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Iraq War

Further information: [2003 invasion of Iraq](#) and [Post-invasion Iraq, 2003–present](#)

The **Iraq War**, also known as the **Occupation of Iraq**,^[44] The **Second Gulf War**^[45] **Operation Iraqi**

Freedom,^[46] or **Operation New Dawn** is an ongoing^[47] **military campaign** which began on March 20, 2003,^[48] with the **invasion of Iraq** by a multinational force led by troops from the **United States** and the **United Kingdom**.^[49]

Prior to the war, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom claimed that Iraq's alleged possession of **weapons of mass destruction** (WMD) posed a threat to their security and that of their coalition/regional allies.^{[50][51][52]}

In 2002, the **United Nations Security Council** passed Resolution 1441 which called for Iraq to completely cooperate with UN weapon inspectors to verify that Iraq was not in possession of WMD and **cruise missiles**. The **United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission** (UNMOVIC) found no evidence of WMD, but could not verify the accuracy of Iraq's weapon declarations.^{[53][54][55][56]} Lead weapons inspector **Hans Blix** advised the UN Security

Council that while Iraq was cooperating in terms of access, Iraq's declarations with regards to WMD still could not be verified.^{[53][57]}

After investigation following the invasion, the U.S.-led **Iraq Survey Group** concluded that Iraq had ended its nuclear, chemical, and biological programs in 1991 and had no active programs at the time of the invasion, but that they intended to resume production if the **Iraq sanctions** were lifted.^[58] Although some degraded remnants of misplaced or

abandoned chemical weapons from before 1991 were found, they were not the weapons which had been the main argument to justify the invasion.^[59] Some US officials also accused Iraqi President **Saddam Hussein** of harboring and

supporting **al-Qaeda**,^[60] but no evidence of a meaningful connection was ever found.^{[61][62]} Other proclaimed **reasons for the invasion** included Iraq's financial support for the families of **Palestinian** suicide bombers,^[63] Iraqi government **human rights** abuses,^[64] and an effort to spread **democracy** to the country.^{[65][66]}

The invasion of Iraq led to an **occupation** and the eventual capture of President Hussein, who was later tried in an Iraqi court of law and **executed** by the new Iraqi government. Violence against coalition forces and among various sectarian groups soon led to the **Iraqi insurgency**, strife between many **Sunni** and **Shia** Iraqi groups, and the emergence of a new faction of **Al-Qaeda in Iraq**.^{[67][68]} In October 2006, the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

(UNHCR) and the **Iraqi government** estimated that more than 365,000 Iraqis had been displaced since the 2006 bombing of the **al-Askari Mosque**, bringing the total number of Iraqi **refugees** to more than 1.6 million.^[69] By 2008, the

UNHCR raised the estimate of refugees to a total of about 4.7 million (~16% of the population). The number of refugees estimated abroad was 2 million (a number close to CIA projections^[70]) and the number of internally displaced people

was 2.7 million.^[71] In 2007, Iraq's anti-corruption board reported that 35% of Iraqi children, or about five million

children, were orphans.^[72] The [Red Cross](#) stated in March 2008 that Iraq's humanitarian situation remained among the most critical in the world, with millions of Iraqis forced to rely on insufficient and poor-quality water sources.^[73]

In June 2008, [U.S. Department of Defense](#) officials claimed security and economic indicators began to show signs of improvement in what they hailed as significant and fragile gains.^[74] Iraq was fifth on the 2008 Failed States

Index,^[75] and sixth on the 2009 list.^[76] As public opinion favoring troop withdrawals increased and as Iraqi forces began to take responsibility for security, member nations of the Coalition withdrew their forces.^{[77][78]} In late 2008, the

U.S. and Iraqi governments approved a Status of Forces Agreement effective through January 1, 2012.^[79] The Iraqi

Parliament also ratified a Strategic Framework Agreement with the U.S.,^[80] aimed at ensuring cooperation in constitutional rights, threat deterrence, education,^[81] energy development, and other areas.^[82]

In late February 2009, new [U.S. President Barack Obama](#) announced an 18-month withdrawal window for combat forces, with approximately 50,000 troops remaining in the country "to advise and train [Iraqi security forces](#) and to provide intelligence and surveillance".^{[83][84]} General Ray Odierno, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, said he believes all U.S. troops will be out of the country by the end of 2011,^[85] while UK forces ended combat operations on April 30, 2009.^[86] Iraqi Prime Minister [Nouri al-Maliki](#) has said he supports the accelerated pullout of US forces.^[87]

On February 17, 2010 Secretary Of Defense Robert Gates announced that as of September 1 2010 the name "Operation Iraqi Freedom" would be replaced by "Operation New Dawn".^[88]

2001–2003: Iraq disarmament crisis and pre-war intelligence

See also: [Lead up to the Iraq War](#), [Rationale for the Iraq War](#), [Public relations preparations for 2003 invasion of Iraq](#), Governments' pre-war positions on invasion of Iraq, Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, and [Iraq and weapons of mass destruction](#)

Main articles: Iraq disarmament crisis timeline 2001-2003 and [2002 in Iraq](#)

According to documents provided by former US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, [George W. Bush](#), ten days after taking office in January 2001, instructed his aides to look for a way to overthrow the Iraqi regime. A secret memo entitled "Plan for post-Saddam Iraq" was discussed in January and February 2001, and a [Pentagon](#) document dated March 5, 2001, and entitled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield contracts", included a map of potential areas for petroleum exploration.^[89]

UN weapons inspections resume

The issue of [Iraq's disarmament reached a crisis](#) in 2002-2003, when Bush demanded a complete end to alleged Iraqi production of weapons of mass destruction and full compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions requiring UN weapons inspectors unfettered access to suspected weapons production facilities. The UN had prohibited Iraq from developing or possessing such weapons after the [Gulf War](#) and required Iraq to permit inspections confirming compliance. During inspections in 1999, Iraq alleged that UN inspectors included U.S. intelligence agents that supplied

the U.S. with a direct feed of conversations between Iraqi security agencies as well as other information. This was confirmed by the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.^[90]

During 2002, Bush repeatedly warned of military action unless inspections were allowed to progress unfettered. In accordance with [UN Security Council Resolution 1441](#) Iraq reluctantly agreed to [new inspections in late 2002](#). The weapons inspections did not uncover any WMD in Iraq. Shortly before the invasion [Hans Blix](#), the lead weapons inspector, advised the UN Security Council that Iraq was cooperating with inspections and that the confirmation of disarmament through inspections could be achieved in a short period of time if Iraq remained cooperative.^[57]

Alleged weapons of mass destruction

In the initial stages of the war on terror, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), under [George Tenet](#), was rising to prominence as the lead agency in the Afghanistan war. But when Tenet insisted in his personal meetings with President Bush that there was no connection between al-Qaeda and Iraq, Vice-President [Dick Cheney](#) and Secretary of Defense [Donald Rumsfeld](#) initiated a secret program to reexamine the evidence and marginalize the CIA and Tenet. A major part of this program was a Pentagon unit known as the [Office of Special Plans](#) (OSP), created by Deputy Secretary of Defense [Paul Wolfowitz](#) and headed by Douglas Feith to supply senior Bush administration officials with raw intelligence pertaining to Iraq, unvetted by intelligence analysts, and circumventing traditional intelligence gathering operations by the CIA. The questionable intelligence acquired by the OSP was "[stovepiped](#)" to Cheney and presented to the public.

In some cases, Cheney's office would leak the intelligence to news correspondents, who would cover it in such outlets as [The New York Times](#). Cheney would subsequently appear on the Sunday political television talk shows to discuss the intelligence, pointing to *The New York Times* reportage as corroboration of his view.^[91]

Prior to the [Gulf War](#), in 1990, Iraq had stockpiled 550 short tons (500 t) of [yellowcake uranium](#) at the Tuwaitha nuclear complex about 20 kilometres (12 mi) south of Baghdad.^[92] In late February 2002, the CIA sent former Ambassador [Joseph Wilson](#) to investigate [reports](#) (later found to be forgeries) that Iraq was attempting to purchase additional yellowcake from [Niger](#). Wilson returned and informed the CIA that reports of yellowcake sales to Iraq were "unequivocally wrong." The Bush administration, however, continued to allege Iraq's attempts to obtain additional yellowcake were a justification for military action, most prominently in the January, 2003, State of the Union address, in which President Bush declared that Iraq had sought uranium, citing British intelligence sources.^[93]

In response, Wilson wrote a critical *New York Times* op-ed piece in June 2003 stating that he had personally investigated claims of yellowcake purchases and believed them to be fraudulent.^[94] After Wilson's op-ed, Wilson's wife [Valerie Plame](#) was publicly identified as an undercover CIA analyst by a [columnist](#). This led to a [Justice Department investigation](#) into the source of the leak.

