

## CIG Assessment, 1 November 2004

### IRAQ SECURITY: FALLUJAH

*This paper was discussed and approved by a Current Intelligence Group on 1 November 2004.*

#### Key Judgements

- I. Contacts between members of the IIG and Fallujan representatives have not resulted in any meaningful progress. The prospects for a negotiated solution remain poor.
- II. The number of insurgents in Fallujah is estimated by the US to be around 3000 including several hundred foreign fighters. We cannot verify these numbers.
- III. Intelligence on insurgent plans and intentions is mixed. Some will certainly stay and fight but we are unable to judge the potential size of this hard core. Some may fight initially and then disperse. Others may have already left the city. A number will lie low in Fallujah to mount a longer-term resistance.
- IV. Intensive fighting in Fallujah will trigger a surge in violence elsewhere in Sunni Arab areas. We should expect an increase in attacks in Baghdad, Mosul and other urban areas across the Sunni heartlands. Long drawn out fighting with heavy civilian casualties will intensify the reaction.
- V. Some Shia militants will seek to exploit any violent outcome, however long it lasts. But we judge they will remain a minority unless the fighting becomes bloody and protracted. We will not see a repeat of the Shia "uprisings" earlier this year.

## IRAQ SECURITY: FALLUJAH

*This assessment examines the current intelligence on Fallujah and the potential impact of military action on the security situation. It should be read in conjunction with [the JIC Assessment] dated 27 October, Iraq: A Long-Term Insurgency Problem. The political impact of military action in Fallujah is covered in [the JIC Assessment] being discussed at JIC on 3 November.*

1. A combination of Sunni Arab insurgent groups (including many former regime elements), and a significant number of foreign jihadists, control Fallujah and use it as a base to launch operations around the city, in Anbar province and more widely. Senior members of the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) have been in contact for months with local political representatives from Fallujah to seek a peaceful solution, but so far without result. A military assault now may take place in the next 7-10 days. (The Sharm el-Sheikh regional conference is due to take place on 23 November and is a factor in the timing of any operation.)

### Political Negotiations

2. Much of the negotiations so far have been unclear. A number of parallel channels appear to have been in use. Mediation led by President al-Yawr and Fallujan negotiator Sheikh al-Jumayli has been rejected by insurgent leaders. [...] A programme for more intensified engagement with Sunnis has been drawn up, including approaching the Iraqi Islamic Party to discuss their participation in negotiations. But the insurgents' known demands are unrealistic: an end to the bombing, withdrawal of the Multinational Force (MNF) and exclusion of Iraqi security forces (ISF) from the city itself. Diplomatic reporting suggests Allawi and the IIG have no confidence in finding a peaceful solution. Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party also continues to try to organise a meeting of Sunni oppositionists in Amman, but many are reluctant to take part until after military action in Fallujah.

3. There is no coherent insurgent leadership in Fallujah. Although united in opposition to the MNF, divisions among the insurgents are appearing. Intelligence indicates continuing friction within their Shura Council, and it is not clear how much authority this body retains. The foreign jihadists, including representatives from al-Zarqawi's network, may be increasingly isolated: they have no incentive to seek a political solution and some intelligence suggests former military officers do not want to include them in the talks. But it is unlikely the other insurgents are yet willing, or able, to turn on the jihadists.

### Insurgent Capabilities and Plans

4. The population of Fallujah was estimated at around 270,000 people. Theatre reporting suggests that in recent weeks many may have left to avoid the fighting, reducing the population by 50% or more – but we have no way of verifying this figure. The number of insurgents is estimated by the US to be around 3000 including several hundred foreign fighters, split evenly between the city itself and the immediate surrounding area. Again, we cannot verify these numbers. The insurgent groups are well-armed with heavy mortars and a limited anti-aircraft capability; the MNF believe a number of car bombs have also been prepared, including tankers rigged as fuel bombs. Many insurgents are former military personnel and they have demonstrated sound tactical sense: intelligence shows that insurgents in the city recognised the MNF attack in the middle

of October as a feint, designed to provoke and test reactions. They are capable of mounting locally sophisticated defensive operations but their ability to co-ordinate between themselves is untested.

5. The insurgents' defensive preparations continue and include the construction of protective berms and fortified houses. Theatre reports suggest a perimeter force will aim to slow down an attack, further ambushes will take place as the MNF move through the city, and an inner core will be formed in the north west of the city. [...] Other reporting suggests al-Zarqawi [...] plans, as do other insurgents, to mount attacks on the MNF support areas and re-supply routes, including in Baghdad and north Babil. But detailed intelligence on insurgent plans and intentions is not good. Some will certainly stay and fight but we are unable to judge the potential size of this hard core. Some may fight initially and then disperse. Others may have already left the city: this drift away could explain an increase in insurgent attacks in other Sunni towns west along the Euphrates. Many may head to other areas where government control is tenuous such as Mosul. A number will lie low in Fallujah to mount a longer-term resistance.

### **MNF Military Planning**

6. Current US planning includes the use of 10 US battalions with offensive air support, leading up to 9 ISF battalions. All of the most capable Iraqi units, including the Intervention Forces, have been, or are about to deploy to support the operations in and around Fallujah. Although Prime Minister Allawi is keen to put Iraqi forces to the fore of any fighting, their precise role has not yet been defined. Their capabilities still limit their employability. Once committed to Fallujah the ability to re-deploy to any other emerging hotspots will be severely restricted – at least in the short term. The situation will be exacerbated if any fighting in Fallujah is protracted. Iraqi National Guard units will remain in place supporting operations in Samarra and north Babil and elsewhere in Iraq.

### **Political and Economic Measures**

7. Diplomatic reporting suggests that the follow-on political and economic preparations are developing but not complete. Allawi has appointed a co-ordinator, Hachem al-Hassani. Some individuals who may be able to fill some of the key political appointments in Fallujah have been identified. An initial reconstruction package of \$44m is planned by the MNF for a range of immediate quick impact projects – including repairing schools, medical facilities and police stations. IIG funding will also be made available but planning for the delivery of this is not yet clear. A long-term plan to ensure the presence of the ISF in the city has not yet been developed or resourced.

### **The Security Impact in Iraq**

8. Intelligence indicates that intensive fighting in Fallujah will trigger a surge in violence elsewhere in Sunni Arab areas. We should expect an increase in attacks in Baghdad, Mosul and other urban areas across the Sunni heartlands. Reporting already suggests that some insurgent groups are stepping up activity in Mosul in an attempt to distract the MNF. The scale of the popular Sunni reaction will depend on what happens in Fallujah. If the attack goes to plan with a short precise operation, and limited impact in the Arab media, the consequent violence will be correspondingly less. Long drawn out fighting with heavy civilian casualties will provoke a more intense reaction.

9. The intensity of the fighting will also affect any Shia reaction. Some Shia militants will seek to exploit any violent outcome, however long it lasts. But we judge they will remain a minority unless the fighting becomes bloody and protracted. In these circumstances Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army may try to take advantage. But we will not see a repeat of the Shia "uprisings" of earlier this year. Wider Shia reaction will depend heavily on Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani's attitude. [...]