

JIC Assessment, 20 December 2007

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES: TWO STEPS FORWARD

This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 19 December 2007.

Key Judgements

- I. Greater centralisation of Iraqi national security decision making has resulted in more effective implementation. The Ministry of Defence is steadily building capacity, but is unlikely to achieve complete self-reliance by the end of 2008. The Ministry of Interior is still largely ineffective, with endemic sectarianism and corruption.
- II. For the foreseeable future the army will depend heavily on the Coalition for air support, logistics, heavy fire support and specialist enablers such as real time intelligence and surveillance. But overall capability continues to develop and far exceeds that of the police. Where violence has flared, combat units have been reinforced from elsewhere without recourse to MNF re-intervention.
- III. The large majority of local Iraqi Police remains almost wholly ineffective in tackling crime and turns a blind eye to sectarian, criminal and violent anti-MNF activity by colleagues who are also members of Shia militias. National Police (NP) and provincial special police units are more tactically capable, but the NP follows a sectarian Shia agenda. The judiciary is also overstretched and underperforming.
- IV. But the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are in a much better position than six months ago, partly because of an overall improvement in capability and partly because of a reduction in threat. The prospects for them being able to successfully manage security outside Baghdad, without MNF ground support, by the end of 2008 will continue to be patchy across Iraq and depend heavily on progress being made on national reconciliation and the maintenance of MNF-led security gains. Neither is guaranteed.
- V. A return to levels of fighting experienced in 2006 is unlikely. But if widespread Sunni violence resumes, ISF are unlikely to cope in all Sunni provinces and parts of Baghdad and Diyala without calling on MNF ground troops for help.
- VI. Prospects in Basra will depend on ISF willingness and ability to take on Shia militias or reach and maintain an accommodation with them and on the ability of local political leaders to broker deals which restrain political violence. All are uncertain at this stage. The loss of either General Muhan or Jalil would remove a stabilising influence.

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This MoD sponsored paper examines Iraqi security strategy and Iraqi Security Forces proficiency updating [the JIC assessment] dated 27 June 2007. Judgements on the Navy and Air Force are unchanged.

Iraqi national security strategy

1. Iraq's draft national security strategy is yet to receive Parliamentary endorsement. But this year's greater centralisation of national security decision making, circumventing some provincial governors and streamlining military chains of command, including through the Office of the Commander in Chief, has resulted in more effective implementation. Provincial "operations centres" in Baghdad, Basra, Karbala and Diyala (see map at Annex C), have provided Maliki's government with greater leverage over Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in those areas. Alongside counter-insurgency and counter terrorism, the strategy stresses national reconciliation as key to long term stability in Sunni areas. Underpinning the strategy is the expansion of the ISF by as much as 20% above the original Coalition projection for 2010 (see Annex A), at which point about 20% of economically active males¹ will be employed in state security (as much as under Saddam).

The security ministries

2. The performance of the intelligence agencies remains patchy and plagued by bureaucratic and sectarian rivalry. Intelligence is still not considered coherently in national security decision making. The Ministry of Defence (MoD), together with its military component, the Joint Headquarters, continues to benefit from extensive Coalition mentoring and experienced former regime officers: we assess it is by far the most capable government department. MNF statistics indicate that the MoD is steadily building capacity, but is unlikely to achieve complete self-reliance by the end of 2008. Its ability to spend its budget allocation effectively has improved markedly with a significant proportion earmarked for the procurement of foreign military equipment. But we judge that overall institutional capacity will continue to be hampered by widespread reluctance of staff to take responsibility for decisions – in part to avoid accusations of corruption.

3. Despite some administrative progress, we continue to judge that the Ministry of Interior (Mol) is largely ineffective. Sectarianism and corruption are endemic. [...] Iran has strong links to some Mol ministers and senior officials, but we do not know what influence they exert.

Law enforcement agencies

4. Security forces under Mol control have grown from 188,260 last January to 330,000 in November – more than twice the size of the army. This does not include 144,000 Facilities Protection (FPS) personnel, under Mol control but assigned to various ministries. The reliability of the FPS is likely to remain highly questionable: many are engaged in criminal activity. The largely Baghdad-based, Badr-dominated National Police (NP) and provincial special police units have superior training, equipment and organisation and are the most tactically capable of Mol's security forces. Joint operations with the Iraqi army, especially in

¹ Economically active males: 3,200,000 (approx). Males of working age (16-64): 8,000,000 (approx). *Source: UNDP.*

Baghdad, have helped develop capability. But we judge that the NP follows a sectarian Shia agenda and intelligence suggests Badr is using the cover of police operations to weaken their political rivals and consolidate power before provincial elections next year. We judge that the large majority of local Iraqi Police (IPS) remains almost wholly ineffective in tackling crime, especially most new recruits in 2007 who have been deployed without formal training and may not receive any. Corruption is endemic. [*Text redacted on grounds of national security: it indicated that the Shia militia were influencing and infiltrating the local police.*] The judiciary is also overstretched and underperforming.