On May 1, 2005 the "[Downing Street memo](#)" was published in [The Sunday Times](#). It contained an overview of a secret July 23, 2002 meeting among British government, [Ministry of Defence](#), and British intelligence figures who discussed the build-up to the Iraq war — including direct references to classified U.S. policy of the time. The memo stated, "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of [terrorism](#) and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."^[95]

The CIA had contacted Iraq's foreign minister, [Naji Sabri](#), who was being paid by the French as an agent. Sabri informed them that Saddam had hidden poison gas among Sunni tribesmen, had ambitions for a nuclear program but that it was not active, and that no biological weapons were being produced or stockpiled, although research was underway. [96]

According to [Sidney Blumenthal](#), George Tenet briefed Bush on September 18, 2002 that Sabri had informed them that Iraq did not have WMD. Bush dismissed this top-secret intelligence from Hussein's inner circle which was approved by two senior CIA officers. The information was never shared with Congress or even CIA agents examining whether Saddam had such weapons. [97]

In September 2002, the Bush administration, the CIA and the DIA said attempts by Iraq to acquire high-strength [aluminum tubes](#) that were prohibited under the UN monitoring program and which they said pointed to a clandestine effort to make centrifuges to enrich uranium for nuclear bombs. [98] This analysis was opposed by the [United States Department of Energy](#) (DOE) and [INR](#), which was significant because of DOE's expertise in such gas centrifuges and nuclear weapons programs. The DOE and INR argued that the Iraqi tubes were poorly suited for centrifuges, though it was technically possible with additional modification. [99] A report released by the [Institute for Science and](#)

[International Security](#) in 2002 reported that it was highly unlikely that the tubes could be used to enrich uranium. [100]

An effort by the DOE to correct this detail in comments prepared for [United States Secretary of State Colin Powell's](#) UN appearance was rebuffed by the administration [101][102] and Powell, in his address to the UN Security Council just prior to the war, referenced the aluminum tubes, stating that while experts disagreed on whether or not the tubes were destined for a centrifuge program, the specifications of the tubes were unusually tight. [103] Powell later admitted he had presented what turned out to be an inaccurate case to the UN on Iraqi weapons, and the intelligence he was relying on was, in some cases, "deliberately misleading." [104][105][106] Shortly after the [United States presidential election, 2008](#), and the election of rival Democratic party nominee [Barack Obama](#), president Bush admitted that "[my] biggest regret of all the presidency has to have been the intelligence failure in Iraq". [107]

In December 2009, [Prime Minister Tony Blair](#) stated that he "would still have thought it right to remove [Saddam Hussein]" regardless of whether Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction or not. [108]

Preparations for war

During 2002 the amount of ordinance used by British and American aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones of Iraq increased compared to the previous years [109] and by August had "become a full air offensive". [Tommy Franks](#), the allied commander, later stated that the bombing was designed to "degrade" the Iraqi air defense system prior to an invasion. [110]

In October 2002, a few days before the [U.S. Senate](#) voted on the Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq, about 75 senators were told in closed session that Iraq had the means of attacking the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. with biological or chemical weapons delivered by [unmanned aerial vehicles](#) (UAVs.) [51]

On February 5, 2003, [Colin Powell](#) presented further evidence in his Iraqi WMD program presentation to the UN Security Council that UAVs were ready to be launched against the U.S. At the time, there was a vigorous dispute within the U.S.

military and intelligence communities as to whether CIA conclusions about Iraqi UAVs were accurate ^[111] and other intelligence agencies suggested that Iraq did not possess any offensive UAV capability, saying the few they had were designed for surveillance and intended for [reconnaissance](#). ^[112] The Senate voted to approve the Joint Resolution with the support of large bipartisan majorities on October 11, 2002 providing the Bush administration with a [legal basis for the US invasion](#) under US law.

The resolution granted the authorization by the Constitution of the United States and the [United States Congress](#) for the President to command the military to fight anti-United States violence. Citing the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, the resolution reiterated that it should be the policy of the United States to remove the Hussein regime and promote a democratic replacement.

Chief UN weapons inspector [Hans Blix](#) remarked in January 2003 that "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance — not even today — of the disarmament, which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace." ^[113] Among other things he noted that 1,000 short tons (910 t) of chemical agent were unaccounted for, information on Iraq's VX nerve agent program was missing, and that "no convincing evidence" was presented for the destruction of 8,500 litres (1,900 imp gal; 2,200 US gal) of anthrax that had been declared. ^[113]

On February 3, 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the UN to present American evidence that Iraq was hiding unconventional weapons. The French government also believed that Saddam had stockpiles of [anthrax](#) and [botulism toxin](#), and the ability to produce VX. ^[114] In March, Blix said progress had been made in inspections, and no evidence of WMD had been found. ^[53]

In early 2003, the U.S., British, and Spanish governments proposed the so-called "eighteenth resolution" to give Iraq a deadline for compliance with previous resolutions enforced by the threat of military action. This proposed resolution was subsequently withdrawn due to lack of support on the UN Security Council. In particular, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members France, [Germany](#) and [Canada](#) and non-NATO member [Russia](#) were opposed to military intervention in Iraq, due to the high level of risk to the international community's security, and defended disarmament through diplomacy. ^{[115][116]}

A meeting between George W. Bush and [Tony Blair](#) took place on January 31, 2003 in the [White House](#). A secret memo of this meeting purportedly showed that the Bush administration had already decided on the invasion of Iraq at that point. Bush was allegedly floating the idea of painting a [U-2 spyplane](#) in UN colors and letting it fly low over Iraq to provoke Iraqi forces into shooting it down, thereby providing a pretext for the U.S. and Britain to invade. Bush and Blair made a secret deal to carry out the invasion regardless of whether WMD were discovered by UN weapons inspectors, in direct contradiction with statements Blair made to the British House of Commons afterwards that the Iraqi regime would be given a final chance to disarm. In the memo, Bush is paraphrased as saying:

Bush said to Blair that he "thought it unlikely that there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups" in Iraq after the war.

Opposition to invasion

Further information: [criticism of the Iraq War](#), [legitimacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq](#), and [legality of the Iraq War](#)

On January 20, 2003, [French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin](#) declared "we believe that military intervention would be the worst solution."^[118] Meanwhile [anti-war groups](#) across the world organised public protests. According to French academic [Dominique Reynié](#), between January 3 and April 12, 2003, 36 million people across the globe took part in almost 3,000 protests against war in Iraq, with demonstrations on February 15, 2003 being the largest and most prolific.^[119]

In February 2003, the U.S. Army's top general, [Eric Shinseki](#), told the Senate Armed Services Committee that it would take "several hundred thousand soldiers" to secure Iraq.^[120] Two days later, U.S. Defense Secretary [Donald Rumsfeld](#) said the post-war troop commitment would be less than the number of troops required to win the war, and that "the idea that it would take several hundred thousand U.S. forces is far from the mark." Deputy Defense Secretary [Paul Wolfowitz](#) said Shineski's estimate was "way off the mark," because other countries would take part in an occupying force.^[121]

In March 2003, Hans Blix reported that "No evidence of proscribed activities have so far been found" in Iraq, saying that progress was made in inspections which would continue. He estimated the time remaining for disarmament being verified through inspections to be "months".^[53] But the U.S. government announced that "diplomacy has failed", and that it would proceed with a coalition of allied countries — named the "[coalition of the willing](#)" — to rid Iraq of its alleged WMD. The U.S. government abruptly advised U.N. weapons inspectors to leave [Baghdad](#) immediately.

There were serious [legal questions](#) surrounding the launching of the war against Iraq and the [Bush Doctrine of preemptive war](#) in general. On September 16, 2004 [Kofi Annan](#), the Secretary General of the United Nations, said of the invasion, "I have indicated it was not in conformity with the UN Charter. From our point of view, from the Charter point of view, it was illegal."

In November 2008 [Lord Bingham](#), the former British Law Lord, described the war a serious violation of [international law](#), and accused Britain and the U.S. of acting like a "world [vigilante](#)". He also criticized the post-invasion record of Britain as "an occupying power in Iraq". Regarding the treatment of Iraqi detainees in [Abu Ghraib](#), Bingham said: "Particularly disturbing to proponents of the rule of law is the cynical lack of concern for international legality among some top officials in the Bush administration."^[122]

2003: Invasion

Main articles: [2003 invasion of Iraq](#), [2003 in Iraq](#), [2003 Iraq war timeline](#), and [List of people associated with the 2003 invasion of Iraq](#)

See also: [Coalition military operations of the Iraq War](#) and [Iraq War order of battle](#)

The first [Central Intelligence Agency](#) invasion team entered Iraq on July 10, 2002.^[123] This team was composed of members of the CIA's [Special Activities Division](#) and was later joined by members of the US military's elite [Joint Special Operations Command](#) (JSOC).^[124] Together, they prepared for the invasion of conventional forces. These efforts

consisted of persuading the commanders of several Iraqi military divisions to surrender rather than oppose the invasion, and to identify all of the initial leadership targets during very high risk reconnaissance missions. [124]

Most importantly, their efforts organized the Kurdish Peshmerga to become the northern front of the invasion. Together this force defeated [Ansar al-Islam](#) in [Iraqi Kurdistan](#) prior to the invasion and then defeated the Iraqi army in the north. [124][125] The battle against Ansar al-Islam led to the death of a substantial number of militants and the uncovering of a chemical weapons facility at Sargat. [123][126]

At 5:34 AM Baghdad time on March 20, 2003 (9:34 p.m., March 19 EST) the military invasion of Iraq began. [127] The [2003 invasion of Iraq](#), led by US army General [Tommy Franks](#), began under the codename "Operation Iraqi Liberation", [128] later renamed "Operation Iraqi Freedom", the UK codename [Operation Telic](#), and the Australian codename Operation Falconer. Coalition forces also cooperated with Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north. Approximately forty other governments, the "U.S.-led coalition against Iraq," participated by providing troops, equipment, services, security, and special forces.

