem to only include hardcore insurgents. Some feel that the Minister of Defense was generally correct in including some 200,000 sympathizers in one guess at the threat. They agree with his statement that, "It does no one any good to deny the insurgents have major public support, particularly in Sunni areas. Our political problem is much more important than our military one."

If one focuses solely on the Sunni insurgency, Iraqis see the same four broad groups of insurgents as the US and MNSTC-I:

- *Zarqawi and Outside Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters*: Mostly foreign Arab and from other countries. Cannot quantify, but numbers are small and probably well under 1,000. The problem is their methods of attack have great impact.
- *Former Regime Elements (FRE)s*: Large numbers, and a mix of true supporters of the Ba'ath, alienated Sunnis, paid volunteers, temporary recruits, and other Iraqis. No way to quantify, but some feel is in the 15,000 to 30,000 level depending on how estimate full time and part time fighters.
- *Iraqi Native Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters*: Small and just emerging. Cannot quantify, but numbers are small and probably well under 500. The problem is their methods of attack can mirror image outside extremists and have great impact.
- *Organized Crime*: The major source of violence and insecurity in at least 12 of the 18 governorates. Often seem to cooperate with terrorists and insurgents. Many different levels of seriousness, but numbers are very high, as is impact.

Iraqis do, however, see far more Iraqi popular hostility to the Coalition forces and "occupation" than many US officials and officers believe exist. They see the deployment of Iraqi forces as a critical step in winning popular support for the new government, and as vital in Shi'ite areas as well as Sunni. They do not agree on how quickly the Coalition should phase down its role, but they do agree that the Coalition is part of the problem and not simply part of the solution.

The deepest division among Iraqis is over just how serious the problem of Shi'ite attacks of reprisals is becoming, and over the extent to which Shi'ite actions are helping to divide the country along sectarian lines. Many Sunnis who have supported the interim Iraqi government, or who current or former officials in it, feel Shi'ite elements of the Ministry of Interior forces and the various Shi'ite and Kurdish militias are becoming a serious problem. Some accuse the Shi'ite militias of atrocities against Sunnis, and both Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs accuse the Kurdish leadership and Pesh Merga of supporting ethnic cleansing in the north, though the details are unclear.

Inclusion versus Conflict

Most Iraqi officials, commanders, and intellectuals agree that it is that the degree to which Iraqis can or cannot find peaceful political solutions to creating an inclusive state will determine the success or failure of the insurgency. Civil war is not a risk, it is already an ongoing reality. The question is just how intensive it will become. The insurgency has gradually created a low-level civil war, and Sunni Islamist extremists have made a concerted effort to drive it towards a broader Sunni vs. Shi'ite conflict. Much of the future nature of the insurgency in Iraq depends on the wisdom and pragmatism of Iraq's present and emerging political leaders over the course of 2005 through 2007.

Iraqi and Coalition policymakers understand the issues and risks involved. US and other MNSTC officials have pressed hard for "inclusion" before the elections, and for Iraqi government contacts and negotiations with the so-called "rejectionist" elements among Iraq Sunni Arabs after the elections.

The US has pressed hard for inclusiveness at every level since the formation of the new government in the spring of 2005. Secretary Rumsfeld visited Iraq to stress this point shortly after the election. US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, visited Iraq after the election and in May. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Iraq on May 16, 2005 -- again to deliver the message that the government must be inclusive, avoid purges of the civil service and Iraqi forces, and develop the existing Iraqi force structure as rapidly as possible. Top US officials have repeated these themes ever since, as has the US ambassador, senior US officers, and other members of the US Embassy team.

Shi'ite Resistance to Sectarian Conflict

So far, Iraq's top Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders have generally pressed for unity and resisted pressures for revenge and reprisals. Iraq's new president and prime minister have consistently stressed a strategy of inclusion and amnesty upon taking office.^{cdl} Iraqi officials have also continued to negotiate with those who boycotted the elections - some of whom have shown an interest in joining the new political structure and being included in writing the constitution.

Forming the new Iraqi cabinet presented serious problems after the January 30, 2005 election, in part because so many Sunnis chose not to participate in the political process before the January 30th election. Some new officials have also been a source of tension. The new Minister of the Interior, Bayan Jabr, had some

Sunni figures call for his removal because they felt he was tied to SCIRI's Badr Corps, which they blamed for attacks on Sunnis.

Jabr has since become a serious problem, and the focus of much of the Sunni feeling that government forces are behind some of the attacks on Sunnis, and various firings and purges of Sunnis. The Badr Organization is seen as having infiltrated both the police and elements of the security forces with his support. Other Iraqis do, however, feel that Sadr and his militia have played a role in the police and in pushing Sunnis out of Shi'ite areas, and see other clerics as responsible for the growing problems Sunnis are having in living in Basra, Shi'ite parts of Baghdad, and the Shi'ite south.

