

## JIC Assessment, 15 December 2004

### IRAQ: THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

*This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 15 December 2004.*

#### Key Judgements

- I. If the Iraqi government and MNF are unable to improve the security situation significantly, particularly in and around Baghdad, credible Iraqi security forces (ISF), capable of managing the insurgency unaided, will not emerge until 2006 at the earliest.
- II. The overall performance of the ISF is being undermined by increasing penetration and intimidation by insurgents. The more capable "elite" units – Iraqi Intervention Forces and Police Special Commandos - performed better than expected during recent operations in Fallujah. But they are small in number (currently some 4,000 out of a planned 17,000) and in danger of over-stretch. Most of the rest of the ISF, nominally some 150,000, lack the equipment, training, leadership, command and control, and, in many cases, determination to oppose the insurgents, particularly when they feel vulnerable with little or no MNF support close by.
- III. Some additional capability will be available by the elections in January 2005, including a small armoured force. But the Iraqi government will continue to rely on a limited core of units to provide an Iraqi contribution to major MNF operations. Provision of security for the elections will be a major challenge.
- IV. Through 2005 ISF capability will grow incrementally but planned levels of expansion for the police and army are very ambitious. Leadership and discipline will remain chronic affecting capability [...] There is little sign of the development of a coherent intelligence capability, which is also critical to success.

#### Policy Implications:

- The slow development of ISF capabilities has implications for the timing of MNF drawdown.
- Key areas requiring improvement are leadership, command and control, intelligence, and better political leadership in the Ministries of Interior and Defence.

## IRAQ: THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

*This paper was commissioned by OD Sec and examines the current status of the Iraqi security forces, their strengths and weaknesses, and prospects over the coming months and into 2005/6.*

### Current Force Levels

1. Currently, the main components of the Iraqi security forces (ISF), reported as some 160,000, are the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) of 87,000 under the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi National Guard (ING) of 43,000 controlled by the Ministry of Defence. The Army is slowly being regenerated but only 2,700 regular soldiers and 2,000 Iraqi Intervention Forces (IIF) have reached full operational capability<sup>1</sup>. There are a number of additional units and formations with specialist roles and training. But the overall figures do not provide a guide to real capability and quality: they should be treated with caution. Only some 50% of the 87,000 police "on duty" for example, are classified as trained and equipped. (More details of force levels are at Annex.) Iraqi intelligence capability is small - some 700 personnel in the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), a similar number in an embryonic police organisation, and small SIGINT and military intelligence units.

### Effectiveness

2. Most elements of the ISF, including the police, are focussed on security and counter-insurgency. In many areas this has allowed crime to flourish. Where the security situation is more benign, for example in some Shia areas in the south, capability of the ISF is developing slowly. Some effective and well-established Kurdish forces operate in the north. But in the Sunni heartlands and Baghdad progress has been much more difficult. The most capable "elite" units - the IIF and the police special commando battalions - performed better than expected during recent operations in Fallujah, although confined largely to a supporting role. Intelligence suggests they are conducting some limited operations elsewhere, including raids, with minimal MNF support. But they are small in number (currently some 4,000 out of a planned 17,000) and in danger of being over - stretched. Theatre reporting and intelligence continues to indicate that some progress has been made among other elements of the ISF: recent Iraqi police operations picked up foreign jihadists in Basra and Baghdad.

3. But overall performance of the ISF continues to be inadequate. The recent surge in violence again exposed fragility: in Mosul, Ramadi, Tall Afar, Al Qaim and other Sunni towns and cities many ISF, notably the police but also some ING units, melted away when attacked. Police stations were abandoned, equipment handed over, and in the worst cases members of the ISF joined the insurgents. There have been delays in the supply of equipment and the ISF lack the training, leadership and, in many cases determination, to oppose the insurgents, particularly when they feel vulnerable with little or no MNF support close by. They do not have the ability to take on the hardened insurgents currently fighting the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and MNF. They are dependent on the MNF for armoured support and strike capability: from both artillery and air. There are severe weaknesses in command and control: the appropriate

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<sup>1</sup> Full operational capability is defined as a unit being manned, trained and equipped and capable of conducting independent operations at company level. Limited operational capability is a unit conducting operations but not fully trained and with equipment shortfalls.

structures and necessary communications are not yet in place. Army brigade and divisional commanders and their staffs have only just been appointed. Recruiting more experienced officers from Saddam's former forces is being considered to address the weak leadership – but will heighten Shia concerns and risks increased penetration by Ba'athist insurgents. Independent logistical support is virtually non-existent. Intelligence capability is limited to some collection but there is little capacity for analysis, fusion and co-ordinated exploitation.

## **A Difficult Environment**

4. The ISF have been under sustained attack and have repeatedly been targeted by suicide bombers: the latest on 4 December in Baghdad killed 6 policemen. The previous day 11 policemen were killed when a police station was assaulted and overrun, also in Baghdad. Over 300 ISF members have been killed since August. Intimidation is relentless and increasing in Sunni areas. It includes threats to individuals and families, kidnapping and murder. In Mosul 75 Iraqis were reportedly murdered in the last two weeks of November – many were members of the ISF.

5. The cumulative effect of these attacks is likely to erode Iraqi confidence in the ISF to provide security. They also impact on morale and effectiveness. Recruitment is holding up with money being a powerful motivator, but also for many a sense of public spirit. The latter may not match the anti-government motivation of many insurgents. Absenteeism reflects the pressures the ISF are under. For example, in the Army 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade on 24 November 890 soldiers were AWOL out of a unit strength of 2100; the ING Tal Affar battalion had 75% AWOL in the first week of December; and IIF units operating in Fallujah were deployed well under full strength. Attempts are being made to mitigate the problem through stopping pay and through early dismissal.