The stated objectives of the invasion were; end the Hussein regime; eliminate whatever weapons of mass destruction could be found; eliminate whatever Islamist militants could be found; obtain intelligence on militant networks; distribute [humanitarian aid](#); secure Iraq's [petroleum](#) infrastructure; and assist in creating a representative but compliant government as a model for other [Middle East](#) nations.

The invasion was a quick and decisive operation encountering major resistance, though not what the US, British and other forces expected. The Iraqi regime had prepared to fight both a conventional and irregular war at the same time, conceding territory when faced with superior conventional forces, largely armored, but launching smaller scale attacks in the rear using fighters dressed in civilian and paramilitary clothes. This achieved some temporary successes and created unexpected challenges for the invading forces, especially the US military.

In the north, OIF-1 used the largest special operations force since the successful attack on the [Taliban](#) government of [Afghanistan](#) just over a year earlier. The Iraqi army was quickly overwhelmed in each engagement it faced with US forces, with the elite [Fedayeen Saddam](#) putting up strong, sometimes suicidal, resistance before melting away into the civilian population.

On April 9 Baghdad fell, ending President Hussein's 24-year rule. US forces seized the deserted [Ba'ath Party](#) ministries and stage-managed [129] the tearing down of a huge iron statue of Hussein, photos and video of which became symbolic of the event, although later controversial. In November 2008, Iraqi protesters staged a similar stomping on and burning of an effigy of George W. Bush. [130] The abrupt fall of Baghdad was accompanied by a widespread outpouring of gratitude toward the invaders, but also massive civil disorder, including the [looting](#) of public and government buildings and drastically increased crime. [131][132]

According to [the Pentagon](#), 250,000 short tons (230,000 t) (of 650,000 short tons (590,000 t) total) of ordnance was looted, providing a significant source of ammunition for the [Iraqi insurgency](#). The invasion phase concluded when [Tikrit](#),

Hussein's home town, fell with little resistance to the US Marines of [Task Force Tripoli](#) and on April 15 the coalition declared the invasion effectively over.

In the invasion phase of the war (March 19-April 30), 9,200 Iraqi combatants were killed along with 7,299 [civilians](#), primarily by US air and ground forces.^[133] Coalition forces reported the death in combat of 139 U.S. military personnel^[134] and 33 UK military personnel.^[135]

Coalition Provisional Authority and Iraq Survey Group

See also: [Iraqi Governing Council](#), [International Advisory and Monitoring Board](#), [CPA Program Review Board](#), [Development Fund for Iraq](#), and [Reconstruction of Iraq](#)

Shortly after the invasion, the multinational coalition created the [Coalition Provisional Authority \(CPA\)](#) فالتى ال تطلّس تدحو ملى, based in the [Green Zone](#), as a transitional government of Iraq until the establishment of a democratic government. Citing [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483](#) (May 22, 2003) and the [laws of war](#), the CPA vested itself with [executive](#), legislative, and judicial authority over the Iraqi government from the period of the CPA's inception on April 21, 2003, until its dissolution on June 28, 2004.

The CPA was originally headed by [Jay Garner](#), a former U.S. military officer, but his appointment lasted only until May 11, 2003 when President Bush appointed [L. Paul Bremer](#). Bremer served until the CPA's dissolution in July 2004.

Another group created by the multinational force in Iraq post-invasion was the 1,400-member international [Iraq Survey Group](#) who conducted a fact-finding mission to find [Iraqi weapons of mass destruction \(WMD\) programmes](#). In 2004 the ISG's Duelfer Report^[136] stated that Iraq did not have a viable WMD program.

Post-invasion phase

Main article: [Post-invasion Iraq, 2003–present](#)

Further information: [U.S. list of most-wanted Iraqis](#) and [Iraq War insurgent attacks](#)

On May 1, 2003, President Bush staged a dramatic visit to the [aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln](#) operating a few miles west of San Diego, California. The visit climaxed at sunset with Bush's now well-known "Mission Accomplished" speech. In this nationally televised speech, delivered before the sailors and airmen on the [flight deck](#), Bush effectively declared victory due to the defeat of Iraq's conventional forces. However, former President Hussein remained at large and significant pockets of resistance remained.

After President Bush's speech, coalition forces noticed a gradually increasing flurry of attacks on its troops in various regions, especially in the "[Sunni Triangle](#)".^[137] The initial Iraqi insurgents were supplied by hundreds of weapons caches created prior to the invasion by the Iraqi army and Republican Guard.

Initially, Iraqi resistance (described by the coalition as "Anti-Iraqi Forces") largely stemmed from [fedayeen](#) and Hussein/[Ba'ath Party](#) loyalists, but soon religious radicals and Iraqis angered by the occupation contributed to the insurgency. The three provinces with the highest number of attacks were [Baghdad](#), [Al Anbar](#), and [Salah Ad Din](#). Those three provinces account for 35% of the population, but are responsible for 73% of U.S. military deaths (as of December 5, 2006), and an even higher percentage of recent U.S. military deaths (about 80%).^[138]

Insurgents use [guerrilla tactics](#) including: mortars, missiles, [suicide attacks](#), [snipers](#), [improvised explosive devices](#) (IEDs), car bombs, small arms fire (usually with [assault rifles](#)), and RPGs (rocket propelled grenades), as well as sabotage against the [petroleum](#), water, and electrical infrastructure.

Post-invasion Iraq coalition efforts commenced after the fall of the Hussein regime. The coalition nations, together with the United Nations, began to work to establish a stable, compliant [democratic](#) state capable of defending itself from non-coalition forces, as well as overcoming internal divisions. ^{[139][140]}

Meanwhile, coalition military forces launched several operations around the [Tigris](#) River peninsula and in the Sunni Triangle. A series of similar operations were launched throughout the summer in the Sunni Triangle. Toward the end of 2003, the intensity and pace of insurgent attacks began to increase. A sharp surge in guerrilla attacks ushered in an insurgent effort that was termed the "[Ramadan Offensive](#)", as it coincided with the beginning of the Muslim holy month of [Ramadan](#).

To counter this offensive, coalition forces begin to use air power and artillery again for the first time since the end of the invasion by striking suspected ambush sites and mortar launching positions. Surveillance of major routes, patrols, and raids on suspected insurgents were stepped up. In addition, two villages, including Hussein's birthplace of al-Auja and the small town of [Abu Hishma](#) were surrounded by barbed wire and carefully monitored.

However, the failure to restore basic services to pre-war levels, where over a decade of [sanctions](#), US and UK bombing, [corruption](#), and decaying infrastructure had left major cities barely functioning, contributed to local anger at the IPA government.

Hunting down the Hussein regime

See also: [Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal](#) and [Trial of Saddam Hussein](#)

In the summer of 2003, the multinational forces focused on [hunting down the remaining leaders](#) of the former regime. On July 22, a raid by the US [101st Airborne Division](#) and soldiers from [Task Force 20](#) killed Hussein's sons ([Uday](#) and [Qusay](#)) along with one of his grandsons. In all, over 300 top leaders of the former regime were killed or captured, as well as numerous lesser functionaries and military personnel.

Most significantly, Saddam Hussein himself was captured on December 13, 2003 on a farm near [Tikrit](#) in [Operation Red Dawn](#). ^[141] The operation was conducted by the [United States Army's 4th Infantry Division](#) and members of [Task Force 121](#). Intelligence on Saddam's whereabouts came from his family members and former bodyguards. ^[142]

With the capture of Hussein and a drop in the number of insurgent attacks, some concluded the multinational forces were prevailing in the fight against the insurgency. The provisional government began training the new Iraqi security forces intended to police the country, and the United States promised over \$20 billion in reconstruction money in the form of credit against Iraq's future oil revenues. Oil revenue was also used for rebuilding schools and for work on the electrical and refining infrastructure.

Shortly after the capture of Hussein, elements left out of the [Coalition Provisional Authority](#) began to agitate for elections and the formation of an [Iraqi Interim Government](#). Most prominent among these was the [Shia](#) cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali

al-Sistani. The Coalition Provisional Authority opposed allowing democratic elections at this time.^[143] The insurgents stepped up their activities. The two most turbulent centers were the area around [Fallujah](#) and the poor Shia sections of cities from Baghdad ([Sadr City](#)) to [Basra](#) in the south.

2004: Iraqi Resistance expands

Main article: [2004 in Iraq](#)

See also: Military operations of the Iraq War for a list of all Coalition operations for this period, [2004 in Iraq](#), [Iraqi coalition counter-insurgency operations](#), [History of Iraqi insurgency](#), [United States occupation of Fallujah](#), [Iraq Spring Fighting of 2004](#)

The start of 2004 was marked by a relative lull in violence. Insurgent forces reorganised during this time, studying the multinational forces' tactics and planning a renewed offensive. However, violence did increase during the Iraq Spring Fighting of 2004 with foreign fighters from around the Middle East as well as [al-Qaeda in Iraq](#) (an affiliated [al-Qaeda](#) group), led by [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#) helping to drive the insurgency.

As the insurgency grew there was a distinct change in targeting from the coalition forces towards the new Iraqi Security Forces, as hundreds of Iraqi civilians and police were killed over the next few months in a series of massive bombings. An organized Sunni insurgency, with deep roots and both nationalist and Islamist motivations, was becoming more powerful throughout Iraq. The Shia [Mahdi Army](#) also began launching attacks on coalition targets in an attempt to seize control from Iraqi security forces. The southern and central portions of Iraq were beginning to erupt in urban guerrilla combat as multinational forces attempted to keep control and prepared for a counteroffensive.

