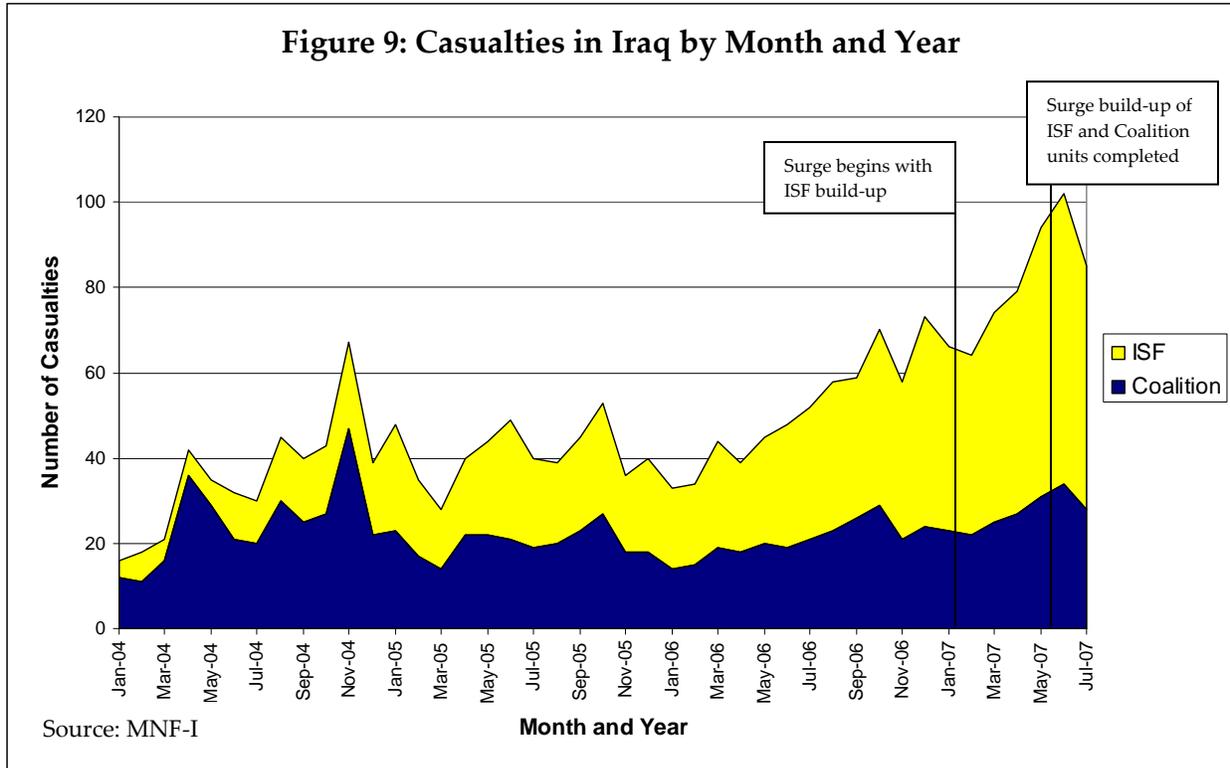


predicted to Commissioners that the Army would be 60 percent capable of independently protecting Iraq from external threats by 2012 and entirely independent in this regard by 2018. He also insisted that the Iraqi Army will be able to accept more responsibility for direct combat against internal threats in 2008.



The Iraqi Special Forces are a success story. The most capable units within the Iraqi military, they have trained extensively with U.S. Special Forces and developed a strong set of junior officers and a noncommissioned officer corps. Special operations involving both Coalition and Iraqi Special Forces are led by Iraqi commanders; their brigade provides 70 percent of the forces for these operations. Nevertheless, the Iraqi Special Operations Forces still rely extensively on Coalition forces for fire and counterfire, close air support, fixed-wing and rotary wing mobility, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

The Iraqi Air Force and Navy are still too underdeveloped to contribute significantly to maintaining Iraq's territorial sovereignty. The Iraqi Air Force is organized for counterinsurgency operations and is flying operational missions over Baghdad and key critical infrastructure sites to provide Iraqi and Coalition forces with actionable intelligence, but these contributions represent a fraction of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability needed to combat the threats facing Iraq. Despite plans to triple its personnel by the end of 2007, the Air Force remains very small and is unlikely to be able to control Iraqi air space without outside assistance before 2010. Its ability to conduct aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions is improving, however, and with the planned acquisition of additional C-130 cargo aircraft for transport, UH-1H helicopters for mobility and medical evacuation, and Russian Mi-17 helicopters for counterinsurgency operations, the Iraqi Air Force will grow more capable over time.

Like the Air Force, the Iraqi Navy is very small and faces significant challenges. Most of Iraq's oil for export is pumped through two offshore oil terminals located just off Iraq's very small coastline in Basra province, a region of Iraq plagued by Jaysh al-Mahdi presence. While the Iraqi Navy's area of responsibility is of strategic importance given the volume of oil for export that is pumped from these oil terminals, the "fleet" is extremely small; some of its vessels are not seaworthy and are useful only as a source of spare parts. The Navy is in the process of acquiring a range of newer vessels that will provide it some capability to patrol continuously, protect the offshore terminals, and sustain maritime operations, but these capabilities will not be fully operational for at least another two to three years.³⁷

Deny Terrorists Safe Haven

To deny international terrorists a safe haven in Iraq, Iraqi Security Forces need to be able to project force on behalf of the central government throughout the country and must have access to sufficient and actionable intelligence to ensure strategic situational awareness, secure the nation's borders, and conduct significant counterterrorism operations. Cooperation between Iraq's armed forces and its civil security forces—that is, the National Police, Iraqi Police Service, and the Department of Border Enforcement—is critical to achieving these missions.

***Finding:** Although the Iraqi Army and Special Forces have demonstrated significant progress in counterterrorism capabilities at the operational level, the Iraqi Police Service and National Police have many challenges to overcome and cannot yet effectively contribute to denying terrorists safe haven in Iraq. The border security forces are assessed as being ineffective.³⁸*

Iraq's central government in Baghdad does not have national reach in terms of security, nor does it have a monopoly on the use of force—a defining characteristic of a functioning nation-state. Militias continue to play a prominent role and are seen by American and Iraqi officials alike as posing almost as significant a threat to Iraqi stability and security as al Qaeda in Iraq. Despite the heavy concentration of forces brought to the capital as part of Fardh al-Qanoon, the central government does not yet fully control security in Baghdad or its surrounding "ring cities."

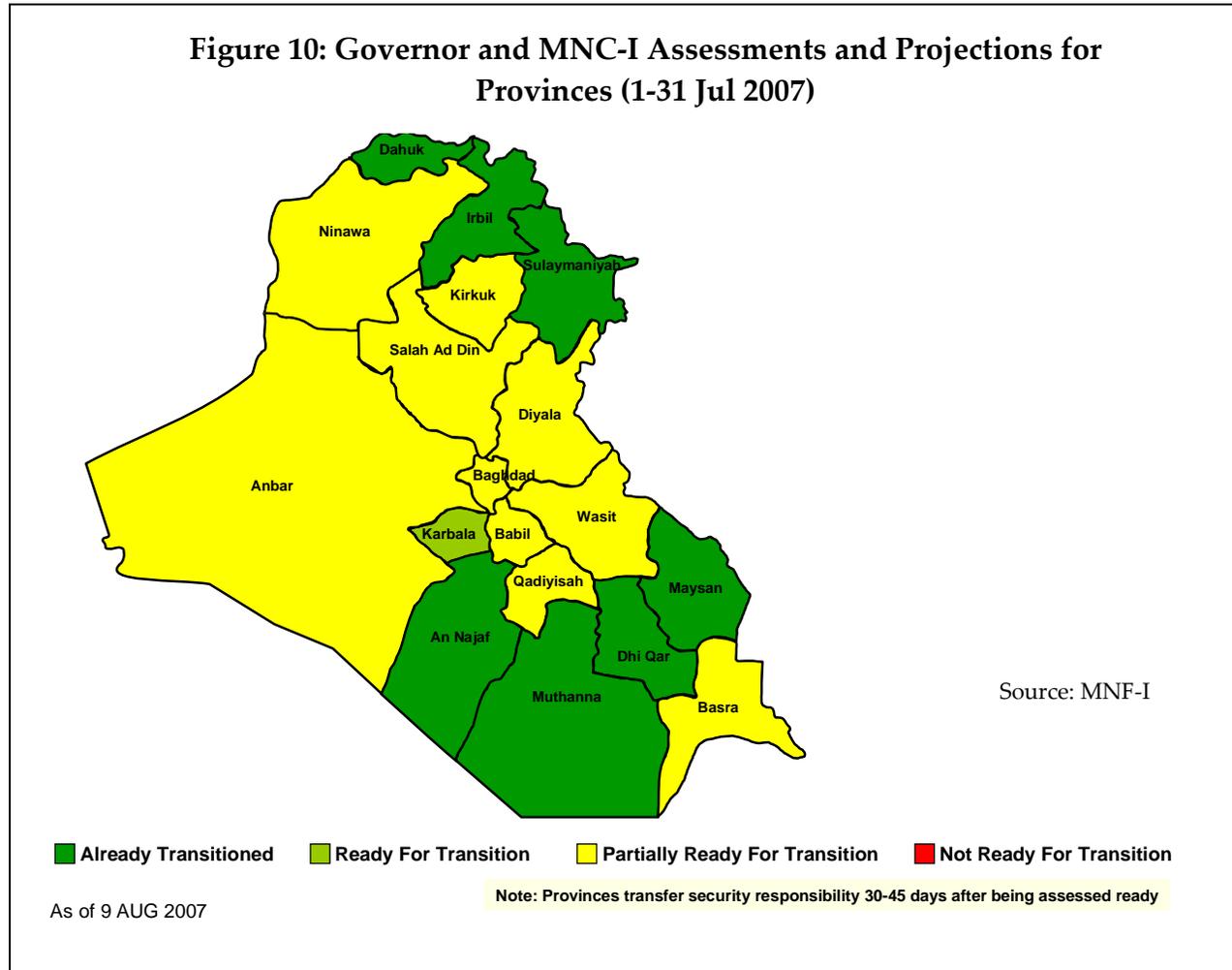
The central government also lacks a clear view of activities in the provinces, although this absence of information does not necessarily mean that terrorists are establishing safe havens within them. Seven of Iraq's 18 provinces are now under "provincial Iraqi control" (PIC), meaning that in theory the Iraqi central government and provincial authorities are largely responsible for security in those areas (see Figure 10). Three of these seven provinces are in the Kurdish region of Iraq, which

³⁷ The Commission surveyed the Coalition's senior field commanders to obtain their on-the-ground assessment of the status and progress of the Iraqi Security Forces. Asked to rate the progress that has been made by the MOD forces toward attaining the capabilities required to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq, 6 of the 8 rated the progress "satisfactory," and 2 "unsatisfactory." None rated progress as "excellent." With regard to MOI forces, 2 rated progress as satisfactory, 2 unsatisfactory, and none excellent.

