

JIC Assessment, 18 December 2008

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES: MIXED ABILITIES

This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 17 December 2008.

Key Judgements

- I. Major security decisions are driven by Prime Minister Maliki. [...] But his circumvention of over-bureaucratic processes has furthered rather than hampered the overall improvement in security.
- II. ISF will be much better placed to manage internal security in 2009, including during elections, but will be unable wholly to prevent intimidation of the electorate or political assassinations. Their ability to maintain security after the Coalition's departure will depend on continued improvement in capabilities; loyalty to the state; effective reconciliation of Shia insurgents; any resurgence of Al Qaida in Iraq; and popular trust. They would be unable to cope unaided with simultaneous unrest in several provinces. They will be dependent on US assistance to defend Iraq's external borders for some years.
- III. The Iraqi army is an increasingly effective force at all levels, capable of conducting routine operations with minimal Coalition mentoring and of mounting some independent counter-insurgency operations. It still needs Coalition support with logistics and strategic intelligence at divisional level and there are continuing problems with sectarian and militant infiltration in some areas.
- IV. The training, equipment and organisation of the National Police now approach that of the army. But local police remain ineffective, due to a lack of resources, militia infiltration and corruption. Law enforcement is also undermined by an overstretched and under performing judiciary. These weaknesses will inhibit the normalisation of Iraqi society and real stability for years to come.
- V. The Ministry of Defence remains the most capable government department, but its failure to commit its shrinking budget fully is likely to affect its plans to equip the ISF for external defence and conventional operations. The Ministry of Interior remains corrupt, sectarian and unable to provide adequate direction and funding to support the development of local police forces.
- VI. The government is unlikely to be able to fully integrate the "Sons of Iraq" (Sol) armed auxiliaries into the ISF and government ministries before provincial elections. Relations between the ISF and the Sol are tense [...]. Some Sol groups have already been infiltrated by Sunni extremists.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES: MIXED ABILITIES

This MoD sponsored paper examines Iraqi security strategy and Iraqi Security Forces proficiency, updating [the JIC assessment] dated 5 June 2008.

The Commander in Chief

1. We judge that major security decisions are driven by Prime Minister Maliki. He reacts to events and bypasses formal ministerial, military and local reporting chains. He has continued to exploit his constitutional role as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces to the full, dictating where, when and how Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are deployed, sometimes overruling local commanders. He has increased the number of regional military commands that report directly to him.

2. We have previously assessed that Maliki's interference in operational decisions and his overconfidence in the ISF have risked overstressing them. However his circumvention of over-bureaucratic processes has also enabled more rapid deployment of forces and we judge that he has so far furthered rather than hampered the overall improvement in security. [...]

The security ministries

3. Both the MoD and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) still depend heavily on Coalition mentors for administrative assistance. We assess the MoD to be the most capable government department, though [...] We expect falling oil prices to reduce next year's defence budget to \$6.5 billion. This is about two thirds of the 2008 budget (but closer to actual spending levels). We continue to judge that fear of accusations of corruption is preventing the MoD from fully committing its budget; slow disbursement of planned spending, especially on procurement of military equipment, is one of the most significant enduring impediments to improving ISF capability. This is likely to affect the MoD's plans to equip the ISF for external defence and conventional operations.

4. Last month MoI officials reasserted that the Ministry was a neutral organisation free from militia and party interference. We judge that it has made some progress in overcoming some of the worst aspects of its notoriously sectarian character. But there is no evidence to suggest Interior Minister Boulani's planned reforms to remove hundreds of corrupt or sectarian staff have been fully implemented: many of its personnel are still affiliated with Badr or the Sadrist. The MoI also continues to provide inadequate direction and resources to support the development of local Police forces. Coordination with the MoD is poor and lacking in trust.

MOD Security Forces

5. The Iraqi army is an increasingly effective force at all levels, capable of conducting routine operations with minimal Coalition mentoring and of mounting some independent counter-insurgency operations (COINOPS). It is maintaining security improvements (see Annex C) months after operations in Basra, Maysan and Sadr City: we assess this is through a mixture of increasing capability, extensive urban deployment and local understandings. However, the army still needs Coalition support at a divisional level with logistics and strategic intelligence and to provide "shaping operations" to weaken the enemy before the

army conducts complex attacks. Support from the Iraqi intelligence services to ISF COINOPS has continued to improve but co-operation between the agencies remains weak and constrains their overall effectiveness.