The most serious fighting of the war so far began on March 31, 2004, when [Iraqi insurgents](#) in [Fallujah](#) ambushed a Blackwater USA convoy led by four US private military contractors who were providing security for food caterers [Eurest Support Services](#).^[144] The four armed contractors, [Scott Helvenston](#), Jerko Zovko, Wesley Batalona, and Michael Teague, were killed with grenades and small arms fire. Subsequently, their bodies were dragged from their vehicles by local people, beaten, set ablaze, and their burned corpses hung over a bridge crossing the [Euphrates](#).^[145] Photos of the event were released to [news agencies](#) worldwide, causing a great deal of indignation and [moral outrage](#) in the United States, and prompting an unsuccessful "pacification" of the city: the [First Battle of Fallujah](#) in April 2004.

The offensive was resumed in November 2004 in the bloodiest battle of the war so far: the [Second Battle of Fallujah](#), described by the US military as "the heaviest [urban combat](#) (that they had been involved in) since the battle of Hue City in [Vietnam](#)."^[146] During the assault, US forces used [white phosphorus](#) as an incendiary weapon against insurgent personnel, attracting controversy. The 46-day battle resulted in a victory for the coalition, with 95 US soldiers killed along with approximately 1,350 insurgents. Fallujah was totally devastated during the fighting, though civilian casualties were low, as they had mostly fled before the battle.^[147]

Another major event of this year was the revelation of widespread [prisoner abuse](#) at [Abu Ghraib](#) which received international media attention in April 2004. First reports of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse, as well as graphic pictures showing US military personnel taunting and abusing Iraqi prisoners, came to public attention from a [60](#)

Minutes II news report (April 28) and a Seymour M. Hersh article in the *The New Yorker* (posted online on April 30.)^[148] Military correspondent [Thomas Ricks](#) claimed that these revelations dealt a blow to the moral justifications for the occupation in the eyes of many people, especially Iraqis, and was a turning point in the war.^[149]

2005: Elections and transitional government

Further information: [2005 in Iraq](#) and [Military transition team](#)

On January 31, Iraqis elected the [Iraqi Transitional Government](#) in order to draft a permanent constitution. Although some violence and a widespread Sunni [boycott](#) marred the event, most of the eligible Kurd and Shia populace participated. On February 4, [Paul Wolfowitz](#) announced that 15,000 US troops whose tours of duty had been extended in order to provide election security would be pulled out of Iraq by the next month.^[150] February to April proved to be relatively peaceful months compared to the carnage of November and January, with insurgent attacks averaging 30 a day from the prior average of 70.

Hopes for a quick end to the insurgency and a withdrawal of US troops were dashed in May, Iraq's bloodiest month since the invasion. Suicide bombers, believed to be mainly disheartened Iraqi Sunni Arabs, Syrians and Saudis, tore through Iraq. Their targets were often Shia gatherings or civilian concentrations of Shias. As a result, over 700 Iraqi civilians died in that month, as well as 79 US soldiers.

The summer of 2005 saw fighting around Baghdad and at Tall Afar in northwestern Iraq as US forces tried to seal off the Syrian border. This led to fighting in the autumn in the small towns of the [Euphrates](#) valley between the capital and that border.^[151]

A referendum was held in October 15 in which the new [Iraqi constitution](#) was [ratified](#). An Iraqi national assembly was elected in December, with participation from the Sunnis as well as the Kurds and Shia.^[151]

Insurgent attacks increased in 2005 with 34,131 recorded incidents, compared to a total 26,496 for the previous year.^[152]

2006: Civil war and permanent Iraqi government

Further information: [2006 in Iraq](#), [Civil war in Iraq](#), [Operation Together Forward](#), and [Provincial Reconstruction Team](#)

The beginning of 2006 was marked by government creation talks, growing sectarian violence, and continuous anti-coalition attacks. Sectarian violence expanded to a new level of intensity following the al-Askari Mosque bombing in the Iraqi city of Samarra, on February 22, 2006. The explosion at the mosque, one of the holiest sites in Shi'a Islam, is believed to have been caused by a bomb planted by al-Qaeda.

Although no injuries occurred in the blast, the mosque was severely damaged and the bombing resulted in violence over the following days. Over 100 dead bodies with bullet holes were found on February 23, and at least 165 people are thought to have been killed. In the aftermath of this attack the US military calculated that the average homicide rate in Baghdad tripled from 11 to 33 deaths per day. In 2006 the UN described the environment in Iraq as a "civil war-like situation."^[153]

The current government of Iraq took office on May 20, 2006 following approval by the [members](#) of the Iraqi National Assembly. This followed the general election in December 2005. The government succeeded the Iraqi Transitional Government which had continued in office in a [caretaker capacity](#) until the formation of the permanent government.

Iraq Study Group report and Hussein's execution

Main articles: [Iraq Study Group](#) and [Execution of Saddam Hussein](#)

The [Iraq Study Group Report](#) was released on December 6, 2006. Iraq Study Group, made up of people from both of the major US parties, was led by former US Secretary of State [James Baker](#) and former Democratic congressman Lee Hamilton. It concluded that "the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating" and "U.S. forces seem to be caught in a mission that has no foreseeable end." The report's 79 recommendations include increasing diplomatic measures with [Iran](#) and [Syria](#) and intensifying efforts to train Iraqi troops. On December 18, a Pentagon report found that insurgent attacks were averaging about 960 a week, the highest since the reports had begun in 2005. ^[154]

Coalition forces formally transferred control of a province to the Iraqi government, the first since the war. Military prosecutors charged eight US Marines with the murders of 24 Iraqi civilians in [Haditha](#) in November 2005, 10 of them women and children. Four officers were also charged with [dereliction of duty](#) in relation to the event. ^[155]

Saddam Hussein was hanged on December 30, 2006 after being found guilty of crimes against humanity by an Iraqi court after a year-long trial. ^[156]

2007: US troop surge

Further information: [2007 in Iraq](#), [Iraq War troop surge of 2007](#), and [Strategic reset](#)

In a January 10, 2007 televised address to the US public, Bush proposed 21,500 more troops for Iraq, a job program for Iraqis, more reconstruction proposals, and \$1.2 billion for these programs. ^[157] On January 23, 2007 in the [2007 State of the Union Address](#), Bush announced "deploying reinforcements of more than 20,000 additional soldiers and Marines to Iraq."

On February 10, 2007 [David Petraeus](#) was made commander of Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I), the four-star post that oversees all coalition forces in country, replacing General George Casey. In his new position, Petraeus oversaw all coalition forces in Iraq and employed them in the new "[Surge](#)" strategy outlined by the Bush administration. ^{[158][159]} 2007 also saw a sharp increase in insurgent [chlorine bombings](#).

On May 10, 2007, 144 Iraqi Parliamentary lawmakers signed onto a legislative petition calling on the United States to set a timetable for withdrawal. ^[160] On June 3, 2007, the Iraqi Parliament voted 85 to 59 to require the Iraqi government to consult with Parliament before requesting additional extensions of the UN Security Council Mandate for Coalition operations in Iraq. ^[161] Despite this, the mandate was renewed on December 18, 2007 without the approval of the Iraqi parliament. ^[162]

Pressures on US troops were compounded by the continuing withdrawal of British forces from the [Basra Governorate](#). In early 2007, [British Prime Minister Blair](#) announced that following [Operation Sinbad](#) British troops would begin to withdraw from Basra, handing security over to the Iraqis. ^[163]

This announcement was confirmed in the autumn by Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#), Blair's successor, who again outlined a withdrawal plan for the remaining UK forces with a complete withdrawal date sometime in late 2008. ^[164] In July Danish Prime Minister [Anders Fogh Rasmussen](#) also announced the withdrawal of 441 Danish troops from Iraq, leaving only a unit of nine soldiers manning four observational helicopters. ^[165]

Planned troop reduction

In a speech made to Congress on September 10, 2007, Petraeus "envisioned the withdrawal of roughly 30,000 U.S. troops by next summer, beginning with a Marine contingent [in September]." ^[166] On September 14, Bush backed a limited withdrawal of troops from Iraq. ^[167]

Bush said 5,700 personnel would be home by Christmas 2007, and expected thousands more to return by July 2008. The plan would take troop numbers back to their level before the surge at the beginning of 2007.

Controversy arose when former Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#) announced before the surge took place that there would have to be a draw down of troops by mid-2007. ^[168]

Effects of the surge on security

By March 2008, violence in Iraq was reported curtailed by 40-80%, according to a Pentagon report. ^[169]

Independent reports ^{[170][171]} raised questions about those assessments. An Iraqi military spokesman claimed that civilian deaths since the start of the troop surge plan were 265 in Baghdad, down from 1,440 in the four previous weeks. The *New York Times* counted more than 450 Iraqi civilians killed during the same 28-day period, based on initial daily reports from Iraqi Interior Ministry and hospital officials.