Through the fall of 2005, Iraq's Arab Shi'ite leaders have, however, largely resisted polarization along ethnic and sectarian lines. This has included key religious leaders as diverse as the Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani and Abdel Aziz al-Hakim. The role of Moqtada al-Sadr has been more uncertain, as has that of many other mid-level and less senior Shi'ite clerics, and some Shi'ite officials..

The Uncertain Future Role of Iraq's Sunnis

As has been noted, there were growing signs of tension, and sometimes clashes between Iraqi Sunnis and foreign-led Sunni Islamist extremist groups as early as the spring of 2005. Even hardline voices also have shown a deep concern for national unity. The blame falls on both sides. In late May, Harith al Dhari, a senior Sunni Imam who ignited sectarian tensions when he blamed the Badr Corps for killings of Sunnis, condemned the killing of a prominent Shi'ite cleric.^{cdli}

These tensions have, however, sometimes pushed the Sunnis towards inclusiveness, rather than away from it. In early April 2005, many of the native Iraqi Sunni clerics in the Association of Muslim Scholars reversed their previous condemnation of Sunni Iraqis who joined the security forces. Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samarrai, a leading cleric in the organization gave a Friday sermon encouraging Iraqi Sunnis to join the army and police, to prevent Iraq from falling into "the hands of those who have caused chaos, destruction, and violated the sanctities."^{cdlii} A total of 64 Sunni native Iraqi imams and religious scholars signed the fatwa that al-Samarrai wrote, including such leading previously hard-line imams as Ahmed Hassan al-Taha of Baghdad.^{cdliii}

Sunni Participation in the New Iraqi Government

The new cabinet selected in the spring of 2005 included seven Sunnis. Iraq's new Minister of Defense, Sadoon al-Dulaimi, was chosen after a long political struggle to find a Sunni with real political credentials who was acceptable to Iraq's Shi'ites and Kurds. Dulaimi was a former officer with training as a sociologist. He became an exile during the Iran-Iraq war and had been sentenced to death in absentia by Saddam Hussein. He had returned to Iraq after Saddam's fall, and had set up the Baghdad-based Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, which conducted a number of Iraq's public opinion surveys.

While some Sunnis charged Dulaimi did not have the political weight to be a serious leader, he was the member of the government who announced on May 16, 2005 that Iraqi forces would stop raiding Sunni mosques and "terrifying worshippers."^{cdliiv} He was also a man that many of his subordinates came to respect, although some still continued to fear a Shi'ite purge of Sunni workers in the ministry. Other key Sunnis included Abid Mutlak al-Jubouri, one of three deputy prime ministers, and Osama al-Najafi, as Minister of Industry.

Sunni groups like the National Dialogue Council, a body composed of 31 Sunni groups -- and Sunni political figures in the government like Adnand Dulami -- have long pushed for inclusion. Sunni Islamist extremism and sectarian violence have pushed other Sunni leaders in this direction as well. On May 21, over 1,000 Sunni Arab clerics, political figures, and tribal leaders declared an end to their boycott of the government-oriented political system and said they were uniting in a Sunni bloc and wanted to actively participate in the drafting of the constitution. This included both moderate and hard-line members of the Iraqi Islamic Party and Association of Muslim Scholars.

The National Assembly included only 17 Sunni members out of 275 Assembly members. And questions have arisen within the Sunni community as to how the Shi'ites have used this power. There have been unexplained Iraqi security raids on seemingly peaceful Sunni political groups like the Dialogue Council. Some Sunnis have also charged that government forces have deliberately raided their mosques, mistreated prisoners, and may have executed Sunni civilians. At the same time, Sunnis have been unrealistically demanding and deeply divided over how to deal with any movement towards inclusion.

The Sunni clerics in the Association of Muslim Scholars who urged their followers to join the Iraqi forces did so in an ambiguous fatwa, stating that the "new army and police are empty of good people, and we need to supply them...Because the police and army are a safeguard for the whole nation, not a militia for any special part, we have issued this fatwa calling on our people to join the army and police."^{cdlv} This was a far cry from reports in September 2004 that indicated that the Association's spokesman, the son of the president of the Association, supported the targeting of what he termed 'collaborators.'^{cdlvi}

An investigation by the New York Times raised serious questions as to whether Dialogue Council's leaders were prepared to accept an Iraq that was not Sunni ruled. The Times found that the Council's conservative Islamic secretary general, Fakhri al-Qaisi, felt that Shi'ites were only 30% of the population and not 60%, and argued that Sunni Arabs were closer to 40% than 20%. He also reacted to the raid on the Council's office by saying that the Council was interested in negotiation but that, "I think it's a scheme to wipe us out, destroy us," he said. "Their slogans about democracy are all but lies."^{cdlvii}