³⁸ The Commission's survey of the Coalition's senior field commanders regarding the ISF asked to rate the progress made by the MOD forces toward attaining the capabilities required to deny international terrorists safe haven, 7 rated the progress as satisfactory, 1 as unsatisfactory, and 1 as excellent; with regard to MOI forces, 4 rated progress as satisfactory, none unsatisfactory, and none excellent.

essentially has a separate regional government and its own security forces. The remaining four provinces under provincial Iraqi control are in the southern part of Iraq. Despite the transition to this status, security in the four southern provinces is deteriorating because of a rise in intra-Shi'a violence. Increasing violence is particularly notable in Basra, Diyala, and Dhi Qar.³⁹ Unlike Diyala and Dhi Qar, Basra has not yet been transferred to provincial Iraqi control, but this transfer is expected to occur in the near future.

Figure 10: Governor and MNC-I Assessments and Projections for Provinces (1-31 Jul 2007)



Although the central government cannot yet control security inside the country, Iraq's ground forces, particularly its Special Forces, have demonstrated strong counterterrorism capability. Iraqi Special Forces, which have conducted many counterterrorism operations with and without Coalition forces, have achieved significant operational success in 2007.

³⁹ See Anthony H. Cordesman, "Success or Failure? Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy: Developments through June 2007," CSIS working draft, updated July 9, 2007; available at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070709_iraqinsurgupdate.pdf.

Concurrent with improvements to the counterterrorism capabilities of the Iraqi Army and Special Forces has been the somewhat unexpected alliance of local tribes in Anbar province with Coalition and Iraqi forces. After meeting with American and Iraqi leaders in Anbar, the Commission assesses that progress in Anbar against al Qaeda in Iraq is both real and encouraging. “Provincial security forces”—local police, vetted by the tribal sheikhs, who will eventually go through formal police training—are helping to drive terrorists out of western Iraq and ensure that it is no longer a safe haven for al Qaeda in Iraq. It is not yet clear whether these new security arrangements can be exported successfully to other parts of Iraq, though there are promising signs that other provinces are experiencing a similar rejection of al Qaeda. Whether confined to Anbar province or more widely established, these alliances will have to be managed very carefully in order for them to contribute to Iraq’s long-term security.

In areas where local tribes have allied themselves with Coalition and Iraqi security forces, tips against al Qaeda in Iraq and apprehensions of suspected al Qaeda in Iraq members or militiamen have increased dramatically. Coalition and ISF personnel are finding caches of weapons and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) more frequently, and the number of murders and other violent attacks is going down. Local populations and leaders in Anbar province will no longer tolerate al Qaeda in Iraq’s violent attacks or attempts to inflict religious law on their more secular societies, and this rejection of the group has been a boon to Coalition forces. It is not clear whether these tribal alliances can always be trusted or will persist once al Qaeda in Iraq is largely driven from the province.⁴⁰

To effectively eliminate terrorist activity inside Iraq, strong cooperation between the military forces and the police forces in Iraq will need to be institutionalized. Thus far the police are at a lower level of development. Most National Police units are not yet sufficiently operationally effective, and the organization as a whole is viewed as highly sectarian, given its almost exclusively Shi’a composition and its history of involvement in sectarian activities. Although Iraqi police working closely with Coalition forces have been able to establish a degree of presence in their respective communities, in many areas of Iraq, members of the Iraqi Police Service rarely venture outside their stations. The very limited existing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities of the Iraqi Police Service police leave them unable to contribute substantially to counterterrorism operations. Perhaps of greatest concern is that in many areas the Iraqi Police Service has been infiltrated by insurgents and militias.

Many of the shortcomings that prevent the Iraqi armed forces and civil security forces from independently maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq are also weaknesses that prevent them from independently ensuring that Iraq does not become a safe haven for international terrorists. Although the Iraqi armed forces have made progress in developing greater combat proficiency, they lack the combat support and combat support services outlined previously.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Sudarsan Raghavan, “In Iraq, a Perilous Alliance with Former Enemies,” *Washington Post*, August 4, 2007.

⁴¹ Anthony Cordesman, *Iraqi Force Development and the Challenge of Civil War*, August 8, 2007, pp. 14–15, p. 335; Multi-see also National Security Transition Command-Iraq, “In Stride Assessment of the Iraqi Security Forces for the FY08 ISFF Budget Review, 30 May 2007,” pp. 2, 10 (hereafter cited as “In-Stride Assessment”).

Across the entire ISF, Iraqi supply chain management, maintenance, and logistics systems are substandard. Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq is working closely with the Ministry of Defense to develop support and sustainment systems at the strategic and operational levels, and the Military Transition Teams reporting to Multi-National Corps–Iraq are working with tactical Iraqi units in the field to improve these capabilities, but the Commission foresees that the Iraqi military will rely on Coalition forces for at least another two to three years.

In a similar vein, Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq is working closely with the Ministry of Interior to develop support and sustainment systems for Iraq’s police and border forces; but because the MOI is not as well developed as the MOD, this process will likely take more time.

Bring Security to the Provinces

In order to bring better security to Iraq’s 18 provinces in the next 12 to 18 months, the Iraqi Security Forces will need to be able to better protect Iraqi citizens from ethnic, religious, terrorist, and insurgent-based violence; protect vital public and private infrastructure and transportation arteries; and project credible, effective, and sustainable military and police power throughout the entire country.

***Finding:** The ability of the Iraqi Security Forces to bring greater security to Iraq’s provinces varies by region and by organization within the ISF owing to many factors, including political leadership, security environment, sectarianism, and available resources.*

While security in some parts of Iraq appears to be increasing, the country continues to be plagued by internal violence. Security gains overall have different attributes depending on the threat in the region. Relatively homogenous areas such as Anbar and the Kurdish provinces seem to be moving rapidly toward establishing provincial security by bringing together tribal leaders, Coalition forces, and Iraqi Security Forces. These developments are encouraging, but their durability is unknown and they are viewed with extreme skepticism by the predominantly Shi’a central government.

The three Kurdish provinces under Iraqi control are relatively secure, and the Iraqi Security Forces in those provinces are quite capable. There are three Iraqi Army brigades in the Kurdish region and a range of police and civil security forces, including the Asayesh, the Peshmerga, the Zeravani, and the Iraqi Police Service.⁴² The Kurdish police were by far the most capable police the Commission observed during its visits to Iraq.

While some areas in Iraq seem to be stabilizing, ethnically or religiously mixed areas such as Baghdad and its ring cities continue to experience violence and intense sectarian activity. As noted above, even some of Iraq’s most homogeneous Shi’a areas in the southern part of the country are seeing rising levels of intra-Shi’a militia violence.

⁴² D. J. Elliott, “Brigade Order of Battle—Iraq, 31 July 2007,” *The Fourth Rail: History, Politics, and the War on Terror*, <http://billroggio.com/multimedia/IraqBdeOOB4.php>.

The shift in the past year toward a greater focus on local recruiting for the Iraqi Security Forces has contributed to the ability of some ISF organizations to provide heightened security in the provinces. The Army and the Iraqi Police Service are most effective in areas where they reflect the ethnic and sectarian composition of the public they are responsible for protecting. Though it is important for the Iraqi Security Forces at the national level to be ethnically and religiously diverse and broadly representative of Iraq's national composition, there is value in using forces that resemble local populations. In areas like western Iraq, the police force is largely Sunni, reflecting the local makeup. The "neighborhood watches" or "provincial security forces" that local sheikhs have organized in partnership with Coalition forces are representative of this kind of successful localized provision of security. In the Kurdish provinces, security forces are largely composed of Kurds. In the Shi'a south, the Iraqi Army and police are almost exclusively Shi'a.⁴³ Over time, if security and stability can be more broadly established in Iraq, the goal should be to field more ethnically and religiously mixed security forces—particularly in the Iraqi Army, which is intended to deploy nationally.

The Iraqi National Police, a force that reports to the Ministry of Interior, illustrates the peril of attempting to provide security with forces that are not representative of the population. There are nine brigades of National Police, and more than 85 percent of the force is Shi'a. Its members have been implicated in sectarian activities, including death squads and covert prisoner torture. When deployed to exclusively Shi'a areas, the National Police has been accepted by local communities, and its units have helped provide security under Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. At the same time, the National Police is widely rejected by Sunni communities, and efforts to recruit more Sunnis into the force have failed. Despite efforts to transform and retrain the National Police by October 2007, the organization is mistrusted by much of Iraqi society and some fear it could become a new Republican Guard.