Historically, the daily counts tallied by the *NYT* have underestimated the total death toll by 50% or more when compared to studies by the United Nations, which rely upon figures from the Iraqi Health Ministry and morgue figures. ^[172]

The rate of US combat deaths in Baghdad nearly doubled to 3.14/day in the first seven weeks of the "surge" in security activity, compared to previous period. Across the rest of Iraq it reduced slightly. ^{[173][174]}

On August 14, 2007 the deadliest single attack of the whole war occurred. Nearly 800 civilians were killed by a series of coordinated suicide bomb attacks on the northern Iraqi settlement of Qahtaniya. More than 100 homes and shops were destroyed in the blasts. US officials blamed al-Qaeda. The targeted villagers belonged to the non-Muslim [Yazidi](#) ethnic minority. The attack may have represented the latest in a feud that erupted earlier that year when members of the Yazidi community stoned to death a teenage girl called Du'a Khalil Aswad accused of dating a Sunni Arab man and converting to [Islam](#). The killing of the girl was recorded on camera-mobiles and the video was uploaded onto the internet ^{[175][176][177][178]}

On September 13, 2007 [Abdul Sattar Abu Risha](#) was killed in a bomb attack in the city of [Ramadi](#).^[179] He was an important US ally because he led the "Anbar Awakening", an alliance of Sunni Arab tribes that opposed al-Qaeda. The latter organisation claimed responsibility for the attack.^[180] A statement posted on the Internet by the shadowy [Islamic State of Iraq](#) called Abu Risha "one of the dogs of Bush" and described Thursday's killing as a "heroic operation that took over a month to prepare".^[181]

There was a reported trend of decreasing US troop deaths after May 2007,^[182] and violence against coalition troops had fallen to the "lowest levels since the first year of the American invasion".^[183] These, and several other positive developments, were attributed to the surge by many analysts.^[184]

Data from the Pentagon and other US agencies such as the [Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO) found that daily attacks against civilians in Iraq remained "about the same" since February. The GAO also stated that there was no discernible trend in sectarian violence.^[185] However, this report ran counter to reports to Congress, which showed a general downward trend in civilian deaths and ethno-sectarian violence since December 2006.^[186] By late 2007, as the U.S. troop surge began to wind down, violence in Iraq had begun to decrease from its 2006 highs.^[187]

Reports from the ground dispute that the surge had a significant effect on security in Iraq. While life in [Baghdad](#) improved in 2007-08, the main reason this was that the battle for Baghdad in 2006-07 between the Shia and the Sunni populations was won by the Shia, who as of September 2008 controlled three-quarters of the capital. These demographic changes appeared permanent; Sunni families who try to get their houses back faced assassination. Thus the war against the US occupation by the Sunni community, who had been favored under Saddam Hussein, had largely ended. The Sunni have been largely defeated, according to [The Independent](#), not so much by the US army as by the Shia-led Iraqi government and the Shia militias.^[188]

Entire neighborhoods in Baghdad were ethnically cleansed by Shia and Sunni militias and [sectarian violence](#) has broken out in every Iraqi city where there is a mixed population.^{[189][190][191]} This assessment is supported by a study of satellite imagery tracking the amount of light emitted by Baghdad neighborhoods at night. The interpretation of the data was that violence had declined in Baghdad due to [ethnic cleansing](#) and that inter-communal violence had reached a climax as the surge was beginning. John Agnew, an authority on ethnic conflict and leader of the project stated "*The surge really seems to have been a case of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.*"^{[192][193]}

Investigative reporter [Bob Woodward](#) cites US government sources according to which the US "surge" was not the primary reason for the drop in violence in 2007-2008. Instead, according to that view, the reduction of violence was due to newer covert techniques by US military and intelligence officials to find, target and kill insurgents, including working closely with former insurgents.^[194]

In the Shia region near [Basra](#), British forces turned over security for the region to Iraqi Security Forces. Basra is the ninth province of Iraq's 18 provinces to be returned to local security forces' control since the beginning of the occupation. ^[195]

Political developments

More than half of the members of Iraq's parliament rejected the continuing occupation of their country for the first time. 144 of the 275 lawmakers signed onto a legislative petition that would require the Iraqi government to seek approval from Parliament before it requests an extension of the U.N. mandate for foreign forces to be in Iraq, which expires at the end of 2008. It also calls for a timetable for troop withdrawal and a freeze on the size of foreign forces. The U.N. Security Council mandate for U.S.-led forces in Iraq will terminate "if requested by the government of Iraq." ^[196] Under Iraqi law, the speaker must present a resolution called for by a majority of lawmakers. ^[197] 59% of those polled in the U.S. support a timetable for withdrawal. ^[198]

In mid-2007, the Coalition began a controversial program to recruit Iraqi Sunnis (often former insurgents) for the formation of "Guardian" militias. These Guardian militias are intended to support and secure various Sunni neighborhoods against the Islamists. ^[199]

Tensions with Iran

Further information: [United States-Iran relations](#) and [Karbala provincial headquarters raid](#)

In 2007, tensions increased greatly between [Iran](#) and [Iraqi Kurdistan](#) due to the latter's giving sanctuary to the militant Kurdish secessionist group Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK.) According to reports, Iran had been shelling PEJAK positions in Iraqi Kurdistan since August 16. These tensions further increased with an alleged border incursion on August 23 by Iranian troops who attacked several Kurdish villages killing an unknown number of civilians and militants. ^[200]

Coalition forces also began to target alleged Iranian Quds force operatives in Iraq, either arresting or killing suspected members. The Bush administration and coalition leaders began to publicly state that Iran was supplying weapons, particularly [EFP](#) devices, to Iraqi insurgents and militias although to date have failed to provide any proof for these allegations. Further sanctions on Iranian organizations were also announced by the Bush administration in the Autumn of 2007. On November 21, 2007 Lieutenant General James Dubik, who is in charge of training Iraqi security forces, praised Iran for its "contribution to the reduction of violence" in Iraq by upholding its pledge to stop the flow of weapons, explosives and training of extremists in Iraq. ^[201]

Tensions with Turkey

Further information: [2008 Turkish incursion into northern Iraq](#)

Border incursions by PKK militants based in Iraqi Kurdistan have continued to harass Turkish forces, with casualties on both sides increasing tensions between Turkey, a [NATO](#) member, and Iraqi Kurdistan.

In the fall of 2007, the Turkish military stated their right to cross the Iraqi Kurdistan border in "hot pursuit" of PKK militants and began shelling Kurdish areas in Iraq and attacking PKK bases in the Mount Cudi region with aircraft. ^{[202][203]} The Turkish parliament approved a resolution permitting the military to pursue the PKK in Iraq

Kurdistan.^[204] In November, Turkish gunships attacked parts of northern Iraq in the first such attack by Turkish aircraft since the border tensions escalated.^[205] Another series of attacks in mid-December hit PKK targets in the Qandil, Zap, Avashin and Hakurk regions. The latest series of attacks involved at least 50 aircraft and artillery and Kurdish officials reported one civilian killed and two wounded.^[206]

Additionally, weapons that were given to Iraqi security forces by the US military are being recovered by authorities in Turkey after being used in that state.^[207]

Private security firm controversy

Main article: [Blackwater Baghdad shootings](#)

On September 17, 2007, the Iraqi government announced that it was revoking the license of the US security firm Blackwater USA over the firm's involvement in the killing of eight civilians, including a woman and an infant,^[208] in a firefight that followed a car bomb explosion near a State Department motorcade. Additional investigations of alleged arms smuggling involving the firm was also under way. Blackwater is currently one of the most high-profile firms operating in Iraq, with around 1,000 employees as well as a fleet of helicopters in the country. Whether the group may be legally prosecuted is still [a matter of debate](#).^[209]

2008: Iraqi forces arm

Further information: [2008 in Iraq](#)

Throughout 2008, U.S. officials and independent think tanks began to point to improvements in the security situation, as measured by key statistics. According to the US Defense Department, in December 2008 the "overall level of violence" in the country had dropped 80% since before [the surge](#) began in January 2007, and the country's murder rate had dropped to pre-war levels. They also pointed out that the casualty figure for U.S. forces in 2008 was 314 against a figure of 904 in 2007.^[210]

According to the [Brookings Institution](#), Iraqi civilian fatalities numbered 490 in November 2008 as against 3,500 in January 2007, whereas attacks against the coalition numbered somewhere between 200 and 300 per week in the latter half of 2008, as opposed to a peak of nearly 1,600 in summer 2007. The number of Iraqi security forces killed was under 100 per month in the second half of 2008, from a high of 200 to 300 in summer 2007.^[211]

Meanwhile, the proficiency of the Iraqi military increased as it launched a spring offensive against Shia militias which Prime Minister [Nouri al-Maliki](#) had previously been criticized for allowing to operate. This began with a [March operation](#) against the Mehdi Army in Basra, which led to fighting in Shia areas up and down the country, especially in the [Sadr City](#) district of Baghdad. By October, the British officer in charge of Basra said that since the operation the town had become "secure" and had a murder rate comparable to [Manchester](#) in England.^[212] The U.S. military also said there had been a decrease of about a quarter in the quantity of Iranian-made explosives found in Iraq in 2008, possibly indicating a change in Iranian policy.^[213]

Progress in Sunni areas continued after members of the Awakening movement were transferred from U.S. military to Iraqi control.^[214] In May, the Iraqi army - backed by coalition support - launched an offensive in [Mosul](#), the last

major Iraqi stronghold of al-Qaeda. Despite detaining thousands of individuals, the offensive failed to lead to major long-term security improvements in Mosul. At the end of the year, the city remained a major flashpoint. [215][216]

In the regional dimension, the ongoing conflict between Turkey and PKK [217][218][219] intensified on February 21, when Turkey [launched a ground attack](#) into the Quandeel Mountains of Northern Iraq. In the nine day long operation, around 10,000 Turkish troops advanced up to 25 km into Northern Iraq. This was the first substantial ground incursion by Turkish forces since 1995. [220][221]

Shortly after the incursion began, both the Iraqi cabinet and the Kurdistan regional government condemned Turkey's actions and called for the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from the region. [222] Turkish troops withdrew on February 29. [223] The fate of the Kurds and the future of the ethnically-diverse city of [Kirkuk](#) remained a contentious issue in Iraqi politics.