6. Intelligence indicates that several problems inhibit the army's COINOPS: independent operations are sometimes disorganised; there are manning shortfalls, particularly in qualified staff officers and NCOs; and much of the army remains politicised, with some infiltration by militia elements. Its ethno-sectarian composition is an important factor in determining its future capability, its relationship with the Iraqi people, and its possible abuse as a political instrument [...] Some units, notably in the north and west, now include large numbers of Sunnis and Kurds (see Annex D). Those with a particular ethnic or sectarian bias are limited in their deployability: divided loyalties of Kurdish dominated units in the north inhibit their ability to deal effectively with security in areas where Arab/Kurd relations are tense and both Kurdish and Shia units have incited resentment in Sunni areas.

7. The army's focus on internal security has left it dependent on US assistance to defend Iraq's external borders. We judge this will remain the case for some years: [...] the MoD currently plans to transition the army from COIN to a primarily externally focussed force by 2020. The Iraqi Navy and Air Force are making some progress but remain wholly dependent on US support to deal with conventional air or maritime threats. They will require continued investment for many years to come.

Mol Security Forces

8. National Police units, (a paramilitary force that exists to bridge the gap between the local police and the Army), who conduct COIN and public order operations in support of the local police, remain the most competent of the security forces controlled by the Mol. Their training, equipment and organisation approach that of the army. [...] We continue to assess that elements of the Shia Badr militia are using the cover of National Police operations to weaken their Sadrist rivals and consolidate their own political powerbase before provincial elections.

9. We continue to judge that most of the local Iraqi Police Service (IPS) is ineffective in tackling crime due to a lack of resources, militia infiltration and corruption, and requires wholesale reform. Law enforcement is also undermined by an overstretched and underperforming judiciary. There is some evidence in polling that the IPS is becoming more popular and trusted in Basra, but it is unclear whether this stems from greater capability. We judge the weakness of the IPS will inhibit the normalisation of Iraqi society and real stability for years to come. The army cannot provide local security or enforce the law while it remains focused on COINOPS, and its methods of operation – checkpoints, barriers, destruction of property – are unsuited to the task. Until the IPS and the justice system are improved and purged of militia influence and corruption, Iraq will need to choose between army methods and a police force that is incapable.

10. Iraq's border-guards also suffer from departmental underinvestment and corruption. They are unable to protect Iraq's borders.

"Sons of Iraq"

11. In October the government took responsibility from the US for 103,000 "Sons of Iraq" (Sol): armed auxiliaries acting as force multipliers for Coalition and ISF, mainly in Baghdad and along the Tigris river valley. It has agreed to recruit 20% of these into the ISF, with the remainder to be employed in other ministries. The transfer of 51,000 Sols in Baghdad has been agreed in principle but standardising and distributing pay remains a problem. The government is unlikely to be able to implement the full transfer before the Provincial Elections (expected on 31 January 2009). Relations between ISF and Sol are tense [...]. Each is suspicious of the other's intentions once the Coalition leaves Iraq: the government worry that former insurgents carrying weapons could turn against them; Sol fear persecution from what they view as a sectarian government. Some Sol groups have already been infiltrated by extremists; media reporting indicates that some Sunni Sol commanders see Shia militias as a target second only to Al Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I).

Prospects

12. The threat from Sunni insurgents, AQ-I and the Jaysh al-Mahdi has reduced significantly over the past eighteen months; AQ-I's presence is now largely confined to Baghdad and Mosul, its operational capability severely damaged by the recent loss of key personnel¹. We judge that the ISF will be much better placed to manage internal security through 2009 than in 2008, including during provincial and national elections. We judge that the ISF will be unable wholly to prevent intimidation of the electorate or political assassinations in the run up to elections, or to cope unaided if there is a significant deterioration in security thereafter.

13. The ISF's ability to maintain internal security after the departure of the Coalition will depend on a number of factors: continued improvement in capabilities; loyalty to the state; effective reconciliation of Shia insurgents; any resurgence of AQ-I; and popular trust. The ISF would be unable to cope unaided with simultaneous unrest in several provinces.

