

## JIC Assessment, 12 October 2005

### THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES: VERY SLOW PROGRESS

*This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 12 October 2005.*

#### Key Judgements

- I. The Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) has failed to develop a coherent national security strategy. This will not change in the short time remaining before the December election. Nor will there be a significant increase of capacity in the security ministries or development of intelligence capability. The need to establish a new Iraqi administration following the elections means that we are likely to see little momentum in these critical areas over much of the next year.
- II. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continue to expand in size, but most units are ineffective against a sophisticated insurgency. Some ISF units are able to perform basic military tasks such as static security and patrolling. But they remain largely peripheral to Multi-National Forces (MNF) offensive operations. Effective leadership, command and control, training, equipment, discipline, logistic support and funding all continue to present major challenges.
- III. Elements of the ISF, primarily those under Ministry of Interior (Mol) control, are involved in sectarian violence. This is fuelling broader tensions across Iraq. The perpetuation and expansion of ethnically- and sectarian-based militia forces carries significant risks for the future.
- IV. The Iraqi police are a particular concern. They often suffer from divided loyalties and a significant number are involved in criminality for financial gain. Their command and control mechanisms remain confused, as does the exact relationship between local police and the Mol in Baghdad.
- V. Currently the MNF envisages completing the training and equipping of the ISF by early 2007, with MNF planners in Baghdad foreseeing a continued need for substantial MNF forces, capable of conducting combat operations, to support the ISF until the end of 2007, and for advisory teams at least until 2009. If the insurgency persists at anywhere near current levels, these time-frames will be unachievable, at least in Baghdad and the Sunni heartlands.
- VI. Outside these areas the prospects for progressive hand-over of security responsibilities to the Iraqis are better, although problems remain. In the UK area in the south, as in other parts of Iraq, some Shia ISF members, particularly among the police, actively collude with extremist militias linked to powerful political groups. When these groups are involved in conflict, the local ISF will not be able to cope.

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*This paper was commissioned by OD Sec and examines progress in developing the Iraqi Security Forces, their continuing problems, and the prospects for the future. It updates [the JIC Assessment] issued on 11 May 2005.*

### Lack of strategy

1. Since our last assessment in May 2005, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have expanded further. But ISF progress is being hampered by inadequate national and provincial level leadership. New structures to help co-ordinate security policy have been put in place by the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), but their effectiveness has been patchy. [...] The "transitional" nature of the government, with new elections in December, has not helped. Crucially, the ITG has failed to develop a national security strategy to address not only the insurgency, but also broader security issues such as criminality. There is no Iraqi vision of the future structure of the ISF, nor how it will be run. When such a vision emerges, it is unlikely to match the current Multi-National Forces (MNF) template.

### The problems

2. [...] In some cases there have been violent clashes between police and army units. Both the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (Mol) are currently dysfunctional, with their capacities developing very slowly if at all. The Mol, without the level of MNF support enjoyed by the MoD, probably faces the biggest challenge; [...]. The build up of capacity in both ministries is clearly not matching the growth of the security forces. Neither MoD nor Mol can administer their forces effectively; some units go unpaid and unsupplied for significant periods. Nepotism is ingrained. Funding for the ISF remains inadequate.

3. The Iraqi Army's basic command and control capability continues to grow slowly. National and Provincial Joint Co-ordination Centres (PJCCs) are in place and can work effectively. But the system has not yet reached full capability: only some PJCCs are assessed by the MNF as fully operational. Command and control mechanisms for Mol forces remain confused, as does the relationship between local police and Mol paramilitary forces. The NATO Staff College has now been established and in the long term this will have some impact on the quality of Iraqi army leadership; for now it is generally inadequate. Iraqi Army divisional and brigade headquarters have been established but their effectiveness depends on MNF advisers. Independent logistic support is minimal; only a limited capability will be in place by mid 2006.

4. An effective Iraqi intelligence organisation is critical in countering the insurgency. Some progress has been made, including establishing central co-ordinating mechanisms. [...] There is some co-ordination between INIS and DGIS, but overall co-ordination remains poor. INIS is perceived by local politicians as run by the CIA; DGIS is making some progress but is undeveloped and under-resourced; and the Mol's relationship with other agencies remains difficult. [...]

## Capacity

5. The ISF is now more visible and active across large parts of Iraq. It has continued to grow in numbers (see Annex). The Iraqi armed forces have again expanded rapidly from about 73,000 trained and equipped personnel in April to around 91,000 now; Mol-trained and equipped forces, mainly police, from 86,000 to about 106,000. But the overall figures should be treated with some caution: they do not take account of absenteeism (although this serious problem is reportedly declining, we have no information on its current scale) or provide an indication of true capability.

6. Basic capabilities are improving slowly. The provision of embedded Coalition advisors in many units and headquarters has built confidence and enabled a significant increase in the number of joint operations with the MNF. Iraqi units now routinely contribute to all major MNF operations, including in the Sunni heartlands. But the large majority of Iraqi units remain restricted to supporting roles carrying out basic military tasks - for example static security, patrolling and route clearances. Only a few units are able to take the lead in offensive operations against hard-core insurgents. In May 21 battalions were rated capable of undertaking operations with Coalition support (Level 2 capability). Now 35 battalions are reportedly at Level 2. But among the Mol paramilitary units capability has reduced with the number of Level 2 units falling from 10 to 2. No units in the military or police are rated as Level 1 (fully capable of independent operations). When in trouble the ISF remain totally dependent on MNF support for strike capability from armour, artillery and air.