U.S. military officials met these trends with cautious optimism as they approached what they described as the "transition" embodied in the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement which was negotiated throughout 2008. [210]

The commander of the coalition, U.S. General [Raymond T. Odierno](#), noted that "in military terms, transitions are the most dangerous time" in December 2008. [210]

Spring offensives on Shia militias

Further information: [Iraq Spring Fighting of 2008](#), [Siege of Sadr City](#), and [Battle of Basra \(2008\)](#)

At the end of March, the Iraqi Army, with Coalition air support, launched an offensive, dubbed "Charge of the Knights", in Basra to secure the area from militias. This was the first major operation where the Iraqi Army did not have direct combat support from conventional coalition ground troops. The offensive was opposed by the [Mahdi Army](#), one of the militias, which controlled much of the region. [224][225] Fighting quickly spread to other parts of Iraq: including [Sadr City](#), Al Kut, [Al Hillah](#) and others. During the fighting Iraqi forces met stiff resistance from militiamen in Basra to the point that the Iraqi military offensive slowed to a crawl, with the high attrition rates finally forcing the Sadrists to the negotiating table.

Following talks with Brig. Gen. [Qassem Suleimani](#), commander of the [Qods brigades](#) of Iran's [Revolutionary Guard Corps](#), and the intercession of the Iranian government, on March 31, 2008, al-Sadr ordered his followers to ceasefire. [226] The militiamen kept their weapons.

By May 12, 2008, Basra "residents overwhelmingly reported a substantial improvement in their everyday lives" according to [The New York Times](#). "Government forces have now taken over Islamic militants' headquarters and halted the death squads and 'vice enforcers' who attacked women, Christians, musicians, alcohol sellers and anyone suspected of collaborating with Westerners", according to the report; however, when asked how long it would take for lawlessness to resume if the Iraqi army left, one resident replied, "one day". [225]

In late April roadside bombings continued to rise from a low in January of 114 to over 250, surpassing the May 2007 high.

Congressional testimony

Speaking before the U.S. Congress on April 8, 2008, General [David Petraeus](#) urged delaying troop withdrawals, saying, "I've repeatedly noted that we haven't turned any corners, we haven't seen any lights at the end of the tunnel," referencing the comments of then President Bush and former Vietnam-era General [William Westmoreland](#).^[227] When asked by the Senate if reasonable people could disagree on the way forward,

Petraeus said, "We fight for the right of people to have other opinions."^[228]

Upon questioning by then Senate committee chair [Joe Biden](#), Ambassador Crocker admitted that [Al-Qaeda](#) in Iraq was less important than the Al-Qaeda organization led by [Osama bin Laden](#) along the Afghan-Pakistani border.^[229] Lawmakers from both parties complained that U.S. taxpayers are carrying Iraq's burden as it earns billions of dollars in oil revenues.

Iraqi security forces rearm

Iraq became one of the top current purchasers of U.S. military equipment with their army trading its [AK-47](#) assault rifles for the U.S. [M-16](#) and M-4 rifles, among other equipment.^[230] This year alone, Iraq accounts for more than \$12.5 billion of the \$34 billion US weapon sales to foreign countries (not including the potential F-16 fighter planes.)^[231]

Iraq sought 36 F-16's, the most sophisticated weapons system Iraq has attempted to purchase. The Pentagon notified Congress that it had approved the sale of 24 American attack helicopters to Iraq, valued at as much as \$2.4 billion. Including the helicopters, Iraq announced plans to purchase at least \$10 billion in U.S. tanks and armored vehicles, transport planes and other battlefield equipment and services. Over the summer, the Defense Department announced that the Iraqi government wanted to order more than 400 armored vehicles and other equipment worth up to \$3 billion, and six C-130J transport planes, worth up to \$1.5 billion.^{[232][233]}

Status of forces agreement

Main article: U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement

The U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement was approved by the Iraqi government on December 4, 2008.^[234] It establishes that U.S. combat forces will withdraw from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009, and that all U.S. forces will be completely out of Iraq by December 31, 2011. The pact is subject to possible negotiations which could delay withdrawal and a referendum scheduled for mid-2009 in Iraq which may require all U.S. forces to completely leave by the middle of 2010.^{[235][236]} The pact requires criminal charges for holding prisoners over 24 hours, and requires a warrant for searches of homes and buildings that are not related to combat.^[237]

U.S. contractors working for U.S. forces will be subject to Iraqi criminal law, while contractors working for the State Department and other U.S. agencies may retain their immunity. If U.S. forces commit still undecided "major premeditated felonies" while off-duty and off-base, they will be subject to the still undecided procedures laid out by a joint U.S.-Iraq committee if the U.S. certifies the forces were off-duty.^{[238][239][237][240]}

Some Americans have discussed "loopholes" [241] and some Iraqis have said they believe parts of the pact remain a "mystery". [242] U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has predicted that after 2011 he would expect to see "perhaps several tens of thousands of American troops" as part of a residual force in Iraq. [243] Several groups of Iraqis protested the passing of the SOFA accord [244][245][246] as prolonging and legitimizing the occupation. Tens of thousands of Iraqis burned an effigy of George W. Bush in a central Baghdad square where U.S. troops five years previously organized a tearing down of a statue of Saddam Hussein. [129][242][247] Some Iraqis expressed skeptical optimism that the U.S. would completely end its presence by 2011. [248] On December 4, 2008, Iraq's presidential council approved the security pact. [234]

A representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani's expressed concern with the ratified version of the pact and noted that the government of Iraq has no authority to control the transfer of occupier forces into and out of Iraq, no control of shipments, and that the pact grants the occupiers immunity from prosecution in Iraqi courts. He said that Iraqi rule in the country is not complete while the occupiers are present, but that ultimately the Iraqi people would judge the pact in a referendum. [247] Thousands of Iraqi have gathered weekly after Friday prayers and shouted anti-US and anti-Israeli slogans protesting the security pact between Baghdad and Washington. A protester said that despite the approval of the Interim Security pact, the Iraqi people would break it in a referendum next year. [249]

2009: Coalition redeployment

Further information: [2009 in Iraq](#)

Transfer of Green Zone

On January 1, 2009, the United States handed control of the [Green Zone](#) and Saddam Hussein's presidential palace to the Iraqi government in a ceremonial move described by the country's prime minister as a restoration of Iraq's sovereignty. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said he would propose January 1 be declared national "Sovereignty Day". "This palace is the symbol of Iraqi sovereignty and by restoring it, a real message is directed to all Iraqi people that Iraqi sovereignty has returned to its natural status," al-Maliki said.

The U.S. military attributed a decline in reported civilians deaths to several factors including the U.S.-led "troop surge", the growth of U.S.-funded Awakening Councils, and Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's call for his militia to abide by a cease fire. [250]

Provincial elections

Main article: [Iraqi governorate elections, 2009](#)

On January 31, 2009, Iraq held provincial elections. [251] Provincial candidates and those close to them faced some political assassinations and attempted assassinations, and there was also some other violence related to the election. [252][253][254][255] Iraqi voter turnout failed to meet the original expectations which were set and was the lowest on record in Iraq, [256] but U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker characterized the turnout as "large". [257] Of

those who turned out to vote, some groups complained of disenfranchisement and fraud. [256][258][259] After the post-election curfew was lifted, some groups made threats about what would happen if they were unhappy with the results. [260]

Exit strategy announcement

On February 27, 2009, [United States President Barack Obama](#) gave a speech at [Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune](#) in the [U.S. state of North Carolina](#) announcing that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would end by August 31, 2010. A "transitional force" of up to 50,000 troops tasked with training the Iraqi Security Forces, conducting counterterrorism operations, and providing general support may remain until the end of 2011, the president added. Obama declared that this strategy for withdrawal was in line with the American goal of "a full transition to Iraqi responsibility" for the sovereign nation of Iraq. He congratulated the Iraqi people and government for their "proud resilience" in not "giving into the forces of disunion", but cautioned that Iraqis would have to remain vigilant against "those...who will insist that Iraq's differences cannot be reconciled without more killing" even after the U.S. drawdown in 2010 and withdrawal in 2011. [261]

The day before Obama's speech, [Prime Minister of Iraq Nuri al-Maliki](#) said at a press conference that the government of Iraq had "no worries" over the impending departure of U.S. forces and expressed confidence in the ability of the Iraqi Security Forces and police to maintain order without American military support. [262]

Sixth year anniversary protests

On April 9, 2009, the sixth anniversary of Baghdad's fall to coalition forces, tens of thousands of Iraqis thronged Baghdad to mark the sixth anniversary of the city's fall and to demand the immediate departure of coalition forces. The crowds of Iraqis stretched from the giant Sadr City slum in northeast Baghdad to the square around 5 km (3 miles) away, where protesters burned an effigy featuring the face of former U.S. President George W. Bush, who ordered the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, and also the face of Saddam. Shi'ites were brutally persecuted under Saddam's rule. [263] There were also Sunni Muslims in the crowd. Police said many Sunnis, including prominent leaders such as a founding sheikh from the [Sons of Iraq](#), took part. [264]