***Finding:** The "clear, hold, build" strategy being implemented by Iraqi Security Forces is on the right track and shows potential, but neither the Iraqi armed forces nor the police forces can execute these types of operations independently.*

Reflecting the Coalition's much stronger grasp of counterinsurgency operations, the "clear, hold, build" strategy launched in March 2006 appears to be generating results in enhancing security in the provinces. The Iraqi Army's ability to conduct "clearing" operations has improved significantly; units such as the 2nd Iraqi Army Division based in Ninewa province are conducting effective intelligence and counterinsurgency operations that seem to be noticeably reducing violence levels. New cooperative relationships with local forces in Anbar and Diyala provinces exemplify how local Iraqi forces are able to "hold" Iraqi territory after it has been cleared by Coalition and Iraqi Army troops.

The "surge" of Coalition forces has made the presence of the Coalition and ISF much more visible in cities and neighborhoods all over Iraq. The morale of ISF units paired with Coalition forces appears relatively high, and trainers all over Iraq report that the ISF, particularly the Iraqi Army, seem to have the will to fight. An ISF casualty rate three times that of Coalition forces would seem to

⁴³ The Iraqi Army as a whole is 75–80 percent Shi'a. Shi'a predominate in 6 of the existing 11 battalions, but Iraqi Army units in the northern regions are 50 percent Kurdish, and a small number of battalions are almost 90 percent Sunni.

reflect this determination, albeit also the reality that neither the Iraqi Army nor the Iraqi Police Service are adequately armed or protected against the threats that they face.⁴⁴ The Joint Security Stations established in Baghdad partner Coalition forces with the Iraqi Army, National Police, and Iraqi Police Service, and they appear to be reducing levels of violence in their immediate areas.⁴⁵ The Joint Security Stations also are increasing the level of cooperation between local Iraqis, the ISF, and Coalition forces, as well as providing opportunities for in-depth mentoring and advising by Coalition forces.⁴⁶

End Sectarian Violence

The ability of the Iraqi Security Forces to end sectarian violence in Iraq and contribute to setting the conditions for national reconciliation is limited in the absence of a strong central government and an active political reconciliation process. From a military perspective, to help end sectarian violence, the Iraqi Security Forces should represent the diversity of Iraq's population at the national level and not be a participant—actual or perceived—in sectarian violence.

***Finding:** The Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police Service have the potential to help reduce sectarian violence, but ultimately the ISF will reflect the society from which they are drawn. Political reconciliation is the key to ending sectarian violence in Iraq.*

Sectarian militias are a fact of life in Iraq. They may pose as much danger as al Qaeda in Iraq and may be an even greater threat to Iraq's long-term stability. Particularly in Baghdad and the southern provinces of Iraq, militias terrorize the population and continue to drive Iraqis out of the country.

At the ministerial level, while the Ministry of Defense has made considerable strides in developing its ability to plan, program, and budget for the Iraqi armed forces and to recruit and retain high-quality, vetted forces, the Ministry of Interior is not administratively effective and may be fueling sectarian tensions. It leans heavily toward protecting Shi'a interests, as evidenced by its recent decision to reject a religiously balanced list of new police for the city of Tal Afar in Ninewa province in favor of assigning 300 Shi'a policemen.⁴⁷ Sectarian tensions are so high that a number of MOI officials having been assassinated on their way to and from their offices, and as a result many MOI officials live permanently in the ministry.

⁴⁴ In most meetings with Americans working with the ISF and Iraqi leaders of the ISF, the Commission heard that the ISF is not adequately armed against the threat, nor do they have sufficient armor protection. See also "In-Stride Assessment," p. 11.

⁴⁵ For example, there was a 26 percent decline in the number of murders and executions in Baghdad between the month of February and March, and a 60 percent reduction during the last week of March and the first week of April. See Melinda L. Larson, "Baghdad Security Plan Seeing Many Successes," American Forces Press Service, April 8, 2007.

⁴⁶ In the Commission's survey of the Coalition's senior field commanders regarding the ISF, among those asked to rate the progress made by the MOD forces toward attaining the capabilities required to bring greater security to the provinces in the respondent's area of operations 7 rated the progress as satisfactory, none as unsatisfactory, and none as excellent. With regard to MOI forces, four rated progress as satisfactory, none as unsatisfactory and none as excellent.

⁴⁷ Meeting with Multinational Division–North officials, July 2007.

The Iraqi Army, while not free of sectarianism, is in fact increasingly representative of the makeup of Iraqi society. About 75–80 percent of Iraqi Army soldiers are Shi'a, and 2 of the 11 divisions are 50 percent Kurdish. Sunnis are the least represented group within the Iraqi Army. Encouragingly, the Iraqi Army's leadership is relatively balanced: of the 11 divisions currently in operation, 3 are led by Kurdish commanders, 4 by Shi'a commanders, and 4 by Sunni commanders. After extensive interaction with Iraqi Army units, Coalition forces assess the majority of Iraqi Army units as operationally reliable and free from blatant sectarianism.

As noted above, the members of the National Police—in contrast to the Iraqi Army—are widely seen as sectarian and are not trusted by most Iraqis. Despite Coalition efforts to retrain the National Police and emphasize human rights and the rule of law, it is not clear that this element of the Iraqi Security Forces, in its current form, can contribute to Iraqi security and stability in a meaningful way.

Local recruiting for the ISF, at least in the short term, is critical in many parts of Iraq where, as already mentioned, developing security forces that reflect local populations will help reduce sectarianism and bring greater security to Iraq's provinces. Ethnically and religiously mixed areas such as Baghdad, the central provinces in Iraq, and areas around Kirkuk and Mosul are more challenging, because they do not lend themselves to this relatively simple model. Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces are already working together, neighborhood by neighborhood, to establish security in mixed areas. As a result of the robust and intense partnerships established under the leadership of General David Petraeus, Coalition forces today are already functioning as brakes on sectarian activity by the ISF. In mixed locations, Coalition forces may be the guarantors of security until sufficient stability can be achieved, but the Coalition cannot serve indefinitely in this capacity.

If recruited in a balanced fashion, vetted appropriately, and properly trained, the Iraqi Security Forces have the potential to reduce sectarian violence. At the same time, because they are drawn from the Iraqi population, the ISF will represent the society from which they come. If Iraq's national government exhibits sectarian behavior and if sectarianism is rampant in Iraqi society at large, it is unlikely that the Iraqi Security Forces will be immune to the same dynamics, regardless of their military readiness.

Since the beginning of Fardh al-Qanoon in February 2007, the Coalition and the Iraqi Security Forces have managed to create some level of security and some breathing space for Iraqi politicians. If the Coalition continues to provide key enabling support and training to the ISF over the next few years, with the expected increases in security that such support will likely bring, a more durable security environment will continue to develop and perhaps broaden. The reverse is certainly true should the government be unable to find the required political solution.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In the Commission's survey of the Coalition's senior field commanders regarding the ISF, among those asked to rate the progress made by the MOD forces toward ending sectarian violence and achieving national reconciliation, 6 rated the progress as satisfactory, 2 as unsatisfactory, and none as excellent. With regard to MOI forces, four rated progress as unsatisfactory, none as satisfactory, and none as excellent.

Conclusion: The Iraqi armed forces—Army, Special Forces, Navy, and Air Force—are increasingly effective and are capable of assuming greater responsibility for the internal security of Iraq; and the Iraqi police are improving, but not at a rate sufficient to meet their essential security responsibilities. The Iraqi Security Forces will continue to rely on the Coalition to provide key enablers such as combat support (aviation support, intelligence, and communications), combat service support (logistics, supply chain management, and maintenance), and training. The Commission assesses that in the next 12 to 18 months there will be continued improvement in their readiness and capability. Evidence indicates that the ISF will not be able to progress enough in the near term to secure Iraqi borders against conventional military and external threats.

CHAPTER 3: THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

The Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD) is a relatively new organization, coping with the challenges of managing its own development while supporting the current combat operations of the Iraqi armed forces. The MOD is strengthening its administrative capacity in several areas—notably in budget development, strategic and operational planning, and personnel management. It has a vision and strategic plan for Iraq’s armed forces and is beginning to implement that vision. It has put functioning systems in place to recruit soldiers, sailors, and airmen; has developed an adequate training base in cooperation with the Coalition; and is working to improve its ability to acquire the systems its armed forces need to accomplish their missions effectively. At the same time, the ministry still struggles to ensure that its armed forces are combat ready. Iraqi commanders today rely on sometimes substantial Coalition assistance to overcome the deficiencies caused by shortfalls in budget execution, contracting, intelligence, and logistics within the MOD.

Overview of the Ministry of Defense

Under Saddam Hussein, the Ministry of Defense was controlled directly by the regime and staffed only by trusted military commanders. The Ba’athist MOD’s primary mission was to protect Saddam and his immediate circle—not the Iraqi people. At the outset of the 2003 invasion, the Coalition planned to de-Ba’athify and then reform the MOD. After discovering firsthand the MOD’s deep roots in the previous regime, the Coalition Provisional Authority chose to dismantle the MOD entirely at the same time that it disbanded the Iraqi Army and other military institutions, under CPA Order Number 2.⁴⁹

Today, the MOD is led by Minister of Defense Lieutenant General (Ret.) Abdul Qadir Mohammed Jassim Obeidi, a Sunni career military officer and political independent.⁵⁰ The ministry comprises a Joint Headquarters, the Iraqi Ground Forces Command (which commands the Army), the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, and the Iraqi Army, Navy (including Marines), and Air Force.⁵¹ The ministry’s core mission and functions are organizing, training, equipping, sustaining, and employing the Iraqi Joint Forces in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution, government direction, and the law.⁵²

Coalition assistance to the Ministry of Defense is provided largely through the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) and the two national-level transition teams assigned to the MOD. The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team advises both the MOD and the Joint Headquarters on manning, training, equipping, basing, and sustainment for ISF units throughout Iraq as they work toward operational readiness. The Ministry of Defense Transition Team (MOD-TT) advises civilian leadership at the MOD and is composed of a team of about 50 U.S. civilian

⁴⁹ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 2, May 23, 2003.