According to the Times, he said that vice president Sheik Ghazi al-Yawar, the highest-ranking Sunni in the government, "...hasn't protected his friends or cooperated sincerely with us in the council." He described the new Minister of Defense, Sadoun al-Dulaimi, as a "double agent." Saleh Mutlak, another Council member, charged that the leaders of the military wing of Supreme Council for the

Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of the two leading Shi'ite religious parties, had been a major obstacle in the negotiations with the new government. He also said that Prime Minister Jafari was half-hearted: "We could not reach anything with him," he said. "He speaks in a vague way. He never comes to the point."

While this was only one report at a time of considerable tension, interviews with Iraqis during this period revealed similar Sunni claims about demographics and attitudes towards the elections. It is also clear that some senior figures in both SCIRI and Prime Minister Jafari's Al Dawa party did believe in purging the new government of "Ba'athists," and in setting very demanding requirements for any inclusion. These seemed to include Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of SCIRI who is not in the government but is a key voice in Shi'ite politics.

The efforts to draft a new constitution proved more reassuring. The initial group of 55 members of the legislature chosen to draft the new constitution on May 10, 2005 included 28 Shi'ites from Prime Minister Jafari's United Iraqi Alliance, 15 Kurds from the Kurdish Alliance, eight members from former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Shi'ite dominated alliance, and one each to a communist, a Turcoman, a Christian, and one Sunni Arab. At US urging, the government offered on May 26, 2005, to add 15 more Sunni seats to the 101 seats in the Constitutional Commission actually doing the draft, which would have given Sunnis a total of 17 seats or nearly 20% of the total.^{cdlviii}

Underlying these negotiations were the fears that the option to delay the writing of the constitution by six months might be invoked and that either that event, or the insistence of the negotiators at the constitutional committee on a certain number of seats for Sunni Arabs deemed unacceptable by Sunni negotiators, might precipitate a withdrawal of Sunni participation in the writing of the constitution and the loss of an opportunity to sap some support among the Arab Sunni community for the insurgency. Jafari, however, said that he would not seek to invoke the extension.

Adnan Dulaimi, head of the Sunni affairs department within the new Iraqi government and a Sunni himself, brought up the specter of such a Sunni rejection. "If they don't agree at the end [to 25 Sunni Arab seats], we'll withdraw from the process of writing the constitution. We will never accept the 13 [additional plus the two we have] seats they want to give us. In the referendum, if they don't agree to our demands, we'll call on three provinces to reject the constitution."^{cdlix}

Other Sunni politicians and negotiators, however, suggested that the problem would not be as intractable as indicated by Dulaimi. Naseer Ani, a Sunni directly involved in the negotiations, stated, "We insist on the number, but it is politics – everything is possible."^{cdlx} Reportedly, 1,000 Sunni scholars, politicians, and eminent figures met at the end of May to discuss the community's political role. In early June, Iraqi politicians were mulling over the possibility of expanding the committee to 69 members so that they could accept the 25 seat Sunni demand.

In mid-June, the constitutional committee offered to give the Sunnis 10 advisers on the committee, but no more than the 15 full members. The Sunni delegation to

the committee agreed to the arrangement but stressed its dissatisfaction with the number of voting members it had. Key Sunni factions seem to have reluctantly agreed to such a compromise in June 2005.

The new draft constitution scarcely received broad Sunni support during the drafting effort that followed, but Shi'ites and Kurds did make active efforts to compromise with Sunnis, and had some success. The constitution was ultimately approved in the October 15, 2005 referendum, but two Sunni provinces soundly rejected it – even though many portions were left open for the new legislature elected on December 15, 2005 to deal with, and a simply majority vote can amend the constitution for at least the first four months of the new government.

Many issues still remain regarding the role Sunnis will play in the constitutional process and the election that will follow, and how much popular support any Sunnis who do participate will get; their inclusion remains at risk. It is also clear that any failure at inclusion that is not recognized as valid by a broad majority of Iraqi Sunnis could have a critical impact on both the short and long-term stability of Iraq and the pace of the insurgency. The new constitution can be vetoed if a two-thirds majority of voters in Iraq's 18 provinces decide to vote "no." Sunnis dominate Al Anbar Province and have large majorities in Salahuddin and Nineveh Provinces. The effort to draft a constitution was also on a tight schedule: The draft was to be approved by a 55-person committee of the National Assembly, and then by the 275-member Assembly, by August 15, and then accepted in a national referendum by October 15.