5. 77,000 Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs) and other tribal "awakenings", drawn from the Sunni insurgency and, to a much lesser extent, from Shia militias, are now acting as force multipliers for MNF and ISF in Baghdad and along the Euphrates and Tigris valleys north of Baghdad. The MoI continue to resist assuming formal responsibility for these volunteers (including paying them). If their payments stopped we judge that many would resume attacks on the MNF and ISF. Their loyalty to central government is likely to remain patchy in the absence of broader national reconciliation; we judge they are likely to become an increasingly attractive target for infiltration by both Sunni and Shia extremists.

Iraqi army

6. The overall capability of the Iraqi army (now 162,000 strong) continues to develop. It far exceeds that of the police. Throughout 2007 the army, with the police, has assumed responsibility for security across half of Iraq. Where violence has flared, combat units have been reinforced from elsewhere without recourse to MNF re-intervention. On paper, MNF assess that the vast majority of combat units and headquarters now meet the minimum requirement for transition to Iraqi provincial control and are capable of undertaking effective counter insurgency operations "effectively with some limitations" (meaning that they still lack vital equipment, non-commissioned officers and some specialist capabilities such as medics). 10% of combat units are currently deemed capable of undertaking effective operations on their own. MNF targets for full effectiveness are unlikely to be met before 2010.

7. On the ground, performance varies widely across Iraq. The bulk of the army is routinely deployed on counter-insurgency operations across the country, including in the most hostile operating environments and against the most challenging elements of the insurgency (although the US troop surge, the suspension since August of JAM operations and a Sunni backlash against AQ-I mean that the threat has reduced significantly in the last six months (see Annex B)). In Baghdad, combat units and headquarters continue to benefit from more extensive Coalition mentoring. In Dhi Qar and Maysan, army commanders have opted to avoid becoming embroiled in intra-Shia violence, letting the police take the lead, but leaving troops untested. There are also still systemic problems: junior leadership is weak with few proficient non-commissioned officers; and for the foreseeable future, the army will depend heavily on the Coalition for air support, logistics, heavy fire support and specialist enablers such as real time intelligence and surveillance.

Basra

8. The replacement of an Iraqi Army brigade in Basra with the new 14th Army Division (still 50% undermanned) and the deployment of an NP battalion and a mechanised infantry unit have raised the ISF profile in Basra from 30,000 in June to 33,500 in December. MNF expect ISF to reach a full strength of

36,500 in June 2008 (See Annex D). Largely manned from outside Basra, these forces are probably less influenced by local tribal and political ties or militia infiltration than those recruited locally. The vast majority of JAM continues to observe a cease-fire with MNF in Basra and have not challenged ISF for local control – although [...] they think they could successfully do so.

9. General Muhan (head of the Basra Operations Centre) has been empowered by Maliki and has authority for security issues in Basra over the Provincial Council and Governor. He appears increasingly willing to take a firm stance against criminality. [...] The Provincial Director of Police, General Jalil, has taken some action to curb corruption and militia influence in the police, including transferring members of the Criminal Investigation Department out of the province and removing corrupt elements in the Department of Border Enforcement. Probably as a result, Jalil has been the subject of seven assassination attempts in recent months: if he is removed, we are not confident any successor would maintain his robust approach. The Mol has also consistently failed to prevent sacked policemen being re-employed elsewhere in MND (SE). Despite Jalil's efforts, we judge that corruption and the malign influence of Shia militias in the police in Basra will remain deeply entrenched well beyond 2008.

Prospects for successful security transition to Iraqi control

10. The ISF are in a much better position than six months ago, partly because of an overall improvement in capability and partly because of a reduction in threat. The prospects for them being able to successfully manage security outside Baghdad, without MNF ground support, by the end of 2008 will continue to be patchy across Iraq and depend heavily on progress being made on national reconciliation and the maintenance of MNF-led security gains in Anbar, Baghdad and Diyala and further gains in Ninewa, Tamim and Salah ad Din. This is not guaranteed: in particular national reconciliation is unlikely to match Sunni expectations. While we do not expect a return to levels of fighting experienced in 2006, if widespread Sunni violence resumes, ISF are unlikely to cope in all Sunni provinces and parts of Baghdad and Diyala, without calling on MNF ground troops for help.