⁵⁰ Most senior staff in the MOD are retired military officers, some of whom still wear their uniforms. The large numbers of retired military officers may be fueling resistance to greater civilian control within the MOD.

⁵¹ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, June 2007, p. 37.

⁵² All background information comes from MOD-TT/JHQ-TT/CMATT overview briefings received by the Commission in Iraq in July 2007.

advisors, 12 civilian advisors from other Coalition countries, and six U.S. military personnel, led by a Senior Executive Service–level U.K. civil servant. Most of the U.S. civilian advisors are contractors from private companies; as of July 2007, only two were U.S. civil servants. The Joint Headquarters Transition Team is led by an Australian general officer and a staff of 50 Coalition military personnel and contractors. All three organizations—the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, the MOD Transition Team, and the Joint Headquarters Transition Team—report to Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq.

The Coalition transition teams working with the Iraqi MOD have separate but related missions, each with specific challenges. The MOD Transition Team is charged both with mentoring the Iraqi MOD civilian leadership as it carries out the ministry’s mission and functions and with helping the ministry build its institutional capacity. The MOD Transition Team is also working to build a professional core of civil servants within the MOD. The Joint Headquarters Transition Team supports the Iraqi Joint Headquarters in its efforts to build and implement a command and control capability to train, sustain, and develop the Iraqi Joint Force’s ability to address threats as directed by the Government of Iraq. The Joint Headquarters is based on a NATO standard staffing model.

During its assessment, the Commission held numerous meetings with Coalition advisors and Iraqi MOD officials, including two with the Iraqi Minister of Defense. The Commission found that the MOD has made significant strides since 2004 and is one of the more effective ministries in the Government of Iraq. As mentioned, the MOD still faces challenges in budgeting functions, contracting, personnel, intelligence, command and control, and logistics.⁵³

Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq
Definition of Success

Success is:

If they can recruit themselves, train themselves, sustain themselves, equip themselves, pay themselves, trust each other and acquire their future force requirements, then they are truly mission ready.

Budgeting

***Finding:** Inefficiencies and overcentralization within the Ministry of Defense and its inability to fully execute its budget impede the combat readiness and capabilities of the Iraqi armed forces.*

The MOD has a functioning financial management system, complete with budgets that are tied to a requirements process at broad levels. MOD officials characterized their budget as having three primary dimensions: activating the armed forces and deepening their capabilities,

⁵³ In a survey conducted of senior Coalition commanders in Iraq, the majority told the Commission that progress being made by the MOD in the essential combat functions of command and control, intelligence, mobility, logistics, and fire support is unsatisfactory. Logistics is the greatest near term priority.

modernizing the ground forces, and continuing expansion in manning levels. The Joint Headquarters commander drives the process to determine budgetary priorities by soliciting inputs from the four services—Iraqi Army and Special Forces, Iraqi Air Force, and the Iraqi Navy—as well as from functional commanders such as those directing logistics and communications.

The ability to build a budget is an important first step, but it may be the least complex element of a financial management system; it is not the same as the ability to execute the budget, a task that the MOD finds far more problematic. As of November 2006, MOD had spent 76 percent of its calendar year budget for salaries, 25 percent of its budget for goods and services, 1 percent of its budget for capital goods and projects, but only 32 percent of its overall budget of \$3.4 billion.⁵⁴ The MOD's ability to execute its budget may be improving; when the Commission met with ministry officials in July 2007, they stated that they had already expended 46 percent of their calendar year budget for 2007.

The Iraqis have a complex internal control system that divides the entire budgeting process between multiple ministries. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) controls all funds and there are serious bureaucratic difficulties in securing the release of moneys. MOD officials shared their frustrations over this situation with the Commission, noting that Ministry of Finance control over their funding makes it difficult, if not impossible, to increase their budget.

Even when the MOD builds a budget and secures the release of funds from the Ministry of Finance, its ability to execute that budget is hindered by insufficient delegation of authority in the MOD to disburse money. The Minister of Defense is allowed to give partial expenditure authority to some staff, but overall the Commission found that budget execution remains burdensome. The specter of corruption has added another layer of internal controls to an already cumbersome budgeting and expenditure process (and as discussed in the next section, MOD's use of the Foreign Military Sales system to thwart corruption has often compounded its difficulties).

The MOD Transition Team should remain engaged and work closely with MOD officials on the crucial issue of budget execution. Continued mentoring is of particular importance, as many of the financial and administrative systems being put in place by Coalition advisors are new to their Iraqi MOD counterparts; grasping them will require significant time and training. The new financial systems may also be an example of the Coalition tendency to focus on solutions that mirror Western methods rather than on developing approaches that are more consistent with Iraqi norms, standards, and experience. Addressing the larger issue of cultural resistance to delegation of authority is more difficult but may be more critical to ensuring that the MOD can execute its budgets consistently. Changing this aspect of the MOD's corporate culture will require institutional changes at the highest levels of ministerial leadership, together with a commitment to prioritize budget execution at the same level as budget development.

⁵⁴ House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 110th Cong., 1st sess., *Stand Up and be Counted*, July 2007, p. 105.

Contracting

Finding: The ability to contract efficiently is important to the MOD's mission to sustain the Iraqi armed forces. The MOD currently lacks effective processes to execute contracting requirements.

In order to recruit, retain, train, operate, and sustain an authorized military force of more than 195,000,⁵⁵ the MOD must be able to contract for a wide range of goods and services. This vital capability continues to be a major problem for both organizational and cultural reasons. During the 30 years of Saddam Hussein's rule, Iraqi bureaucrats learned that mistakes were punished with a severity that curbed any impulse toward initiative. This ingrained fear, coupled with a cultural bias toward centralized control at senior levels, led to an onerous process for awarding MOD contracts. For example, a minimum of three bids are required for any contract above 25 million dinars (about \$20,000). MOD officials told the Commission that if fewer than three bids are received, the MOD must reissue the request for proposal. In a similar vein, the Minister of Finance apparently insists on personally reviewing all contracts over \$50,000.

Because of these extensive controls and limitations, the Iraqi procurement process was accomplishing little. It also was seriously distorted by corruption. To correct both problems, U.S. advisors persuaded the Iraqi government to utilize the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system, an elaborate arrangement developed over the past 40 years to coordinate the sales of military hardware and services to foreign governments. The United States government acts as the integrating office for a relatively small commission.

The Foreign Military Sales system is free of corruption, but it is not speedy under even the best of circumstances—and in this specific instance, its functioning has been weak and frankly embarrassing. The Commission was told by Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq that of \$1.7 billion in sales in 2006, only \$300 million of the services and equipment had been received by the Iraqis as of July 2007. They have deposited another \$600 million for the Ministry of Defense in 2007, but no orders have been placed pending delivery of 2006 orders. Moreover, it appears that the New Equipment Training (NET) bought and paid for through Foreign Military Sales did not enable the Iraqis to actually learn to maintain the equipment they had received. When confronted with this record, senior U.S. commanders in Iraq lamented that the performance of the Foreign Military Sales system is “a national embarrassment.” The Coalition talked the Iraqi government into using the system to avoid corruption and ensure delivery of critical goods and services, yet the United States is not delivering on the commitments it made. This failure is hurting the United States as sorely as the Iraqis. The Coalition depends on the improved capabilities of Iraqi forces to replace Coalition troops. U.S. failure to make the foreign military system function is directly hindering plans to transfer warfighting responsibilities to the Iraqis. The U.S. Secretary of Defense should appoint a single senior official responsible for ensuring timely and efficient processing of Iraqi material and support contracts through the Foreign Military Sales system on an expedited basis.

MOD officials expressed frustrations about contracting processes at the MOD and also acknowledged that although the Foreign Military Sales system is the best option at present, the

⁵⁵ Figure from MNSTC-I overview briefing received in Baghdad, July 2007.

Iraqis must develop their own system.⁵⁶ The contracting issue is a long-term problem that requires more than a near-term work-around. Coalition personnel consistently noted to the Commission that Iraqis are more likely to address important issues when they are spending Iraqi government money. If this is true, the current practice of financially supplementing Iraqi operations may be enabling the Iraqis to avoid making needed changes to their administrative systems and processes: in this case, to their contracting system.

There also are indications that the Iraqi MOD may be improving its ability to contract effectively. In June 2007, the MOD Joint Contracting Command awarded \$64.2 million in contracts, of which more than 70 percent—for items such as batteries, uniforms, undergarments, boots, and armored buses—were awarded to Iraqi-owned companies. This contracting effort is extremely important, as it demonstrates that there is an emerging capability within Iraq to provide material in support of ISF requirements.

Personnel

Finding: The MOD consistently compensates the members of the Iraqi military, but it has difficulty accounting for personnel.

In general, the MOD is able to make payroll for its growing forces—despite relying on methods that are out of date by U.S. standards. Currently, unit commanders must certify who is on the rolls, and then compare those rolls to a master list. At that point, designated fiduciary agents in the units distribute moneys to the commanders, who pay military personnel in cash. Though highly cumbersome, this administrative system appears to work effectively.

The MOD also continues to develop a new banking facility that is already providing roughly 2,800 employees with direct deposit services. The MOD is working to add another 1,500 personnel to the bank's rolls. The new MOD bank will facilitate payment while also reducing the risks of corruption in the payroll system.⁵⁷ Although at present only a fraction of MOD personnel are part of the new direct deposit system, it is an important step in the right direction.