A one-week extension was then voted through on August 15. With August 22 came another extension of the process. On August 28, the Shiite and Kurd representatives of Parliament used their vast majority to approve a version of the bill which the Sunnis quickly and publicly rejected. Discreet negotiations continued in an attempt to appease Sunni concerns, but a manageable solution was never met. On September 6, Bahaa al-Araji, a leading Shiite on the committee, announced that the talks had ended, and that the constitution would be printed in the form in which it was passed in the National Assembly the week prior.^{cdlx} This set the stage for the October 15, 2005 constitutional referendum. Although even as the constitution made its way to the UN printer in mid-September, discussion and amendment continued to unfold.

All of these factors reinforce the thesis that the key issue shaping Iraqi success in fighting the insurgency will be whether large numbers of Sunnis that are now neutral or passively hostile towards the Iraqi Interim Government can be persuaded to join in the political process, and whether some form of stable new balance of power can be found that will make Sunnis accept a political process dominated by the Shi'ites and where the Kurds and other minorities also play a role proportionate to their size. There cannot be an end to the Sunni insurgency without a political solution that the vast majority of Sunnis at least tolerate and hopefully support.

At the same time, the Iraqi government must show it can actually govern at the local and regional level. The Iraqi military, security, and police forces must reach a level of critical mass where they are large enough to serve the country, large

enough to take over most of the burden of maintaining security from the US. They must be effective enough to show that the new Iraqi government is not only legitimate in terms of politics but in terms of force. Political legitimacy is essential to good government, but no government can govern that lacks the force to ensure the security of its population and deal with insurgent and terrorist threats.

There also will almost certainly be at least another year of intensive fighting against Islamist and extremist elements that will reject inclusion in the political process almost regardless of what political system emerges during the coming elections. There are only three ways to deal with Iraq's most hard-line elements: Kill them, imprison them, or drive them out of the country. There is a very real war to fight, and it is still unclear when or if Iraqi forces will really be ready to fight it with anything like the total numbers required.

No one who has dealt with Arab Iraqis can be unaware of the fact that most think of themselves as Iraqis and nationalists, and not just as Sunnis and Shi'ites. Insurgency can turn into a broader civil war, however, and the future inclusiveness of the Iraqi government is anything but clear in a climate where Iraq is just beginning to develop political leaders and parties.

Insurgency and the Effectiveness and Visibility of Iraqi Military, Security, and Police Forces

Finally, much depends on Coalition and Iraqi success in creating effective Iraqi forces that are the *visible* element of security operations that Sunnis and other Iraqis see on a day-to-day basis. The lack of highly visible Iraqi forces, and the fact that US occupiers have both won virtually every past victory and still dominate most security activity, have so far tended to sustain the image of a nation where fighting is done by foreigners, non-Muslims, and occupiers.

Many Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government tactical victories have also produced a costly political and military backlash. Even successful military engagements can lead to the creation of as many new insurgents as they kill or capture. The lack of popular support means that many existing insurgents disperse with their weapons or bury their weapons and supplies for later retrieval.

Many Iraqis still see US and Coalition-dominated military actions as actions by "occupier" forces; they are a source of constant propaganda and fuel conspiracy theories. Real and imagined civilian casualties, collateral damage, and the impact on civilians and shrines that these engagements cause remain a constant problem. All of these points reinforce the need to create larger and more effective Iraqi forces as soon as possible, and to give them full force protection and counterinsurgency capability.

At the same time, Iraqis also do not want their own military constantly visible in the streets, or militias and other unofficial forces that often support hardline interpretations of Islam and/or enforce their own selfish interests. Most ordinary Iraqis also see crime as much more of a day-to-day threat than insurgents. As a result, the efforts of the Iraqi government and MNSTC-I to create effective police

and security forces in parallel with creating effective military forces are absolutely critical to nation building, political legitimacy, effective government, and the effort to eventually create a true civil society.

This raises serious issues about how the new Iraqi military, security, and police force treat their own population. One of Jalal Talibani's first acts in becoming Iraq's new president in April 2005 was to offer an amnesty to Iraqi Sunni insurgents. This followed up on a more limited offer of insurgent by then Prime Minister Ayad Allawi in 2004. Such acts of political inclusion are as critical to Iraqi success in defeating the insurgents as the effectiveness of Iraqi forces.^{cdlxii}

As has been discussed earlier, however, there are strong indications that some Iraqi forces – including commando units – continue to use far more brutal methods in searching for, interrogating, and dealing with other Iraqis than Coalition forces are permitted to use.^{cdlxiii} These abuses include their treatment of Iraqi detainees. Moreover, there are indications that some Coalition forces encourage Iraqi forces to do this, and use them as proxies for actions they are not allowed to take. At a minimum, US and other Coalition forces operating with Iraqi units sometimes stand by and allow such activities to take place.^{cdlxiv} Such actions are particularly divisive when largely Kurdish or Shiite units operate in Sunni areas.

