

JIC Assessment, 27 June 2007

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES AND STRUCTURES: QUANTITY NOT QUALITY

This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 27 June 2007.

Key Judgements

- I. Work is underway by Prime Minister al-Maliki's government to develop a national security strategy, but it is unlikely to make a difference to Iraq's security as long as the government remains factionalised and fails to make progress on national reconciliation. [...]
- II. Policy incoherence is exacerbated by a plethora of competing and ineffectual committees operating with little central coordination. The Ministries of Interior and National Security remain largely ineffective; the Ministry of Defence is slightly better, but still underperforming and often bypassed. The performance of the intelligence agencies is patchy at best.
- III. The army continues to develop slowly. The bulk of the army is routinely deployed on counter-insurgency operations across the country, including in the most hostile operating environments. But quality varies markedly between units and there are still serious systemic problems: leadership is weak; under-manning remains common; logistic support is poor; many units lack key items of equipment.
- IV. The local Iraqi Police Service is at best ineffective. In many areas the police are synonymous with militia or insurgents. The smaller paramilitary National Police is marginally better trained, but also suffers from significant Shia militia penetration. Corruption is endemic. Many police are probably unreformable.
- V. The desire for national Shia unity and the ability of local parties to broker deals may restrain but will not prevent political violence in the south. In the likely event of serious intra-Shia fighting the police would probably take sides according to their particular tribal and militia affiliations and the army would try to remain on the sidelines.
- VI. Despite the success of locally-raised Sunni tribal units in reducing violence in Anbar, it is unrelenting in Baghdad, Diyala and other mixed provinces around the capital and in much of the Sunni heartlands. Multinational force (MNF) plans to transfer some of these provinces to Iraqi control in February 2008 are likely to be delayed. In the absence of a significant reduction in the threat, the Iraqi security forces will be unable to cope without MNF combat support well beyond that.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES AND STRUCTURES: QUANTITY NOT QUALITY

This paper was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to assess the proficiency of the Iraqi security forces. It updates our assessment of 17 January 2007.

Security strategy and structures

1. Work is underway by Prime Minister al-Maliki's government to develop a national security strategy, but we judge that it is unlikely to make a difference to Iraq's security as long as the government remains factionalised and fails to make progress on national reconciliation. Under strong Coalition pressure there are signs that the government has tried to apply a more even-handed approach to security. Maliki has agreed to intensified action against Shia militias as part of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) and in the south. But in the face of continuing Sunni insurgent and Islamist extremist violence, [...]

2. Policy incoherence is exacerbated by a plethora of competing and ineffectual committees operating with little central coordination. The Ministries of Interior (MOI) and National Security remain largely ineffective, dogged by bureaucratic weakness and a consistent inability to spend their budget allocations effectively; the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is slightly better, but still underperforming. Shia militia infiltration and endemic corruption persist. The performance of the intelligence agencies is patchy at best and plagued by bureaucratic and sectarian rivalry. Iran has strong links to some ministers and senior officials in the security structures. But we do not know what influence they exert, including in the armed forces.

3. [...]

The armed forces

4. The Iraqi security forces (ISF) now number some 500,000 on paper (see Annex) and continues to grow, despite taking some 1,000 casualties every month. The capability of 150,000-strong **Army** continues to develop slowly. The bulk of the army is routinely deployed on counter-insurgency operations across the country, including in the most hostile operating environments. Iraqi Special Operations Forces (numbering only a few thousand) and Kurdish units are the most competent forces. But quality varies markedly between units. Multinational forces (MNF) assess that the majority of army units are capable of undertaking most counter insurgency operations with international support; but only one of 10 divisional headquarters, four of 36 brigade headquarters and six of 114 combat battalions are fully capable of operating independently. There are still serious systemic problems: leadership is weak, with few proficient non-commissioned officers; under-manning remains common; logistic support is poor; many units lack key items of equipment.

5. We still lack detailed information on the ethnic or sectarian composition of army units, but we judge Sunnis are generally under-represented. We continue to judge that many army units contain individuals and groups who co-operate with either Sunni Arab insurgents or Shia extremists. The scale of infiltration is difficult to gauge: the problem may be worse in largely Shia units. Some action is being taken: [...]