6. Many units of the ISF are penetrated by insurgent forces: either actively taking part in insurgent operations or sympathetic and providing information and other support. In some of the most hostile areas collaboration has been rife: notably Samarra, Ramadi and Mosul. In Shia areas violence also exposed police collusion. Corruption, commonly bribery and embezzlement, remains endemic and threatens to undermine public support, particularly for the police. There is [...] some action being taken against corrupt officers, but we do not know the scale of the problem and how much of it is being tackled.

## **The Plan**

7. ISF capability continues to build and key issues of improving command and control, equipment, intelligence and sustainability are being addressed. Prime Minister Allawi wants more capable Iraqi forces to take on the hard-line elements of the insurgency and reduce his reliance on the MNF. More army units are coming on line: elements of a mechanised brigade (including some tanks and armoured personnel carriers) and two new army brigades are deploying this month, one to Mosul and one to Baghdad. Three more police special commando battalions are planned. But these units have limited operational capability (the new brigade in Mosul is doing badly and is being replaced). This will restrict their employability in the short term and may jeopardise longer-term ISF aspirations. A plan has been put forward to address some of the command and control problems: by the end of January 2005 a national command and control system will be in place linking the Prime Minister, MOD and MOI to the national Joint Co-ordination Centre (JCC) and

provincial JCCs. This will help, but better political leadership and overall management by the MOI and MOD is required. Leadership at provincial level is also of variable quality.

8. The MOD plans to field two army and six ING divisions, and an IIF division and a mechanised brigade by mid-2005. There is an aspiration to expand the mechanised brigade into a division, convert a regular army division to the IIF and integrate the ING into the regular army. A support command responsible for logistics, transport and intelligence will also be created. Some of this may be achievable in 2005 but will be dependent on funding. The current allocation is \$1.3 billion; the planned additional capabilities will require a further \$2.5 billion which has not been included in the recently approved budget for next year. Police forces will grow incrementally in parallel but full capability will not be established until mid 2006.

## Prospects

9. Despite the additional ISF capability which will be available by the January 2005 elections, the IIG will continue to rely on a core of the IIF and special police commando units to provide Iraqi contribution to major MNF operations. A substantial proportion may have to remain in Fallujah, limiting their ability to deploy in response to surges in violence elsewhere. Provision of security for the elections will provide a major challenge to the rest of the ISF. Close and large-scale MNF support will be essential, particularly in Sunni areas.

10. Through 2005 ISF capability will grow incrementally and significant units, up to brigade size should be deployable by the summer. The ISF should benefit from the planned improved training and equipment procurement programmes. After significant delays these are now reported to be on track, however the planned expansion of trained and equipped police from some 47,000 to 135,000 and the army from some 3,000 to 27,000 between now and July 2005 seems very ambitious. The more modest increases planned for specialist units may be more achievable. The NATO mission to assist leadership training is stalled. The ISF will remain reliant on support from the MNF in many areas, in particular heavy fire support and logistics. There is little sign of the development of a coherent intelligence capability, which is critical to success. Leadership and discipline will remain chronic problems affecting capability; [...] Attacks and intimidation will also continue to undermine effectiveness. Policing crime will have to remain a second priority in many areas.

11. According to the MNF, 15 out of 18 provinces will be under local control - requiring only limited support by the MNF - by the end of the year. But we judge local control, even in some Shia and Kurdish areas, will remain fragile. We assessed in October that the ISF would not be able to handle significant security responsibilities unaided until the middle of 2005 at the earliest. We have also previously judged that the MNF are constraining, not containing, the insurgency. We now judge that, if the Iraqi government and the MNF are unable to improve the security situation significantly, particularly in and around Baghdad, a credible ISF capable of managing the insurgency unaided will not emerge until 2006 at the earliest.

ANNEX: Iraqi Security Force Levels<sup>2</sup>

## Iraqi Security Forces - Ministry of Interior

COMPONENT	AUTHORISED	CURRENTLY ON PAYROLL	CURRENTLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED	PROJECTED 100% AUTHORIZED TRAINED AND EQUIPPED
POLICE	135,000	86,891	47,342	July 2006
CIVIL INTERVENTION FORCE	3,720	1,091	1,091	July 2005
EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT	270	168	168	February 2005
BORDER ENFORCEMENT	29,360	17,200	14,593	August 2006
HIGHWAY PATROL	6,300	925	370	To be determined
DIGNITARY PROTECTION	500	484	484	December 2004
SPECIAL POLICE COMMANDO UNITS	4,450	2,019	1,650	January 2005
TOTAL	179,600	108,778	65,698	August 2006

## Iraqi Security Forces - Ministry of Defence

COMPONENT	AUTHORISED	CURRENTLY OPERATIONAL	PROJECTED FULL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY
ARMY	27,000	2,713	July 2005
NATIONAL GUARD	61,904	43,445	September 2005
INTERVENTION FORCE	6,584	2,062	May 2005
SPECIAL OPS	1,967	587	September 2005
AIR FORCE	502	167	To be determined based on aircraft procurement
COASTAL DEFENCE	582	484	To be determined based on patrol boat procurement
TOTAL	98,539	49,458	March 2006

<sup>2</sup> MNF-I figures as at 29 November 2004. They incorporate the force structure proposals at paragraph 8 of the paper in terms of planned overall personnel numbers; allocation between the force components may change.