US State Department human rights reporting notes that Iraqi forces must operate in a climate of extraordinary violence and extremism on the part of their opponents, and make protecting Iraqi civilians their primary mission. It also, however, sounds an important warning about the Iraqi police, security, and National Guard actions through December 31, 2005:^{cdlxv}

With the ongoing insurgency limiting access to information, a number of instances in the Report have been difficult to verify. However, there were reports of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, and poor prison conditions--particularly in pretrial detention facilities--and arbitrary arrest and detention. There remained unresolved problems relating to the large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Corruption at all levels of the Government remained a problem. Some aspects of the judicial system were dysfunctional, and there were reports that the judiciary was subject to external influence. The exercise of labor rights remained limited, largely due to violence, unemployment, and maladapted organizational structures and laws; however, with international assistance, some progress was underway at year's end.

...With the ongoing insurgency, there was a climate of extreme violence in which persons were killed for political and other reasons. There were occasional reports of killings particularly at the local level by the Government or its agents, which may have been politically motivated. In early December, Basrah police reported that officers in the Internal Affairs Unit were involved in the killings of 10 members of the Ba'ath Party. Basrah police also reported that the same Internal Affairs Unit officers were involved in the killings of a mother and daughter accused of engaging in prostitution. The Basrah Chief of Intelligence was removed from his position as a result of the accusations; however, he retained command of the Internal Affairs Unit. An MOI investigation into the Basrah allegations was ongoing at year's end. Other instances reflected arbitrary actions by government agents. For example, on October 16, Baghdad police arrested, interrogated, and killed 12 kidnappers of 3 police officers.

... The TAL expressly prohibits torture in all its forms under all circumstances, as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), during this reporting period, torture and ill treatment of detainees by police was commonplace. In interviews with 90 prisoners conducted from August to October, 72 claimed that they had been tortured or mistreated. The reported abuses included some instances of beatings with cables and hosepipes, electric shocks to their earlobes and genitals, food and water deprivation, and overcrowding in standing room only cells.

Additionally, HRW reported that specialized agencies, including the Major Crimes Unit, Criminal Intelligence, Internal Affairs and possibly the Intelligence Service, were responsible for pretrial irregularities, such as arrest without warrant, lengthy periods of detention before referral to an investigative judge, and the denial of contact with family and legal counsel. Although detainees were primarily criminal suspects, they also included others, such as members of the Mahdi Militia and juveniles, who sometimes were caught in arrest sweeps.

There were instances of illegal treatment of detainees. For example, on November 1, Baghdad police arrested two Coalition Force citizen interpreters on charges involving the illegal use of small arms. After their arrest, police bound the detainees' arms behind them, pulling them upward with a rope and cutting off their circulation. This treatment was followed by beatings over a 48-hour period with a steel cable, in an effort to make the detainees confess. Both interpreters required medical treatment after their release to Coalition Forces. No further information on the incident was available at year's end. In another case, the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) gathered enough evidence to prosecute police officers in Baghdad who were systematically raping and torturing female detainees. Two of the officers received prison sentences; four others were demoted and reassigned.

There were also allegations that local police sometimes used excessive force against both citizens and foreigners. On November 28, a foreign national reported that police beat him at a police station in Kufa. According to the victim, he witnessed police beating detainees at a police station while he was filing a claim on another matter. When he questioned the treatment of the detainees, he was beaten and detained for 4 hours.

A number of complaints about Iraqi National Guard (ING) abuses surfaced during the year. For example, in November, the ING raided a house in southern Baghdad and arrested four alleged insurgents. The family was evicted and the ING burnt the house. In another incident, a doctor at the al-Kindi hospital in Baghdad said that the ING had tried to force him to treat one of their colleagues before other more serious cases. When he refused, they beat him. There also were many reported instances of ING looting and burning houses in Fallujah in November.

According to an ING official, disciplinary procedures were in place to deal with the mistreatment of citizens and a number of members of the ING were fired during the year for violations.

There were numerous reports and direct evidence that insurgents employed multiple forms of torture and inhumane treatment against their victims...Although there was significant improvement in Iraqi Corrections Service (ICS) prison conditions following the fall of the former regime, in many instances the facilities did not meet international penal standards. According to the Government, it generally permitted visits by independent human rights observers. In August, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited ICS facilities. The Ministry of Human Rights established a permanent office at the Abu Ghraib prison. HRW visited some ICS facilities.

After the fall of the former regime, prison functions were consolidated into the Ministry of Justice, and the ICS was transferred from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Government, ICS confined civilians under the rule of law, and a valid confinement order from a judge was required. Confinement was

not connected with military intelligence operations nor was there any contact with military confinement functions.