6. In **MND(SE)** there is mixed reporting on 10th Division. Some 3,000 of its troops have deployed to Baghdad to support the BSP and performed creditably according to embedded MNF training teams. But we judge the test of their effectiveness is their ability to deal with intra-Shia tensions in the south, where they

are recruited and based and susceptible to local political and tribal pressures. Units of 10th Division continue to conduct routine counter-insurgency operations with MNF support across the region, but when opposed its performance has been patchy. [...]

7. We judge the prospect of transition to Iraqi control in Basra has helped to focus the Iraqi government on dealing with security challenges in the south. Intelligence shows increasing concern in Baghdad that a range of local political and militia groups are vying for control of army, police, port and border security forces. The government has taken action to improve the situation, actively appointing a new Chief of Police and a senior army officer to oversee provincial security. [...]

8. Iraqi **Navy** capability remains limited: we judge it will rely on MNF support to protect Iraq's offshore oil platforms until 2010 at the earliest. The small Iraqi **Air Force's** operational capability will increase in the next two years but it too will remain reliant on MNF support.

The police and law enforcement agencies

9. We continue to judge that the large majority of 135,000 members of the local **Iraqi Police Service** (IPS) are at best ineffective and in many areas are synonymous with militia or insurgents actively targeting the MNF. The smaller paramilitary National Police is marginally better trained and deployable but suffers from significant Shia militia penetration; [...] its Baghdad-based divisions work hand-in-glove with elements of JAM. Corruption is endemic. [...] Those who act against Shia militias are subject to violent intimidation. Intelligence shows that the Iraqi government recognises some of the problems; but their depth and scale mean that many police are probably unreformable. The 144,000-strong Facilities Protection Force (FPS) is also unreliable, with no coherent command structure. Its members are responsible for violent crimes and other illegal activity; significant improvements are unlikely even if long-standing government plans to put the FPS under MOI control finally go ahead.

Non-government forces

10. Sunni tribal Emergency Response Units (ERUs) are emerging alongside the official ISF. Eight ERUs operate in Anbar province, three backed by the MNF. Similar anti-AQ-I groups operate among tribes in Salah Ad Din, Diyala and Ninewa provinces. With MNF support and Iraqi government backing, the ERUs in Anbar have made significant progress: in Ramadi attacks against civilians, ISF and the Coalition have fallen by 80%. Though generally supportive of ERUs, Shia politicians remain wary of arming Sunni tribes. [...]

Prospects for effective security transition

11. The Iraqi government is now responsible for security in seven of Iraq's eighteen provinces – four in the Shia south and three in the Kurdish north. Other provinces in the south, including Basra are likely to transition later this year. We judge that the desire for national Shia unity and the ability of local parties to broker deals may restrain but will not prevent political violence in the south. But in the likely event of serious intra-Shia fighting, we see no reason to change our judgement in January that the police would probably take sides according to their particular tribal and militia affiliations and the army would try to remain on the sidelines.

12. Despite the success of locally-raised Sunni tribal units in reducing violence in Anbar, it is unrelenting in Baghdad, Diyala and other mixed provinces around the capital and in much of the Sunni heartlands. MNF plans to transfer some of these provinces to Iraqi control in February 2008, but we judge this is likely to be delayed. In the absence of a significant reduction in the threat, we judge the ISF will be unable to cope without MNF combat support well beyond that. [...]

Annex

Iraqi Security Force Levels¹

Force	Trained and Equipped ²	Target ³	
		2007	2010
Ministry of Interior			
Iraqi Police Service	135,000	195,000	210,000
National Police	26,300	27,600	27,600
Other (Border Enforcement, Dignitary Protection, MOI Forensics Unit)	32,900	33,400	37,000
MOI Total	194,200	256,000	274,600
Ministry of Defence			
Army (inc Special Operations and Support)	152,500	170,700	262,542
Air Force	900	2,900	8,100
Navy	1,100	1,600	2,500
MOD Total	154,500	175,200	273,142
Other			
Facilities Protection Service	144,000	125,000	85,000
Emergency Response Units	Unknown	6,000	15,000
Security Battalions	Unknown	-	-
Other Total	144,000	131,000	100,000
ISF Total	492,700	562,200	647,742

¹ Unauthorized absence personnel are included in these figures.

² Iraq Weekly Status Report, 13 June 2007.

³ Provisional expansion figures from "In Stride Assessment of the Iraqi Security Forces", Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, 10 May 2007