¹ Abu Qaswarah, AQ-I's deputy leader and a key operational figure, was killed during a Coalition operation in Mosul on 5 October. Abu Ghadiyah, a leading AQ-I foreign fighter facilitator, was killed in a US raid in Syria on 26 October.

ANNEX A

MAP OF IRAQI PROVINCES



ANNEX B

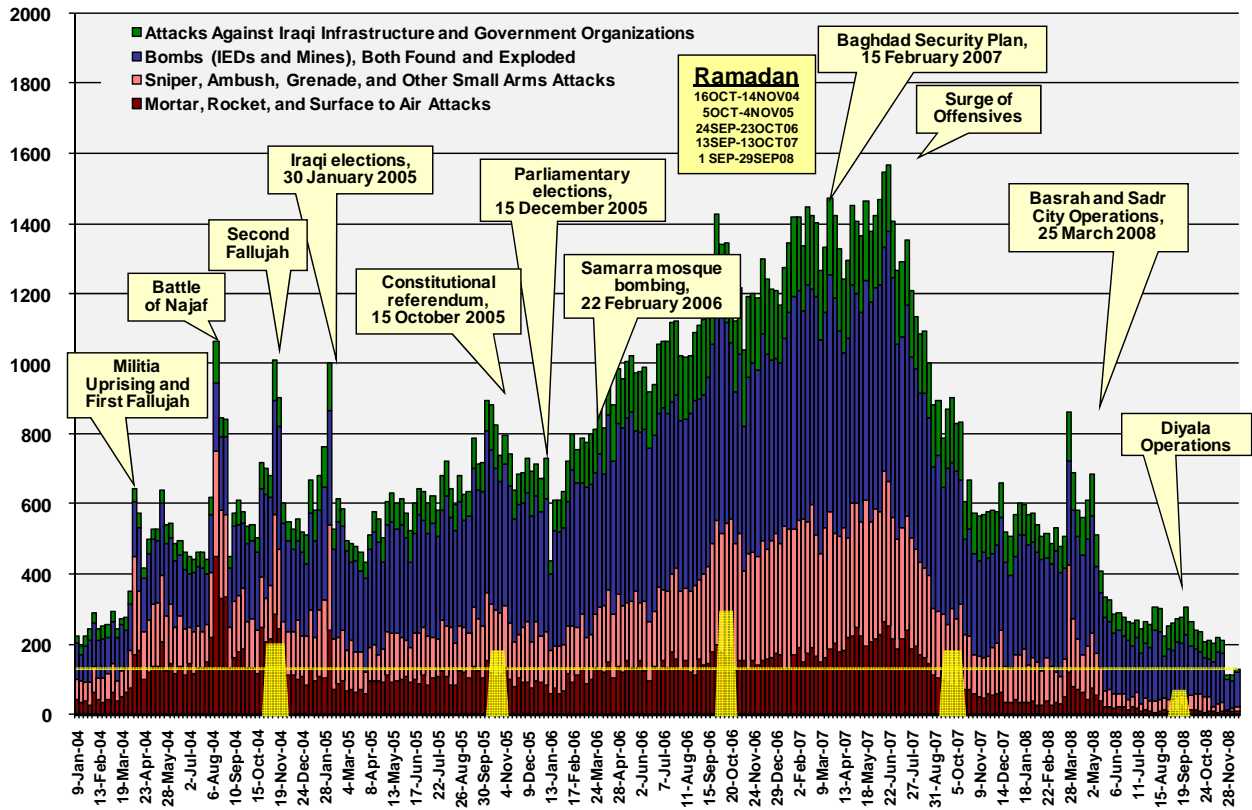
ISF FORCE PROJECTIONS 2010

Iraqi Force components	Original Coalition projection for 2010	Establishment Jan 2007	Establishment Feb 2008	Revised Coalition projection for 2010	Iraqi projection for 2010
Army	248,990	134,783	179,007	290,858	283,822
Police/DBE	260,600	188,260	360,769	307,446	335,250
Air Force	5,000	900	1,368	5,000	5,000
Navy	1,500	1,135	1,341	1,500	1,500
Special Forces	4,000	1,523	3,140	4,000	4,000
Total	520,090	326,601	544,725	608,804	629,572

These numbers (from MNSTC-I) include neither the 144,000 strong Facilities Protection Service nor the 106,189 strong Sons of Iraq.