...Allegations of inmate abuse by ICS Officers continued, although fewer than in the previous year. The ICS Internal Affairs Division claimed it conducted investigations of all detected or reported cases and that appropriate corrective action was taken if an allegation was verified. Although fewer than 10 cases were investigated between July and December, an individual with access to human rights complaints alleged that hundreds of cases were pending accusing ICS officers of abuse and torture of detainees and prisoners, including women. No further information was available at year's end.

..At year's end, ICS was investigating eight cases in which inmates alleged police predetention abuse and torture. Overcrowding was a problem. Inmate disturbances and riots reduced available prison beds by approximately one-third, and pretrial detention facilities were often overcrowded. The insurrections in Sadr City and later in Najaf created additional overcrowding in detention facilities.

...Detainees were generally retained in custody pending the outcome of a criminal investigation. Individuals were generally arrested openly and warrants were issued only with sufficient evidence, although, there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrest and detention

There were no publicized cases of criminal proceedings brought against members of the security forces in connection with alleged violations of these rights, nor were there publicly known measures adopted to prevent recurrence.

Due to the insurgency, high-crime rates, and limited police training, innocent persons were sometimes arrested and detained erroneously

...The MOI's responsibilities extended only to internal security. MOI commands a number of uniformed forces, including the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and Department of Border Enforcement. The MOI also has criminal and domestic intelligence capabilities and regulates all domestic and foreign private security companies operating in the country. The MOI also has authority over the Civil Defense Directorate, the firefighters and emergency response organization, and the Facilities Protection Service shielding strategic infrastructure, government buildings, and cultural and educational assets.

...In the aftermath of the fall of the former regime, a police presence temporarily vanished, except in the Kurdish North. Police equipment was stolen. After April 2003, a large recruitment and training program was established, including hiring former police officers.

During the year, various specialized units were created, including an Emergency Response Unit (with capabilities similar to a SWAT team) and Public Order Battalions that perform riot control functions, as well as specialized counterinsurgency units.

More than any other group, the police have been a target of terrorist attacks. Over 1,500 IPS personnel have been killed between April 2003 and year's end. Additionally, pervasive lawlessness has led to an increase in violent and organized crime, particularly related to kidnappings.

...There was a widespread perception that police made false arrests to extort money. Some police officers did not present defendants to magistrates and held them in detention cells until their families paid bribes for their release. In the Central Criminal Court in Baghdad, the time between arrest and arraignment was often in excess of 30 days, despite the 24-hour requirement.

There were organized police abuses. For example, on September 4, approximately 150 police, none of whom had uniforms or badges, surrounded the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP), which is associated with the International Center for Reconciliation of the Coventry Cathedral, in response to an alert that a prominent former regime figure might be inside

the Cathedral. Four individuals identified themselves as MOI officials, but did not show badges. Armed men, some with heavy weapons, broke down the doors and ransacked the IIP building, stealing phones and money. The incident ended with no serious injuries but without judicial follow-up.

On August 16, a ministry, reportedly wishing to occupy the real property used by a political party, caused party members to be arrested and detained for almost 60 days without charges. During their detention, a habeas corpus writ from the Chief Investigative Judge of the Central Criminal Court was ignored. The minister involved also refused to appear before the judge to explain his ministry's actions. The political party members were eventually released; however, the property involved remained under the control of the ministry at year's end.

...Reportedly, coerced confessions and interrogation continued to be the favored method of investigation by police. According to one government official, hundreds of cases were pending at year's end alleging torture. There have been several arrests, and both criminal and administrative punishments were handed out to police in cases where allegations of torture were substantiated.

Additionally, corruption continued to be a problem with the police. The CPI was investigating cases of police abuse involving unlawful arrests, beatings, and the theft of valuables from the homes of persons who were detained; however, the police often continued to use the methods employed by the previous regime. In addition to the CPI, several other mechanisms were put into place to address this problem, including an internal affairs capability, mentoring, and training programs that focus on accountability.

...Efforts to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the police were ongoing; however, there was little indication that the IIG took sufficient steps to address this problem adequately or to reinforce publicly the message that there will be no climate of impunity.

Because of arbitrary arrest and detention practices, some prisoners were held in incommunicado detention.

...Lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a significant problem due to backlogs in the judiciary and slow processing of criminal investigations. Approximately 3,000 inmates were in pretrial detention, and 1,000 were held post-trial.

...Corruption remained a problem in the criminal justice system. In the fall, the MOI referred allegations of misconduct involving a judge to the COJ. The allegations concerned professional misconduct, including bribery. At year's end, this case was still pending...