British troops end combat operations

On April 30, 2009, the [United Kingdom](#) formally ended combat operations. Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) characterized the operation in Iraq as a "success story" because of UK troops' efforts. Britain handed control of Basra to the United States Armed Forces. [265]

U.S. withdraw from urban areas and decrease in violence

The withdrawal of U.S. forces began at the end of June, with 38 bases to be handed over to Iraqi forces. On June 29, 2009, U.S. forces withdrew from Baghdad. On November 30, 2009, Iraqi [Interior Ministry](#) officials reported that the civilian death toll in Iraq fell to its lowest level in November since the 2003 invasion. [266]

Iraq awards oil contracts

On June 30 and December 11, 2009, the [Iraqi ministry of oil](#) awarded contracts to international oil companies for some of Iraq's many oil fields. The winning oil companies enter joint ventures with the Iraqi ministry of oil, and the

terms of the awarded contracts include extraction of oil for a fixed fee of circa \$1.40 per barrel.^{[267][268]} The fees will only be paid once a production threshold set by the Iraqi ministry of oil is reached. Oil fields contracted include the "super-giant" [Majnoon Field](#), [Halfaya Field](#), [West Qurna Field](#) and [Rumaila Field](#). The [East Baghdad Field](#), situated in part under [Sadr City](#), did not receive any bids and the Iraqi oil ministry is considering working the field itself. Oil minister Hussein al-Shahristani told Iraqi public television that the increasing oil production "would finance infrastructure projects across Iraq - schools, roads, airports, housing, hospitals". Iraq's oil deposits hold known reserves of 43 billion barrels of [crude](#), as well as large quantities of [natural gas](#).^[268]

Casualty estimates

Main article: [Casualties of the Iraq War](#)

See also: [Suicide bombings in Iraq since 2003](#) and [Foreign hostages in Iraq](#)

For coalition death totals see the infobox at the top right. See also [Casualties of the Iraq War](#), which has casualty numbers for coalition nations, contractors, non-Iraqi civilians, journalists, media helpers, aid workers, wounded, etc.. The main article also gives explanations for the wide variation in estimates and counts, and shows many ways in which undercounting occurs. Casualty figures, especially Iraqi ones, are highly disputed. This section gives a brief overview.

There have been several attempts by the media, coalition governments and others to estimate the Iraqi casualties. The table below summarizes some of these estimates.

Criticisms and costs

Further information: [Criticism of the Iraq War](#), [Opposition to the Iraq War](#), [Legitimacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq](#), [Legality of the Iraq War](#), [Views on the 2003 invasion of Iraq](#), [Protests against the Iraq War](#), American popular opinion on invasion of Iraq, Governments' positions pre-2003 invasion of Iraq, and 2003 invasion of Iraq media coverage

See also: [Iraq War misappropriations](#), [Habbush letter](#), and [The Way of the World: A Story of Truth and Hope in an Age of Extremism](#)

The U.S. [rationale for the Iraq War](#) has faced heavy criticism from an array of popular and official sources both inside and outside the United States, with many U.S. citizens finding many parallels with the [Vietnam War](#).^[270]

According to the [Center for Public Integrity](#), President Bush's administration made a total of 935 false statements between 2001 and 2003 about Iraq's alleged threat to the United States.^{[271][272]} Both proponents and [opponents](#)

of the invasion have also criticized the prosecution of the war effort along a number of other lines. Most significantly, critics have assailed the US and its allies for not devoting enough troops to the mission, not adequately planning for [post-invasion Iraq](#), and for permitting and perpetrating widespread human rights abuses. As the war has progressed, critics have also railed against the high human and financial costs.

The [court-martial](#) of [Ehren Watada](#), the first US officer to refuse to serve in Iraq, ended in a mistrial because the [Judge Advocate General's Corps](#) would not consider the question of whether orders could be illegal. A federal

district court judge ruled that Watada cannot face [double jeopardy](#) on three of his five charges, but abstained from ruling on whether the two remaining charges of [conduct unbecoming an officer](#) may still go forward. [273]

Many soldiers came to oppose the invasion, especially after the administration's claims that Iraq held WMD turned out to be entirely false. A group calling itself, Iraq Veterans against the War, quickly developed a membership of well over 1,000 soldiers and veterans. In January 2006, over 1,000 soldiers signed a petition, An Appeal for Redress, which was delivered to Congress asking for a "prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq." A February 2006 Zogby poll discovered that 72 percent of soldiers who served in Iraq felt that the U.S. should withdraw within one year. Several books chart the GI dissent, including Camilo Mejia's *The Road from Ar Ramandi* and Carl Mirra's *Soldiers and Citizens: An Oral History of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Battlefield to the Pentagon*

Another criticism of the initial intelligence leading up to the Iraq war comes from a former CIA officer who described the Office of Special Plans as a group of ideologues who were dangerous for US national security and a threat to world peace, and that the group lied and manipulated intelligence to further its agenda of removing President Hussein. [274] Subsequently, in 2008, the nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity has enumerated a total of 935 false statements made by George Bush and six other top members of his administration in what it termed a "carefully launched campaign of misinformation" during the two year period following 9-11, in order to rally support for the invasion of Iraq. [275][276]

The [financial cost of the war](#) has been more than £4.5 billion (\$9 billion) to the UK, [277] and over \$845 billion to the U.S., with the total cost to the U.S. economy estimated at \$3 trillion. [278]

Criticisms include:

[Legality of the invasion](#) [279][280]

[Human casualties](#)

Inadequate troop levels (a RAND study stated that 500,000 troops would be required for success) [281]

Insufficient post-invasion plans

Financial costs with approximately \$612 billion spent as of 4/09 the [CBO](#) has estimated the total cost of the war in Iraq to U.S. taxpayers will be around \$1.9 trillion. [282]

Adverse effect on US-led global "war on terror" [283][284]

Negative impact on [Israel](#) [285]

Negative impact on [Saudi Arabian](#) regime [286]

Endangerment and [ethnic cleansing](#) of religious and ethnic minorities [190][287][288][289][290]

Damage to US' traditional alliances and influence

Disruption of Iraqi [oil](#) production and related energy security concerns (the price of oil has quadrupled since 2002) ^{[291][292]}

After President Barack Obama was inaugurated in 2009 some anti-war protestors decided to stop protesting even though the war was still going on, some of them decided to stop because they felt they should give the new President time to establish his administration, and others stopped because they were convinced that the new President will end the war. ^[293]

A CNN report noted that the U.S. led interim government, the [Coalition Provisional Authority](#) lasting until 2004 in Iraq had lost \$8,800,000,000 in the [Development Fund for Iraq](#). An inspector general's report mentioned that "'Severe inefficiencies and poor management' by the Coalition Provisional Authority would leave no guarantee that the money was properly used," said Stuart W. Bowen Jr., director of the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. "The CPA did not establish or implement sufficient managerial, financial and contractual controls to ensure that funds were used in a transparent manner." ^[294]

Humanitarian crises

Main articles: [Humanitarian Crises of the Iraq War](#) and [Refugees of Iraq](#)

In December 2007, the Iraqi government reported that there were 5 million [orphans](#) in Iraq - nearly half of the country's children. ^{[297][298]} Iraq's health has deteriorated to a level not seen since the 1950s, said Joseph Chamie, former director of the U.N. Population Division and an Iraq specialist. "They were at the forefront", he said, referring to health care just before the 1991 Persian Gulf War. "Now they're looking more and more like a country in [sub-Saharan Africa](#)." ^[299] [Malnutrition](#) rates have risen from 19% before the US-led invasion to a national average of 28% four years later. ^[300] Some 60-70% of Iraqi children are suffering from psychological problems. ^[301] 68% of Iraqis have no access to safe drinking water. A [cholera outbreak](#) in northern Iraq is thought to be the result of poor water quality. ^[302] As many as half of Iraqi doctors have left the country since 2003. ^[303]

Human rights abuses

Main articles: [Human rights in post-invasion Iraq](#) and [Suicide bombings in Iraq since 2003](#)

Throughout the entire Iraq war there have been [human rights](#) abuses on all sides of the conflict.

Iraqi government

The use of torture by Iraqi security forces. ^[304]

Iraqi police from the Interior Ministry accused of forming Death Squads and committing numerous massacres and tortures of Sunni Arabs ^[305] and the [police collusion with militias in Iraq](#) have compounded the problems.

Coalition forces and private contractors

[Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse](#)

[Haditha killings](#) of 24 civilians (ongoing with some charges dropped)

[White phosphorus use in Iraq](#)

Gang-rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl and the murder of her family, in [Mahmoudiyah](#) ^[306]

The torture and killing of [prisoner of war](#), Iraqi Air Force commander, [Abed Hamed Mowhoush](#)

[Bombing and shooting of 42 civilians in Mukaradeeb](#) ^[307] (under investigation)

Controversy over whether disproportionate force was used, during the [assaults](#) by Coalition and (mostly Shia and Kurdish) Iraqi government forces on the Sunni insurgent stronghold of [Fallujah](#) in 2004.