Another positive development in the MOD's administrative capacity is the rolling implementation of the Human Resource Information Management System (HRIMS),⁵⁸ which links personnel and pay functions into a single automated system and database. The purpose of HRIMS is to provide its customers, in a single format, a clear snapshot of information, tracking pay and personnel from initial recruitment to separation. The system should also be able to facilitate accurate reporting and analysis, enabling reliable auditing functions and minimizing opportunities for corruption. At present, the Commission was informed that HRIMS is in use at the MOD and division levels, and should be available for use at the brigade level by September 2007.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Commissioner interviews at Camp Phoenix, Baghdad, July 10, 2007.

⁵⁷ Interview with senior Iraqi MOD officials, Baghdad, July 10, 2007.

⁵⁸ Interview with MOD Logistics and Personnel Transition Team, Baghdad, July 10, 2007

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Intelligence

***Finding:** The level of information sharing and cooperation between the Iraqi intelligence community and the Iraqi Security Forces is not satisfactory—a problem exacerbated by bureaucratic competition and distrust among duplicative intelligence organizations.*

There are four significant, known intelligence organizations that support the Iraqi Security Forces. The Directorate General of Intelligence and Security (DGIS) is within the MOD; the National Information and Investigation Agency (NIIA), is under the Ministry of the Interior; and the Iraqi National Intelligence System (INIS) is considered Iraq's primary intelligence agency. An independent intelligence organization has been established by the Ministry of State for National Security Affairs (MSNSA).

Most Iraqi officials that met with the Commission noted that there is relatively little information sharing between these organizations—or, in some cases, even between operational units of the same organization in the field. The reluctance to share information seems particularly apparent at the intersection point of the military and police forces. There is very little understanding in the Iraqi armed forces or in the Ministry of Interior—where many senior officials are former military officers—of how to use intelligence effectively to support operations. The Commission was concerned by the apparent lack of access by the Iraqi Army and police to the Iraqi National Intelligence System.

Information-sharing challenges between intelligence organizations and security forces are not unique to Iraq, but the active competition among Iraq's intelligence organizations is making the typical problems much more difficult. For example, the MSNSA is organized along the lines of the former regime state security apparatus and is operating in direct competition with INIS, the more established national-level intelligence agency. Commissioners believe that MSNSA was created in part as a reaction to perceptions that INIS was too closely linked to the Coalition. These internal turf battles detract from the critical task of building greater intelligence capacity. Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq has a new intelligence transition team function that is working closely with members of the Iraqi intelligence community to facilitate coordination among these agencies.

Iraq is principally a human intelligence (HUMINT) theater of operations and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The challenge for all of Iraq's security forces is how to share information gathered at the local level without compromising sources, and how to convince information holders to trust and communicate with one another. From a fusion center would come "actionable intelligence"—which then would have to be converted into "immediate-use" intelligence for operations. At that point, certain technologies and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) would be applied to continually monitor the target.

The Commission believes that the U.S. military intelligence model, which is heavily based on technology, is unlikely to work well in the Iraqi environment. Iraqi officials stressed repeatedly that what they need is mentoring and time to develop and adjust their own approaches rather than to adopt the complicated doctrine, structures, and technological solutions that are the hallmark of the U.S. system. Examples of low-technology techniques described to the Commission that have worked well in Iraq include the "National Tips Hotline," which enables the public to provide information to

the police and military via cellular telephone, and the working relationships that are being developed through partnership arrangements such as the Joint Security Stations and brigade-level Military Transition Teams.

Command and Control

***Finding:** Parallel lines of direct communication to military units have been established under the control of the Prime Minister. He is perceived by many as having created a second, and politically motivated chain of command, effectively communicating orders directly to field commanders. Such a practice bypasses national command lines, which should flow through the Minister of Defense and the Commanding General of Iraqi Armed Forces.*

In creating the Office of the Commander in Chief, the Counter-Terrorism Bureau, and in claiming command and control over Iraq's highly capable Special Forces, the Prime Minister is perceived to have established a separate chain of command. At the very least, there now exists the appearance that a senior elected official can bypass existing military command structures for sectarian reasons. In Iraq's developing military culture, this has a potentially divisive effect reminiscent of the previous era. The two organizations most associated with this perception are the Office of the Commander in Chief and the Counter-Terrorism Bureau, both of which report directly to the Prime Minister. Any perception that elements of the ISF are influenced along sectarian and political lines is not in the best interest of Iraq's newly formed Armed Forces. The Commission believes that the Office of the Commander in Chief should be abolished and that the Prime Minister should immediately emphasize that command and control of Iraqi Special forces is to be executed through the national chain of command. The existence of any other parallel or additional structures fosters mistrust, creates confusion, impedes military effectiveness, and perpetuates sectarian tension in the Armed Forces.

Logistics

***Finding:** The lack of logistics experience and expertise within the Iraqi armed forces is substantial and hampers their readiness and capability. Renewed emphasis on Coalition mentoring and technical support will be required to remedy this condition.*

The Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq 2007 Campaign Action Plan for the "Year of Leaders and Logistics" called for the Iraqi Joint Headquarters to assume responsibility for providing logistical support to the Iraqi Army by November 2007. Although steps have been made in contracting and procurement strategies, information technology systems rollout, infrastructure improvement, logistics force structure design, and leadership development, the progress to date has been slow by Coalition standards, and Iraqi logistics is unlikely to be ready for this transition by the end of 2007.

The MOD has a plan to roll out an information system designed to support the command and control of the logistics enterprise. This is a vital requirement, as the MOD currently relies on an unresponsive, paper-driven process. Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq advisors to

the MOD informed Commissioners that they are planning to field a new software system within the next 6 to 10 months, but before that can happen the software needs to be translated into Arabic, soldiers will need to gain the skills to operate it, and solutions are needed to the problems of connectivity that the regular electricity shortages will inevitably cause. In light of these challenges, fielding a workable logistics information technology system in support of the Iraqi Armed Forces is very unlikely in the near term.

There has been progress in providing the infrastructure required to logistically support the Iraqi armed forces. The comprehensive plan is centered around the Taji National Depot, which, when completed, will provide the national hub for training, supply support, and intermediate maintenance. Construction of warehouses, small arms and ammunition storage, and generator facilities are under way. Much work remains before this plan will be realized, however. The Commission was informed that the end point of the phased timeline is early 2008, but funding and construction delays will most likely push actual completion to between 2010 and 2012. Only \$55 million has been funded, just one-tenth of the total required.

Another challenge for the MOD is logistics force structure design. The Iraqi Army remains heavily dependent on contracted support to satisfy day-to-day requirements, and it appears that contracted logistics support (CLS) in some form will be necessary for two to three years. The MOD has developed a detailed plan that will, when in place, adequately provide all required support. This plan is well understood by all key stakeholders, and the structure will provide not only ministerial oversight but also operating components down to the tactical level. Manning the logistics force structure will be a major undertaking, as the Iraqi Army has concentrated on its combat units and has only recently begun the process of manning and training logistics organizations. The Commission was informed that arriving at the final force structure design will likely take two to four years.

The final element needed for logistics development at the MOD level is critical: leadership. At present, there is little logistics expertise at the national level, and both uniformed and civilian leaders require one-on-one mentoring. At the operational and tactical level, transition teams are embedded with operational units. These teams provide technical support and mentoring to the battalion, brigade, and division headquarters and appear to be working very well.

Conclusion: The Ministry of Defense, which is responsible for policy development and implementation as well as resource allocation for the Iraqi military, is building the necessary institutions and processes to fulfill its mission. However, its capacity is hampered by bureaucratic inexperience, excessive layering, and overcentralization. These flaws reduce the operational readiness, capability, and effectiveness of the Iraqi military. As the MOD continues to mature, it should assume the ministerial-level functions that currently fall to the Coalition.

CHAPTER 4: THE IRAQI ARMY AND IRAQI SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

The Iraqi Army (IA) is a newly forming light infantry army already fighting a difficult counterinsurgency as it comes into being. Though the Iraqi Army is enjoying increasing success at the tactical level, significant challenges remain. Most units can muster only 60–75 percent of their assigned strength on any given day, owing to the need for soldiers to travel home to give their families their pay, the lack of enforcement of the Iraqi Code of Military Discipline, the counting of wounded soldiers who remain on the personnel rolls but cannot fight, and the number of soldiers on scheduled leave.⁶⁰ Although many units in the Iraqi Army can now fight well at the small unit level and appear to have a greater will to fight than was present in 2005 and 2006, Iraqi Army units are often outgunned because they lack crew-served and indirect fire weapons, possess limited capacity to handle medical evacuation and combat casualty, and have few “soldier support” systems. Reflecting these capability gaps, the Iraqi Army is at present highly dependent on the Coalition for combat enablers such as fires and counterfires, close air support, fixed wing and rotary wing mobility, C⁴ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), reinforcing capability, partnered presence with Multi-National Corps–Iraq units on the battlefield, supplemental logistics, and maintenance support.

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) is a small, elite group that has trained very closely with Coalition Special Forces and has developed into one of the most capable special forces in the Middle East. Like the Iraqi Army, however, the Iraqi Special Operations Forces remain dependent on Coalition combat enablers. The fact that the chain of command to the Special Forces is outside the established Ministry of Defense chain of command, reporting directly to the Prime Minister’s office, raises concerns about the politicization of these units.

Overview of the Iraqi Army and Special Forces

From 1980 to 1988, the Iraqi Army fought a corps-level war against Iran over a terrain larger than the entire Western front of World War II. At the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, Iraq’s army was the world’s fourth-largest, composed of seven corps and five armored divisions and having mobilized 1.7 million Iraqis.⁶¹ During the Gulf War in 1991, the Coalition destroyed this force—significantly weakening the armed forces of Iraq.