A report by the Inspector General of the State Department and the Inspector General of the Department of Defense noted that as of late April 2005,^{cdlxvi}

The International Police Liaison Officers' (IPLOs) daily reports chronicle disturbing accounts of instances in which IPS personnel are not professional in the performance of their duties. There are frequent reports of breakdowns in discipline, feuds among police units, and prisoner abuse. In the absence of viable tracking systems, the IG Team is not able to determine whether or to what degree Coalition-trained police may be perpetrators of such actions. The failure to impose proper discipline rests with IPS leaders (some of whom have been directly, even violently, involved in the unseemly questionable incidents). The examples set by poor leaders for Coalition-trained personnel (mostly new recruits) bode ill.

Like political inclusion, Coalition, US, and MNSTC-I efforts to give the new Iraqi military, security, and police forces human rights training and the kind of respect for the rule of law necessary to win hearts and minds are vital to Iraq's success. The same is true of NATO training efforts and those of other countries.^{cdlxvii} There

is no question, however, that such training is not always successful, and that Islamist suicide bombings and atrocities sometimes provoke Iraqi forces to extremes.^{cdlxviii} There are also controversial units like the 5,000 man Special Police Commando that are Iraqi recruited and trained. While such units are often highly effective, they have not been models of respect for human rights.^{cdlxix}

Counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations are necessarily brutal and violent; war is war. They also, however, are also battles for the hearts and minds of both the people where the war is fought and of the enemy. The effectiveness of Iraqi forces is heavily dependent on their winning such support and not mirroring the actions of Saddam Hussein's forces and regime. As similar US errors at the Abu Ghraib prison compound demonstrated all too clearly, excessive force and interrogation methods quickly become counterproductive and self-defeating even if they produce short-term results. The political dimension and impact of military, security, and police operations is not one that either Coalition or Iraqi commanders and forces can afford to ignore, even in the heat of battle. The primary purpose of Iraqi operations is to reforge a nation; not defeat an enemy.

X. Probable Outcomes and the Lessons of War

The insurgency so far lacks any major foreign support other than limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign supporters. It does not have the support of most Shi'ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population. If Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, if the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and if the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

There is, however, a serious risk of civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi'ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi'ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi'ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

In short, the odds of insurgent success remain roughly even -- at least to the point where Iraq remains divided and/or unstable for some years to come. Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitution referendum and need for act on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will mutate into warring Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions. The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi'ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Shi'ites, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk

As for the lessons of the Iraqi insurgency to date, one is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation,

underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about “lessons,” as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalitions' side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid “Phase IV” and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the “waste” of US troops on “low priority” missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated," and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency where it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall of Saddam's regime, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, fail to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency as having legitimate causes, and choose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi'ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

The Limits of "Oil Spots"

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. "Oil spots," "hearts and minds," "Special Forces," walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is very useful if it means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical.

But, "oil spots" are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

Even with limited resources, neither option can really be chosen exclusively over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country – where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploits serious ethnic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot.

The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea, particularly when the insurgency is far more "humancentric" than netcentric. For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practice, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia choose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated y modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.^{cdlxx}

The same is true of the similar British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different target at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "Counterinsurgency "Small Wars," "a modular army," and "pacification." Come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning than in many cases, only allied forces and allied

governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

The “Undrainable Swamp”

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents' incentives to join civil society. In short, to “drain the swamp.”

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In Iraq's case, in Vietnam, and in many other cases; the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, “crusader,” or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from the US. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power set of local political movements drive the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help

themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.

The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are “simple, quick and wrong.” History shows all too clearly that this “simple, quick and wrong” approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, “a triumph of hope over experience.” The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a “worst case” or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed. We become involved because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unattended Consequences"

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the “fog of war” evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by “law of unintended consequences.” Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis based on what we think we know

going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges and in think tanks and universities during Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play, the Counterinsurgency Game

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all.

It is far easier to blunder than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency, mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said "USA Water," while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the "Investor's Journal" in Vietnamese and English. This was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?

This raises another lesson the Iraqi insurgency that the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to play it. Robert Osgood made the point a long time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself whether if they had known when we went the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents

cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms. Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are and less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that given both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer in future crisis may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, *and alternative means* honestly and in depth.

Counterinsurgency Does Not always Mean Winning

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point

in “staying the course” through a major Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn’t a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose. You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you can’t lose, having no limits, and then losing. And this should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.

If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency. If the US must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, risks that will require more forces and resources; or it must otherwise set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them -- regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over

from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. And to some extent, will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can't figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can't deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far too often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now have spent or committed its way through nearly \$20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can't protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" is illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is relevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don't win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

Honestly Winning the Support of the American People

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush Administration, and the American military

great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda lose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and its allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn't a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US "spins" each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don't end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President's term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executors, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

Lessons for Warfighting

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lessons about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn't matter how well the war went last month; it doesn't matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don't know, they should spend the lives of American men and women in the first place?