## A difficult environment

7. The ISF continue to be a major target for the insurgents, and in particular are a favoured target for suicide bombers. Kidnapping and murder remain common. Compared to the MNF they lack capability to defend themselves effectively when deployed. They have consequently suffered a disproportionately high casualty rate: while the MNF have been the target of about 80% of attacks over the last few weeks, the ISF have suffered more casualties on a daily basis. Morale and recruitment continues to hold up in most areas, although creating and sustaining effective ISF in the Sunni-dominated west is a major problem. Recent polling also suggests that popular confidence in both the police and military is beginning to decline. The reasons are not clear but might be a combination of the perceived lack of progress in improving security with increasing reports of ISF corruption, human rights abuses and involvement in sectarian attacks. Widespread criminal activity and lawlessness – beyond the capacity of the current justice system to control – affects the day-to-day life of many ordinary Iraqis.

8. In the Sunni areas of western Iraq where the insurgency is strong, the ISF, and the police in particular, continue to be penetrated by insurgents. In other areas, the police often suffer from divided loyalties: a small number of officers affiliated to local militias or political parties can significantly undermine the ability of local police commanders to enforce the law effectively. A significant number are also involved in criminality for financial gain. The true degree of active sectarianism in the ISF is difficult to gauge, although accusations are common. We do not know the ethnic breakdown of the ISF. Sectarianism may cover a spectrum of issues from discrimination in employment to outright violence and intimidation. Intelligence suggests that some security appointments within the Mol are motivated along sectarian lines, with Sunnis being replaced by Shia, many with previous Badr Corps connections. There is a view among senior Iraqi politicians [...] that the activities of Mol paramilitary units are a particular problem: they are seen as a Shia force and as perpetrating a campaign

of violence against Sunnis. We cannot judge the scale of this sectarianism but violence by members of the ISF, Shia and Sunni, is taking place. It is fuelling broader ethnic tensions across Iraq.

9. The issue of militias and their incorporation into the ISF has still not been resolved. Under the terms of the draft constitution, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) will have responsibility for the security forces in the KRG region, and is likely to use its existing Peshmerga militia. Those ISF units which are Kurdish-dominated, and the Peshmerga, constitute the most formidable indigenous military forces in Iraq, and will take direction primarily from the KRG government. They number about 75,000. If other self-governing regions are created, they may have similar influence on locally recruited ISF: we judge ownership of security policy in such areas is likely to be a source of significant conflict in the future. In the absence of an effective local ISF, the MoD with MNF support has begun to recruit a Sunni tribal militia in Anbar province to help deal with Al Qaida. In both Shia and Sunni areas of Baghdad there have been calls for local militias to be raised to improve security. We judge the perpetuation of militia forces, on ethnic, tribal, or political lines, carries significant risks for the future.

### **The situation in the south**

10. The main threat in southern Iraq is not from Sunni violence, but the deep-rooted local tribal, political, and ethnic influences, which are common in many parts of Iraq. The impact these can have was most recently illustrated by events in Basra in mid-September. The Iraqi Army in the region is rated by the MNF as effective. But it remains untested. The effectiveness of the police in Basra has been a persistent concern: we examined the problems in [the JIC Assessment of 28 September]. As elsewhere in Iraq, some members of the police are linked to the militias of political factions or tribes: under pressure their reliability will be doubtful. We judge that factional loyalties in the south are such an integral part of society that when these groups are involved in conflict, the local ISF will be unable to cope.

### **Prospects**

11. In the short time remaining to the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) there will be no coherent national counter-insurgency strategy, significant increase of capacity in the security ministries or significant development of intelligence capability. The need to establish a new Iraqi administration following December's elections means that we are likely to see little new momentum in these critical areas for much of the next year. Overall progress will be further hampered as the ISF is increasingly affected by – and in some cases contributes to – the growing sectarian tensions across Iraq.

12. The ISF has continued to expand in numbers and its capacity to assist the MNF in conducting combat operations has also grown. But generating the capabilities required to combat a sophisticated insurgency will take significantly longer. Currently the MNF envisages completing the training and equipping of the ISF by early 2007, with MNF planners in Baghdad foreseeing a continued need for substantial MNF forces capable of conducting combat operations to support the ISF until the end of 2007, and for advisory teams at least until 2009. But the ISF and MNF together have been unable to contain the level of violence, which continues to grow. If the insurgency persists at anywhere near current levels, we judge that these time-frames will be unachievable, at least in Baghdad and the Sunni heartlands. Outside these areas the prospects for progressive hand-over of security responsibilities to the Iraqis remain better.

## Iraq Security Force Levels (as at 4 October 2005)

## Iraqi Security Forces – Ministry of Interior

COMPONENT	CURRENTLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED	
	4 Oct 05	25 Apr 05
POLICE	68,398	56,459
CIVIL INTERVENTION FORCE	7,933	4,726
EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT	361	233
BORDER ENFORCEMENT	17,303	15,583
HIGHWAY PATROL	1,551	1,127
DIGNITARY PROTECTION	662	500
POLICE COMMANDO UNITS	9,572	7,399
TOTAL	105,780	86,027

## Iraqi Security Forces – Ministry of Defence

COMPONENT	CURRENTLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED	
	4 Oct 05	25 Apr 05
REGULAR ARMY AND INTERVENTION FORCE <sup>1</sup>	79,277	67,871
SPECIAL OPERATIONS	1,487	845
AIR FORCE	262	193
NAVY	750	521
COMBAT SUPPORT, SERVICE SUPPORT & TRAINING UNITS	9,646	3,081
TOTAL	91,422	72,511

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<sup>1</sup> Includes mechanised and armoured elements and the former National Guard.