Prewar planning for the invasion of Iraq in the 2002–2003 time frame “called for the dismantlement of the Special Republican Guard, the Republican Guard, and paramilitary structures and for the creation of a core of a new force, consisting of three to five divisions and geared to self-defense.”⁶² As the United States advanced into the country, the Iraqi forces put up very little

⁶⁰ This figure is derived from conversations with current and former MiTT team members and MNSTC-I officials throughout Iraq and in Washington. It accords with estimates of outside sources such as Dr. Anthony Cordesman and the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

⁶¹ “Iraqi Army,” GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/army.htm>.

⁶² Andrew Rathmell, Olga Olikier, Terrence K. Kelly, David Brannan, and Keith Crane, *Developing Iraq’s Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority’s Experience*, MG-365-OSD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), p. 10; available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG365.pdf.

resistance—but instead of surrendering, they shed their uniforms and melted back into the civilian population.⁶³ Along with other top Ba'athist leadership, the 400,000 regular troops and 10,000 generals of the Iraqi Army simply went home. The rampant looting that followed destroyed what was left of the Iraqi Army facilities, including many hardware and ammunition depots.

On May 23, 2003, Order 2 of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) formally disbanded the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of State for Military Affairs, National Security Bureau, Iraqi Army, Republican Guard, Special Republican Guard, Directorate of Military Intelligence, and Saddam's many irregular units.⁶⁴ CPA Order 1 concerning de-Ba'athification had already essentially liquidated and sent into hiding or resistance the top cadre of military leadership.⁶⁵ CPA Order 2 also initiated the extensive task of reconstructing Iraq's security forces and establishing the New Iraqi Corps, which became the New Iraqi Army (NIA) in August 2003. Under civilian control, the army's mission was to provide "defense of the nation, including defense of the national territory and the military protection of the security of critical installations, facilities, infrastructure, lines of communication and supply, and population."⁶⁶ The objective was to create a force that could deter regional aggressors and unwanted foreign factions without threatening the regional balance of power. This force was to be 44,000-strong, "oriented toward external threats . . . with a clear focus on border security . . . [to] fill the growing need for a national military force, but with a measured equipping program and without any true logistical capacity."⁶⁷

In September 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority increased end strength and added force structures: an air component, coastal defense, and an Iraqi counterterrorism force that became the Iraqi Special Operations Forces.⁶⁸ Also that month, CPA Order 28 recognized a need for more Iraqi forces to deal with the continued degradation of the security situation in the country, creating the internally oriented Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, later renamed the Iraqi National Guard.⁶⁹ The Iraqi National Guard worked alongside Coalition forces to address Iraq's internal security challenges, but it quickly developed a poor reputation and became a prime target of the insurgency.⁷⁰ In March 2004, the CPA redesignated the New Iraqi Army as a component of the Iraqi Armed Forces under the control of a newly constructed Ministry of Defense.⁷¹ In April 2004, it transferred control of the Iraqi National Guard from the Ministry of Interior to the MOD.

In June 2004, Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Interim Iraqi Government announced the formation of another military service—the Iraqi Intervention Force, a branch of the Iraqi Army specializing in counterinsurgency warfare.⁷² This was a force designed to surge to urban hot spots within the country. Because the missions of the Iraqi Intervention Force and the Iraqi Army were

⁶³ Rathmell et al., *Developing Iraq's Security Sector*, p. 13.

⁶⁴ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 2, May 23, 2003.

⁶⁵ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 1, April 16, 2003.

⁶⁶ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 22, August 7, 2003.

⁶⁷ Col. Frederick Kienle, "Creating an Iraqi Army from Scratch: Lessons for the Future," *National Security Outlook*, May 2007, p. 1; available at http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.26249/pub_detail.asp.

⁶⁸ Rathmell et al., *Developing Iraq's Security Sector*, p. 34.

⁶⁹ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 28, September 3, 2003.

⁷⁰ "Iraq to Dissolve National Guard," BBC, December 29, 2004; available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4133039.stm.

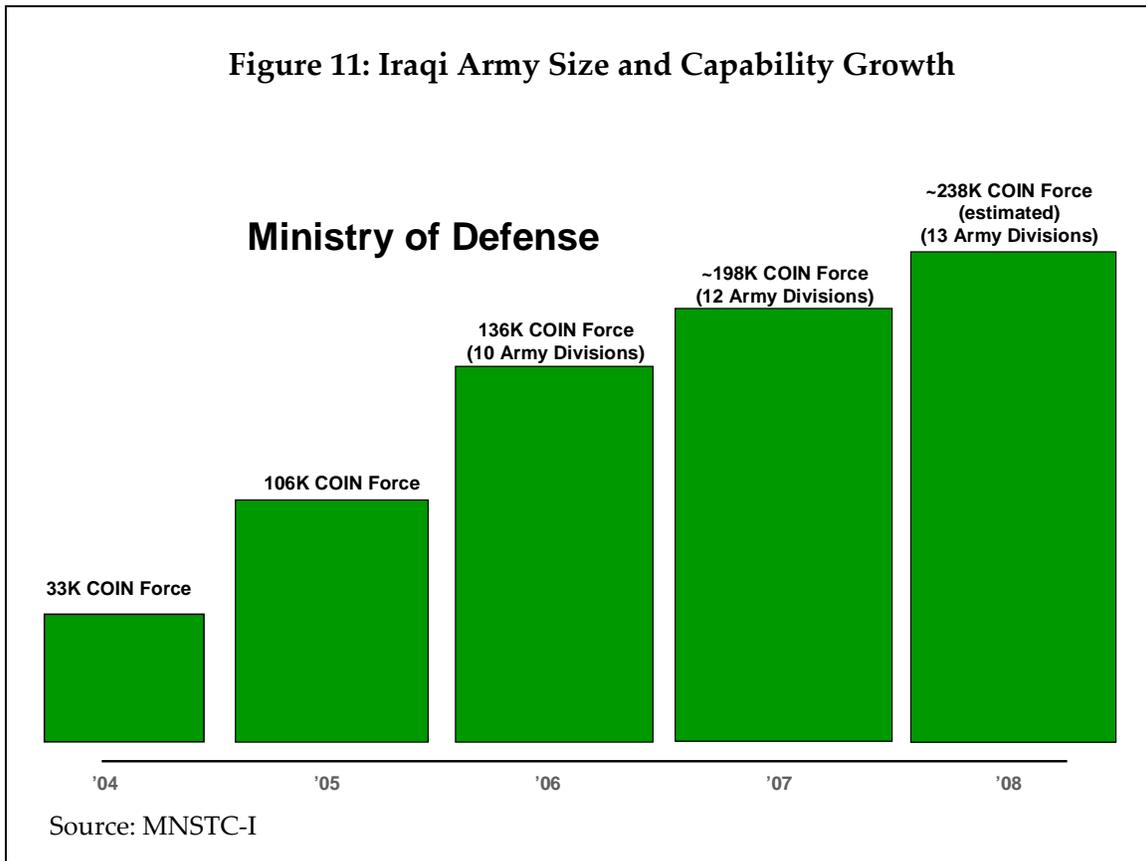
⁷¹ Coalition Provisional Authority Order 67, March 21, 2004.

⁷² "Iraqi Intervention Force," GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/iif.htm>.

becoming difficult to distinguish, the CPA and MOD decided to merge the Iraqi National Guard and Iraqi Intervention Force into the Iraqi Army.

The Iraqi Army, in all its various forms, has been an all-volunteer force since the fall of the Ba'athist regime and is the core of Prime Minister Maliki's "Objective Counterinsurgency Force" (for its growth since 2004, see Figure 11). It is composed of:

- Nine light infantry divisions (with one more division in development and two more planned)
- One mechanized infantry division
- Associated support/combat support units
- Nine motorized transportation regiments
- Four logistics battalions
- Two support battalions
- Five regional support units
- Eighty garrison support units⁷³



⁷³ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, March 2007, p. 37, and June 2007, pp. 40–41 (reports of this title, submitted to Congress in accordance with section 9010 of various Department of Defense appropriation acts, are cited hereafter as 9010 Report).

The Iraqis also formed the Strategic Infrastructure Brigade, dedicated to protecting key energy and other infrastructure. It comprises three brigade headquarters commanding 17 battalions. The Prime Minister has directed that the Strategic Infrastructure Battalions go through a retraining and equipping process to bring them to Iraqi Army battalion standards, but with additional training in infrastructure protection and consequence management.⁷⁴

The Iraqi Army's training base is still developing. Currently there are three dedicated training battalions and six Regional Training Centers under the direction of the Iraqi Training and Doctrine Command. Also under Training and Doctrine Command are the Defense Language Institute, the Tactical Doctrine Center, and the Lessons Learned Center. Within the training base are the nascent National Defense University, the Joint Staff College, and the Defense Strategic Studies Institute. Finally, the Iraqi Army has established a noncommissioned officer school, a counterinsurgency center, and the Iraqi Military Academy at Rustamiyah.

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces is the operational component of the Iraqi Counterterrorism Command. Iraqi Special Operations Forces is a brigade-size force composed of approximately 1,500 soldiers: a counterterrorism battalion, a commando battalion, a support battalion, and a special reconnaissance unit. A key component in developing an Iraqi counterterrorism capability is the ongoing effort to double the number of soldiers in the Iraqi Special Operations Forces.⁷⁵ This expansion will include an additional commando battalion with forward-based commando companies in Basra, Mosul, and Al Asad.