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, Iraq has shown that enemies will make every effort to try win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority.** It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or

terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19th century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Madhi's victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn't a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don't win. Technology doesn't win.

- **Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it.** The character of America's political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think *it* can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars must be fought out largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth, the US does do need to improve our counterinsurgency technology, but cannot win with “toys.”** Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: those twin IR sensors, the shaped charges, the radio-controlled devices, the foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.
- **Fifth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner.** If it is true that the US can win

most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies means also respect; it doesn't mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare that if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior, and even more difficult if you ignore the ministry of finance, this just doesn't work.

In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. And, incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices

- **Sixth, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on "democracy." In most of the world, "legitimacy" has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But, bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability, a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don't win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

- **Seventh, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to

go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point support the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside and where the fighting takes place.

The US needs put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaffs the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn't require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to "civilianize" some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier who is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, humancentric warfare does not mean "supersoldiers" or superrintelligence officers. This is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraqi shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn't important? Of course it doesn't; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.

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Born Ahmed al-Khalayleh on Oct. 20, 1966. His father was a traditional healer, and he and his nine siblings grew up poor. He took the name "Zarqawi" as homage to his hometown of Zarqa, Jordan.

In 1983 he dropped out of high school. People there remember him as a petty criminal, simple, quick-tempered, and barely-literate gangster

In 1989 he went to Afghanistan to fight. He and Bin Laden rose to prominence as "Afghan Arabs" - leading foreign fighters in the "jihad" against Soviet forces. After the Soviets pulled out, he worked as a reporter for a jihadist magazine.

Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan around 1992, and was convicted of hiding weapons and of conspiring to overthrow the monarchy and establish an Islamic caliphate. Imprisoned until 1999, fellow inmates say he devoted hours of study to the Koran. He also is said to be a specialist in poisons. Not long after his release, he fled the country.

His movements have been difficult to track. Western intelligence has indicated that Zarqawi had then sought refuge in Europe. German security forces later uncovered a militant cell which claimed Zarqawi as its leader. The cell-members also told their German interrogators their group was "especially for Jordanians who did not want to join al-Qaeda".

After Europe he is believed to have moved to Afghanistan and to have set up a training camp in the western city of Herat, near the border with Iran. Students at his camp supposedly became experts in the manufacture and use of poison gases. It is during this period that Zarqawi is thought to have renewed his acquaintance with al-Qaeda.

He is believed to have fled to Iraq in 2001 after a US missile strike on his Afghan base. US officials argue that it was at al-Qaeda's behest that he moved to Iraq and established links with Ansar al-Islam - a group of Kurdish Islamists from the north of the country.

He was first identified as a suspect at large in a plot to attack U.S. and Israeli targets in Jordan, culminating in the 2002 slaying of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. Jordan tried him in absentia and sentenced him to death for allegedly plotting attacks on American and Israeli tourists.

He is believed to have traveled extensively since 9/11, reportedly spending time in Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey.

In the run-up to the Iraq war in February 2003, US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations Zarqawi was an associate of Osama Bin Laden who had sought refuge in Iraq.

On 29 August 2003 Ayatollah Sayed Mohamad Baqir Al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), was killed in a car-bomb blast in the holy city of Al-Najaf in southern Iraq. It was one of the bloodiest attacks. US authorities pinned the blame on Zarqawi.

In February 2004, the US military released a letter it claimed to have intercepted in which Zarqawi apparently asks al-Qaeda to help ignite a sectarian conflict in Iraq.

In October 2004 his group, Tawhid and Jihad, declared allegiance to AQ.

He is suspected of direct involvement in the kidnapping and beheading of several foreigners in Iraq - even of wielding the knife himself. In May 2004 the American contractor Nick Berg, taken hostage in Baghdad, was among the first to be beheaded. The CIA believes with a "high degree of confidence" that it was Zarqawi who read out a statement and then carried out Berg's murder. Those killed in this fashion include another American, a South Korean and a Bulgarian, and a string of others. A Turkish hostage was shot three times in the head.

In the days leading up to the Jan. 30 Iraqi election, the terror leader declared a "fierce war" on democracy and was believed to be the voice in audiotapes urging people not to vote.

In April 2005 U.S. forces said they had recently come close to capturing him in Iraq.

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^{cdlxix} See Peter Maass, "The Way of Commandos," New York Times, April 31, 2005.

^{cdlxx} For background, see the excellent discussion in Chapter Nine, "Complex Irregular Warfare: The Face of Contemporary Conflict," The Military Balance, 2005-2006, pp. 411-420.