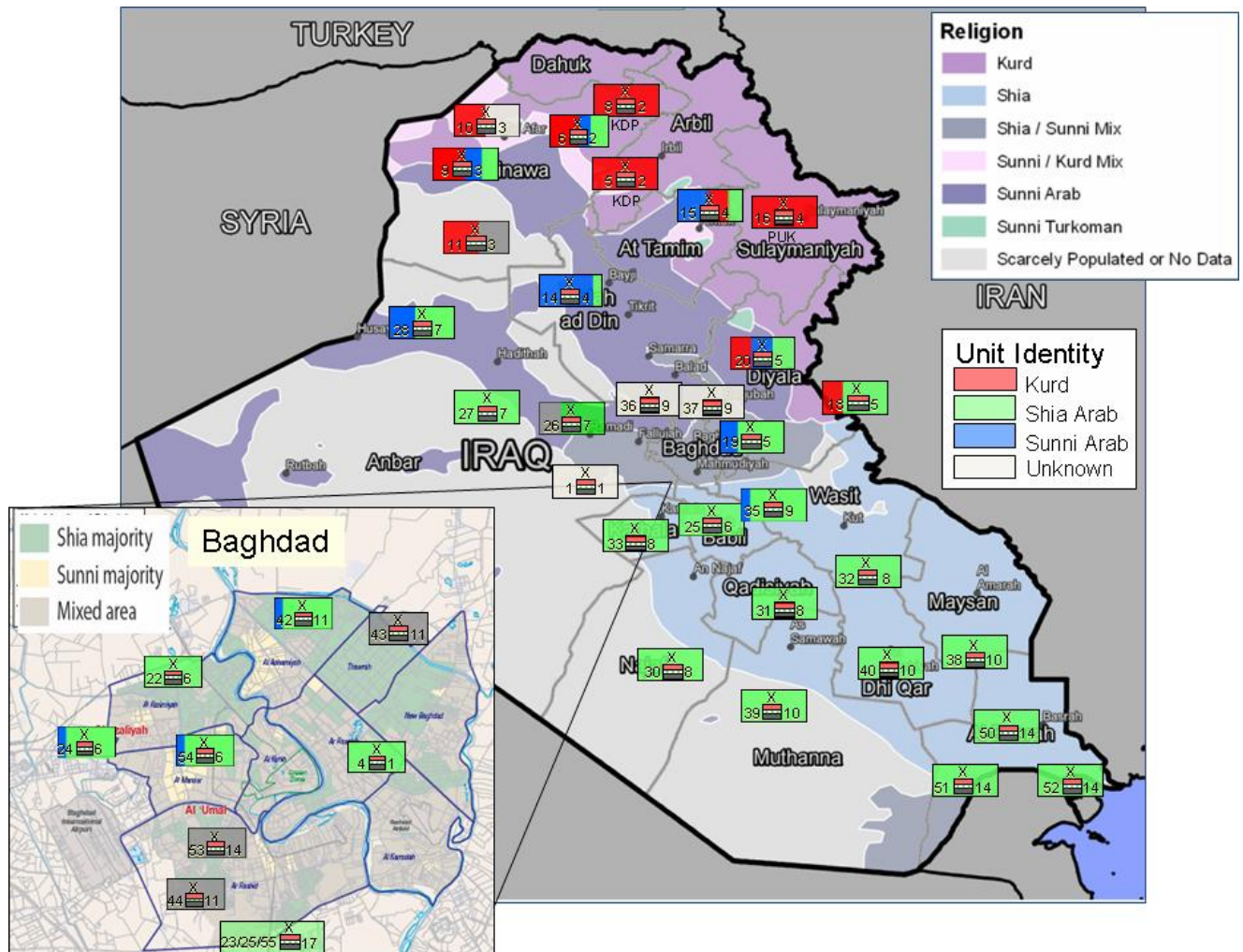
ANNEX C

IRAQ ATTACK TRENDS



ANNEX D

ETHNICITY SECTARIAN DATA



~~TOP SECRET~~ Declassified

~~TOP SECRET~~ Declassified