Like the other elements of the Iraqi military, the Iraqi Army today receives training and mentoring from both Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq and Multi-National Corps–Iraq. As Iraqi Army units become capable of operating in combination with Coalition forces, their tactical control is transferred to the appropriate Multi-National Corps–Iraq unit, which embeds advisors and partners Coalition forces with Iraqi units. The Iraqi Assistance Group, which reports to the Multi-National Corps–Iraq commander, provides advisors in the form of Military Transition Teams. The Military Transition Teams are composed of 10–15 Coalition soldiers—along with marines, airmen, and sailors—ranking from staff sergeant to colonel (or equivalent service rank). There are currently 5,000 Coalition personnel serving in more than 500 Military Transition Teams throughout the country. Military Transition Teams advise, coach, teach, and mentor the Iraqi Security Forces in infantry tactics, intelligence, communications, fire support, and logistics.⁷⁶ They seek to develop and improve Iraqi leaders, support Iraqi units' continued training, and assist with logistics and battlefield enablers such as medical evacuation and close air and artillery support. Military Transition Teams are linked to brigade combat teams deployed throughout Iraq. As Iraqi Army units sustain themselves more effectively, the goal is ultimately for them to operate without the Military Transition Teams. To gauge unit progress, the Military Transition Team leader and counterpart Iraqi Army commander prepare monthly classified Operational Readiness Assessments⁷⁷ (for the readiness level definitions and the Iraqi Army's progression to ORA levels 1

⁷⁴ Several other battalions with this specialty skill set may be developed in the 3rd Iraqi Army Division.

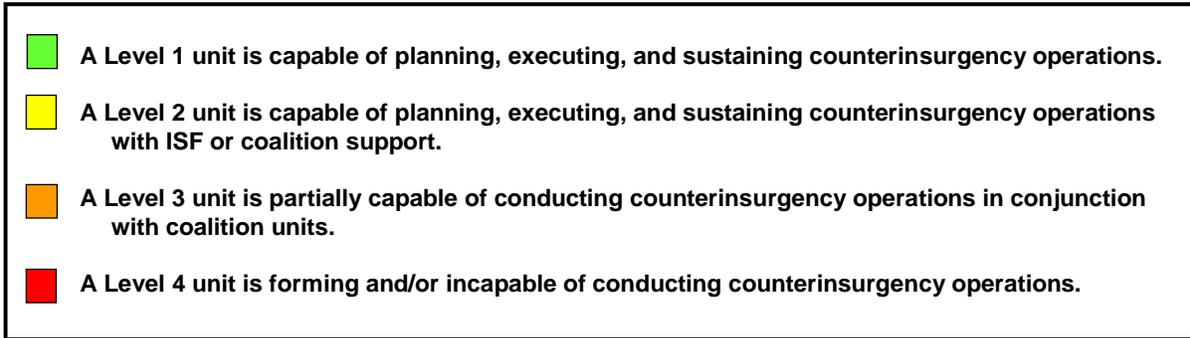
⁷⁵ 9010 Report, June 2007, pp. 41–42.

⁷⁶ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Stand Up and Be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building the Iraqi Security Forces*. 110th Cong., 1st sess., July 2007, pp. 127–41.

⁷⁷ These reports were formerly known as Transitional Readiness Assessments.

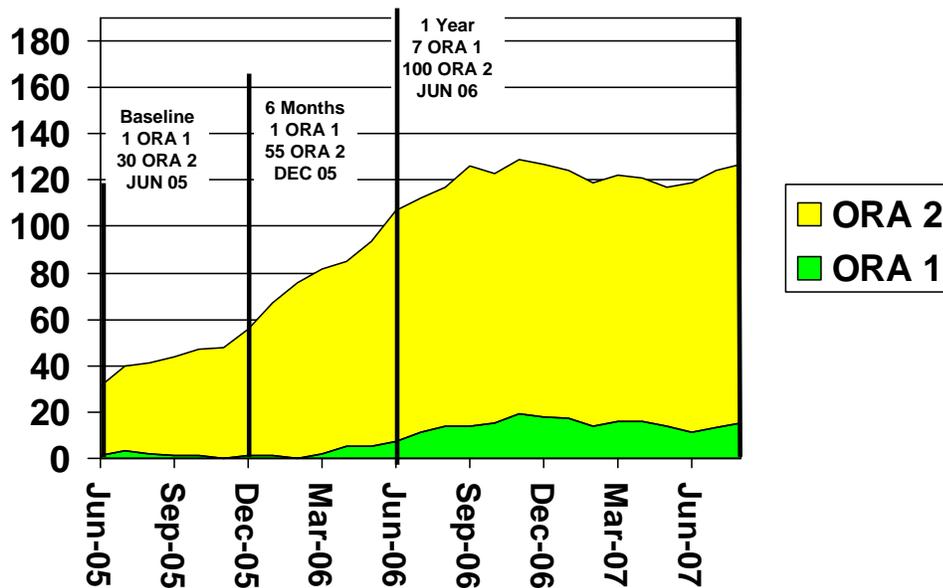
and 2, see Figures 12 and 13 below; for the disposition of Iraqi Army divisions and their respective ORA levels, see Figure 14).

Figure 12: Iraqi Army Operational Readiness Assessment (ORA) Level Definitions



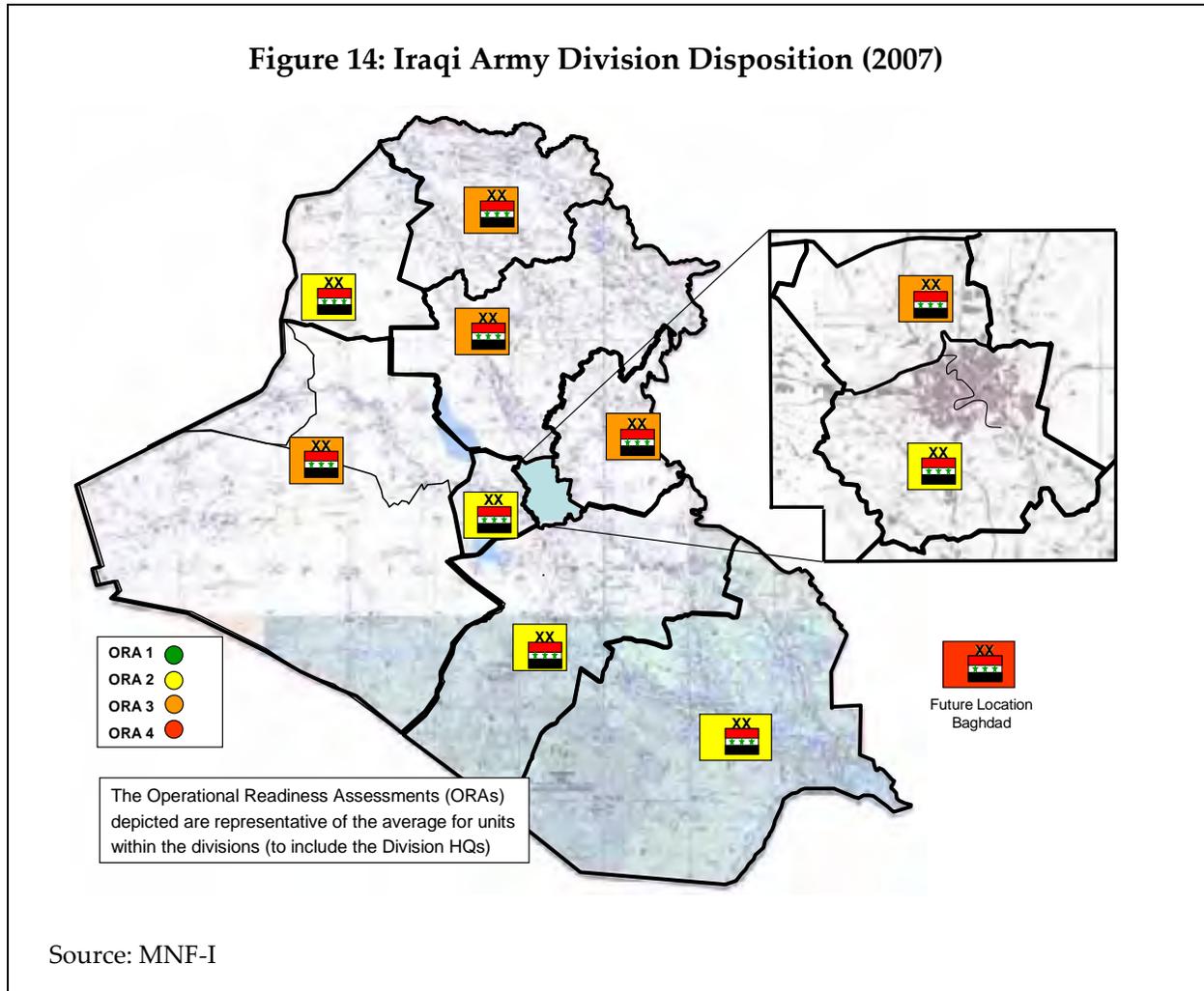
Source: MNSTC-I

Figure 13: Iraqi Army Progression to ORA Levels 1 and 2



Source: MNF-I

Figure 14: Iraqi Army Division Disposition (2007)



Challenges for the Iraqi Army and Special Operations Forces

During its assessment, the Commission held discussions with more than 50 American officials and 50 Iraqi officials directly involved in the development of the Iraqi Army and Special Operations Forces, including meetings with a large number of Military Transition Teams and partnered Multi-National Corps–Iraq forces. The Commission also visited more than 30 Iraqi Army and Special Operations Forces facilities throughout Iraq, including Army bases, training centers, logistics and maintenance centers, and units at the division, brigade, and battalion levels.

The Commission believes that the Iraqi ground forces have made considerable progress, particularly in the past two years. However, the Iraqi Army and Special Forces face significant challenges in several mission and functional areas, including border protection, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, leadership, personnel, equipment, and logistics and maintenance.