11. Prospects in Basra will depend on ISF willingness and ability to take on Shia militias or reach and maintain an accommodation with them and on the ability of local political leaders to broker deals which restrain political violence. All are uncertain at this stage. The loss of either General Muhan or Jalil would remove a stabilising influence.

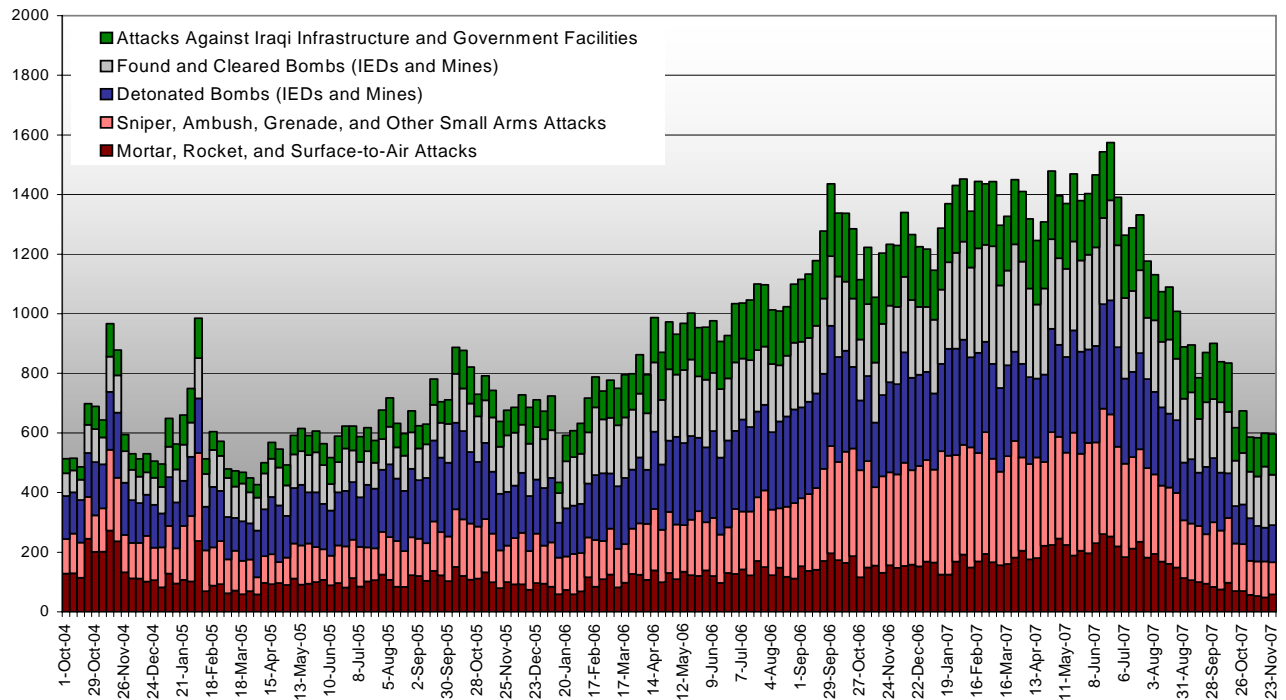
Annex A

ISF Force Projections 2010

Iraqi Force components	Original Coalition projection for 2010	Establishment Jan 2007	Establishment Dec 2007	Revised Coalition projection for 2010	Iraqi projection for 2010
Army	248,990	134,783	159,199	290,858	283,822
Police/DBE	260,600	188,260	330,000	307,446	335,250
Air Force	5,000	900	1,075	5,000	5,000
Navy	1,500	1,135	1,106	1,500	1,500
Special Forces	4,000	1,523	3,244	4,000	4,000
Total	520,090	326,601	494,624	608,804	629,572

Annex B

Nationwide Attacks



* These numbers (from MNSTC-I) include neither the 144,000 strong Facilities Protection Service nor the 72,000 strong Concerned Local Citizen Groups.

Annex C

Map of Iraqi Provinces



Annex D

Basra ISF numbers – June 2008

Iraqi Army	10,250
Iraqi Police	16,500
Police Emergency Battalions	1,250
Border Guards inc. Maysan	8,500
Total ISF	36,500