Planting weapons on noncombatant, unarmed Iraqis by three US Marines after killing them. ^{[308][309]} According

to a report by [The Nation](#), other similar acts have been witnessed by US soldiers. ^[310] Members of [Iraq](#)

[Veterans Against the War](#) tell similar stories. ^[311]

Insurgent groups

Main article: [Iraq War insurgent attacks](#)

Further information: [Tactics of the Iraqi insurgency](#)

Killing over 12,000 Iraqis from January 2005 to June 2006, according to Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, giving the first official count for the victims of bombings, ambushes and other deadly attacks. ^[312] The insurgents have also conducted numerous [suicide attacks](#) on the Iraqi civilian population, mostly targeting the majority Shia community. ^{[313][314]} An October 2005 report from [Human Rights Watch](#) examines the range of civilian attacks and their purported justification. ^[315]

Attacks against civilians including children through bombing of market places and other locations reachable by car bombs.

Attacks on diplomats and diplomatic facilities including; the bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003 killing the top U.N. representative in Iraq and 21 other UN staff members; ^[316] beheading several

diplomats: two Algerian diplomatic envoys Ali Belaroussi and Azzedine Belkadi,^[317] Egyptian diplomatic envoy al-Sherif,^[318] and four Russian diplomats.^[319]

The February 2006 bombing of the al-Askari Mosque, destroying one of the holiest Shiite shrines, killing over 165 worshipers and igniting sectarian strife and reprisal killings.^[320]

The publicised killing of several contractors; Eugene Armstrong, [Jack Hensley](#), [Kenneth Bigley](#), Ivaylo Kepov and Georgi Lazov (Bulgarian truck drivers.)^[321] Other non-military personnel murdered include: translator [Kim Sun-il](#), [Shosei Koda](#), [Fabrizio Quattrocchi](#) (Italian), charity worker [Margaret Hassan](#), reconstruction engineer [Nick Berg](#), photographer Salvatore Santoro (Italian)^[322] and supply worker [Seif Adnan Kanaan](#) (Iraqi.) Four private armed contractors, Scott Helvenston, Jerko Zovko, Wesley Batalona and Michael Teague, were killed with grenades and small arms fire, their bodies dragged from their vehicles, beaten and set ablaze. Their burned corpses were then dragged through the streets before being hung over a bridge crossing the Euphrates.^[323]

Torture or killing of members of the New Iraqi Army,^[324] and assassination of civilians associated with the [Coalition Provisional Authority](#), such as [Fern Holland](#), or the [Iraqi Governing Council](#), such as [Aqila al-Hashimi](#) and [Ezzedine Salim](#), or other foreign civilians, such as those from Kenya.^[325]

Public opinion on the war

Main article: [Public opinion on the Iraq War](#)

International opinion

According to a January 2007 [BBC World Service](#) poll of more than 26,000 people in 25 countries, 73% of the global population disapproves of the US handling of the Iraq War.^[326] A September 2007 poll conducted by the BBC found that 2/3rds of the world's population believed the US should withdraw its forces from Iraq.^[327]

According to an April 2004 USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll, only a third of the Iraqi people believed that "the American-led occupation of their country is doing more good than harm, and a solid majority support an immediate military pullout even though they fear that could put them in greater danger."^[328] Majorities in the UK and

Canada believe the war in Iraq is "unjustified" and - in the UK - are critical of their government's support of US policies in Iraq.^[329] According to polls conducted by The Arab American Institute, four years after the invasion of Iraq, 83% of Egyptians had a negative view of the US role in Iraq; 68% of Saudi Arabians had a negative view; 96% of the Jordanian population had a negative view; 70% of the UAE and 76% of the [Lebanese](#) population also described their view as negative.^[330] The Pew Global Attitudes Project reports that in 2006 majorities in the [Netherlands](#), Germany, Jordan, France, Lebanon, China, Spain, [Indonesia](#), Turkey, [Pakistan](#), and [Morocco](#) believed the world was safer before the Iraq War and the toppling of Hussein. Pluralities in the US and India believe the world is safer without Hussein.^[331]

Iraqi opinion

The US government has long maintained its involvement there is with the support of the Iraqi people, but in 2005 when asked directly, 82–87% of the Iraqi populace was opposed to the US occupation and wanted US troops to leave. 47% of Iraqis supported attacking US troops.^[332] Another poll conducted on September 27, 2006, found that seven out of ten Iraqis want US-led forces to withdraw from Iraq within one year. Overall, 78% of those polled said they believed that the presence of US forces is "provoking more conflict than it's preventing." 53% of those polled believed the Iraqi government would be strengthened if US forces left Iraq (versus 23% who believed it would be weakened), and 71% wanted this to happen in 1 year or less. All of these positions were more prevalent amongst Sunni and Shia respondents than among Kurds. 61% of respondents said that they approve of attacks on US-led forces, although 94% still had an unfavorable opinion of al-Qaeda.^[333]

A March 7, 2007 survey of more than 2,000 Iraqis found that 78% of the population opposed the presence of Coalition forces in Iraq, that 69% believed the presence of U.S. forces is making things worse, and that 51% of the population considered attacks on coalition forces acceptable, up from 17% in 2004 and 35% in 2006. In addition:^[334]

64% described their family's economic situation as being somewhat or very bad, up from 30% in 2005.

88% described the availability of electricity as being either somewhat or very bad, up from 65% in 2004.

69% described the availability of clean water as somewhat or very bad, up from 48% in 2004.

88% described the availability of fuel for cooking and driving as being somewhat or very bad.

58% described reconstruction efforts in the area in which they live as either somewhat or very ineffective, and 9% described them as being totally nonexistent.

A 2007 survey for the first time asked ordinary Iraqis their view on the highly contentious draft oil law. According to the poll, 76 percent of Iraqis feel inadequately informed about the contents of the proposed law. Nonetheless, 63 percent responded that they would prefer Iraqi state-owned companies – and not foreign corporations – to develop Iraq's extensive oil fields.^[335]

Relation to the US Global War on Terrorism

Main article: Iraq War and U.S. Global War on Terror

Further information: Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda timeline, and Criticism of the War on Terrorism

Former President George W. Bush consistently referred to the Iraq war as "the central front in the War on Terror", and argued that if the US pulled out of Iraq, "terrorists will follow us here."^{[336][337][338]} While other proponents of the war have regularly echoed this assertion, as the conflict has dragged on, members of the US Congress, the US public, and even US troops have begun to question the connection between Iraq and the fight against anti-US terrorism. In particular, a consensus has developed among intelligence experts that the Iraq war has increased terrorism. Counterterrorism expert [Rohan Gunaratna](#) frequently refers to the invasion of Iraq as a "fatal mistake."^[339] London's conservative [International Institute for Strategic Studies](#) concluded in 2004 that the

occupation of Iraq had become "a potent global recruitment pretext" for [jihadists](#) and that the invasion "galvanised" al-Qaeda and "perversely inspired insurgent violence" there. ^[340] The US [National Intelligence Council](#) concluded in a January 2005 report that the war in Iraq had become a breeding ground for a new generation of terrorists; David B. Low, the national intelligence officer for transnational threats, indicated that the report concluded that the war in Iraq provided terrorists with "a training ground, a recruitment ground, the opportunity for enhancing technical skills... There is even, under the best scenario, over time, the likelihood that some of the jihadists who are not killed there will, in a sense, go home, wherever home is, and will therefore disperse to various other countries." The Council's chairman Robert L. Hutchings said, "At the moment, Iraq is a magnet for international terrorist activity." ^[341] And the 2006 [National Intelligence Estimate](#), which outlined the considered judgment of all 16 US intelligence agencies, held that "The Iraq conflict has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the [Muslim world](#) and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement." ^[342]

Iranian involvement

It has been claimed that Iran has provided training, weapons, money, and intelligence to Shiite insurgents in Iraq and up to 150 Iranian intelligence agents, plus members of the [Iranian Revolutionary Guard](#) are believed to be active in Iraq at any given time. ^[343] Members of the Iranian [Quds Force](#) and the [Iranian Revolutionary Guard](#) are thought to have trained members of the Qazali terror network in explosives technology and also provided the network with arms, munitions, and military advisors.

According to two unnamed U.S. officials, [the Pentagon](#) is examining the possibility that the [Karbala provincial headquarters raid](#), in which insurgents managed to infiltrate an American base, kill 5 U.S. soldiers, wound 3, and destroy three humvees before fleeing, was supported by Iranians. In a speech on 31 January 2007, Iraqi [Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki](#) stated that Iran was supporting attacks against Coalition forces in Iraq ^[344] and some

Iraqis suspect that the raid may have been perpetrated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps's Qods Force in retaliation for the detention of 5 Iranian officials by U.S. forces in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil on 11

January. ^{[345][346]} Many explosive devices, including improvised explosives (IEDs) and armor-piercing penetrators (EFPs), used by insurgents are claimed to be Iranian-made or designed.

In January 2008, [Multi-National Force – Iraq](#) (MNFI) initiated Task Force Troy to identify Iranian-made weapons. Their report was delivered in July 2008. Of 4,600 weapons caches discovered, only 98 contained at least one Iranian-made weapon with these representing less than one half percent of the total number of weapons recovered. No Iranian weapons were discovered in Karbala or Basra and of the 350 armor-piercing explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) found, none were of Iranian origin. Despite frequent claims that Iran is supplying weapons to insurgents, the MNFI report criticized official US statements on Iranian weapons, stating; "Iranian munitions found in Iraq were likely purchased on the open market." ^[347]

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There is a fundamental difference between relying on incorrect intelligence and deliberately painting a picture to the American people that you know is not fully accurate.

- Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV

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239. ^

Committees assigned to deal with U.S.-led combat operations and jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel are among those that have not met even as Iraq moves toward sovereignty, U.S. Army Gen. Ray Odierno told reporters.

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