Border Protection

Finding: *In addition to protecting the nation against external military threats, the Iraqi Army can and should also play a role in preventing unconventional threats migrating from points outside of Iraq. The Army currently does not have sufficient forces to enhance border security and conduct counterinsurgency operations simultaneously.*

Iraqi and American officials noted to the Commission that the Iraqi insurgency is a “vehicle-borne insurgency.” Controlling main routes to and from border areas and in other key regions is necessary to stop the inflow of foreign fighters and to control the spread of explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) and other deadly technologies that defeat up-armored vehicles and kill or injure Coalition and Iraqi forces in large numbers. More than 80 percent of suicide bombers in Iraq—including the drivers who deliver vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices to their targets—are foreigners.⁷⁸

Senior officials at the Iraqi Ministry of Defense made clear to the Commission that they are aware of a serious problem with Iraq’s border security. The MOI’s Department of Border Enforcement forces, as the first line of defense, are failing to control the borders adequately (as discussed in Chapter 11). Coalition and Iraqi commanders who use Iraqi Army units to reinforce less capable border forces are finding success—apprehending foreign fighters and intercepting significant amounts of weapons.⁷⁹ Despite the Iraqi Army’s achievements in assisting with border security in some areas, it relies deeply on the Coalition for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. In addition, although the Army needs to play a role in thickening Iraq’s border defenses, given its demanding internal security responsibilities, it does not yet have adequate forces to fill the gap.

Recommendation: *The Iraqi Army’s size and capability should be developed as part of an Iraqi national security strategy that defines the roles and missions of the ISF to address both internal security and border security needs. The Army as well as the nation’s police forces are currently emphasizing internal security; only ineffective border security forces are focused on controlling the borders. The Iraqi Army must contribute to both border and internal security. A national commitment to expand the Army’s mission beyond counterinsurgency to include border security must be reflected in Army and MOD plans and policies.*

Given Iraq’s evident border security challenges, the Iraqi Army should assist in “thickening” or “reinforcing” border enforcement as part of its broader mission to protect the country from external threats. In the near term, the Government of Iraq may need to consider expanding the size of the Iraqi Army to backstop less reliable border enforcement police without compromising the Iraqi Army’s ability to combat internal threats. To be effective in this role in the near term, the Iraqi

⁷⁸ See Anthony H. Cordesman, “Iraq’s Sunni Insurgents: Looking Beyond Al Qa’ida,” CSIS working draft, July 16, 2007, p. 3; available at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070716_sunni_insurgents.pdf. Also see Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

⁷⁹ Iraqi Army and Coalition commanders in the areas of responsibility of Multi-National Forces Command–West and Multi-National Division–North noted the utility of this approach.

Army will require key enabling support from the Coalition, particularly in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Operations

The Iraqi Army

***Finding:** The Iraqi Army has become more effective in supporting Coalition-led counterinsurgency operations from the start of Iraqi and Coalition surge operations in early 2007. The reliability of Iraqi Army units continues to improve, and some units now are an integral part of the Coalition team for counterinsurgency operations. The overall rate of progress of the Army is uneven. Some units perform better than others; but there is rising confidence that progress is being made at a rate that will enable Iraqi Army tactical formations and units to gradually assume a greater leadership role in counterinsurgency operations in the next 12 to 18 months. However, they will continue to rely on Coalition support, including logistics, intelligence, fire support, equipment, training, and leadership development for the foreseeable future.*

Changes to U.S. counterinsurgency strategy since 2006 have significantly altered the dynamic between U.S. and Iraqi forces, and have led to noticeable improvements in the Iraqi Army's ability to conduct counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations (internal defense). The lessons learned and best practices resulting from the new approach to counterinsurgency operations are spreading to Iraqi Army units, in part because those units are working hand-in-glove with the Americans. The Iraqi Security Forces have developed their own counterinsurgency doctrine, and unit commanders are cycled through the Iraqi Counterinsurgency School at Taji.

The Commission observed Iraqi Army units operating alongside U.S. troops in joint security stations, patrol bases, and command outposts. The American and Iraqi field-grade officers indicated to the Commission that they trust one another unconditionally. Even when American units are absent, the Commission observed indications that Iraqis are taking the fight to the enemy. High-intensity operations such as Fardh al-Qanoon in Baghdad plainly demonstrate that the Iraqi units are willing to combat urban counterinsurgency with far more determination and efficacy than during the generally disorganized joint operations of 2004 to 2006.

At the same time, it is clear that the relatively large numbers of Coalition advisors and partner units are a key enabler of this improved performance, as they continually provide strong leadership and mentoring, as well as combat support during actual operations. Where American and Iraqi Army units have worked closely with local communities, established patrol bases and other forward sites, and operated extensively together, there are increasing signs that local populations enjoy a credible security alternative to the lawlessness of the past few years. These closer Coalition-Iraqi community partnerships are leading to the development of stronger human intelligence networks, which in turn lead to more combat successes.

Coalition forces advise and mentor Iraqi Army units learning to conduct operations that win hearts and minds, respect human rights, separate enemies from the civilian population, and facilitate

political solutions. These are complex operations for any military force, and Coalition support for the Iraqi Army has been critical to the progress made to date. Without continued training, mentoring, and key combat enablers from the Coalition, it would be difficult for the Iraqi Army to progress to a point where it can conduct effective, independent counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. Further, it is likely that the hard-won progress made to date would atrophy.

Iraqi Special Operations Forces

Finding: *Iraqi Special Operations Forces are the most capable element of the Iraqi armed forces and are well-trained in both individual and collective skills. They are currently capable of leading counterterrorism operations, but they continue to require Coalition support. They remain dependent on the Coalition for many combat enablers, especially airlift, close air support, and targeting intelligence.*

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces are a strong direct action and “snatch” force—specializing in operations to place high-value targets in custody in “nonpermissive” environments. Joint special operations involving the Iraqi Special Forces are led by Iraqi commanders; their brigade provides 70 percent of the forces. Coalition Special Operations Forces have been training their Iraqi counterparts since 2003, and many Coalition operators are in Iraq on repeated tours, bringing depth, continuity, and experience to the training effort. Coalition forces have helped develop a strong noncommissioned officer corps in the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, as well as a junior officer corps. Both display considerable promise for and confidence in the future of the Iraqi armed forces.

Despite their strong and consistent performance, the Iraqi Special Operations Forces rely heavily on Coalition combat enablers. A particularly important capability gap is the lack of independent rotary air support. Consequently, there are a variety of special operations missions and roles that the Iraqi Special Operations Forces cannot yet perform.

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces are the most capable force in the Iraqi Security Forces, but the diverse and challenging nature of the threats in Iraq leads to an extraordinarily difficult mission set. To ensure that the requirements of this mission set can be met, Special Operations in Iraq must remain a three-legged stool—Iraqi Special Forces and MOI special tactics units, Coalition Joint Special Operations Task Force units, and other U.S. Special Operations task forces.

Army Leadership

Finding: *The Iraqi Army is short of seasoned leadership at all levels, and a lack of experienced commissioned and noncommissioned officers hampers its readiness, capability, and effectiveness.*

De-Ba’athification initially banned almost all experienced Iraqi Army leadership from continued service. Over time, the Coalition and the Government of Iraq adjusted their policies and about 20,000 officers and noncommissioned officers have returned to the Army. The most severe leadership shortage is the lack of company-grade and junior field-grade officers. According to

Coalition estimates, the Iraqi Army needs at least an additional 30,000–40,000 leaders (officers and NCOs) to command units in the field. The demand for officers and NCOs in Iraq competes with the need for competent leaders throughout government bureaucracies and in the other security forces. The virtual shutdown of many Iraqi colleges and universities, and the interruption of primary and secondary schools by the events of the past few years, will likely make recruiting educated officers and noncommissioned officers a greater challenge, as has the continued emigration of many educated Iraqis.

Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq has many programs under way to develop an officer corps, with an emphasis on “train the trainers” approaches. The Coalition is attempting to increase the number of one-year military academies in the country, using a standardized curriculum based on that of the Royal British Military Academy at Sandhurst. The first military academy was opened in 2004 as the Iraqi Military Academy in Rustamiyah and is run by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Training Mission–Iraq.⁸⁰ The first class of 73 cadets graduated in June 2006. More than 2,500 Iraqi officers and civilians have received training in Iraq through NATO-led courses, and close to 1,000 Iraqi personnel have been trained outside the country through additional NATO Training Mission courses.⁸¹ NATO also has provided the Iraqi Army with much-needed equipment and has provided additional training and educational activities outside of Iraq. The Commission wishes to underscore the immense potential that the efforts of NATO nations are unleashing in Iraq.

***Finding:** A noncommissioned officer corps is not part of Iraq’s military tradition, but it will be invaluable to making the Army more combat-effective.*

The Iraqi Army needs a noncommissioned officer corps in order to become a truly cohesive fighting force capable of the type of small unit operations essential to success in combating an insurgency. However, the American concept of NCOs seems to present difficulties for many Iraqi officers, particularly when newly minted NCOs are seen to perform at levels approaching NATO standards. In addition, during the Saddam era, Iraqi officers operated in an environment that emphasized centralized power over delegation to subordinates. Coalition advisors should support and encourage NCO development and should foster in Iraqi officers an appreciation for their role. However, it may take time for the Iraqis to embrace this concept.

It appears the American concept of a noncommissioned officer is fundamentally threatening to many current Iraqi officers, particularly when newly minted noncommissioned officers are seen to perform at levels approaching NATO standards. As the Iraqi Army and Coalition forces continue to develop the noncommissioned officer corps, care should be taken at the same time to develop Iraqi officers’ appreciation for their role.

***Recommendation:** Developing leadership in the Iraqi Army will require continued support from Coalition advisors and units. Ongoing employment of a “train the trainers” approach, and continued*

⁸⁰ The MNSTC-I commander is dual-hatted as the commander of NTM-I.

⁸¹ NATO Training Mission–Iraq, “Facts and Figures,” July 5, 2007; available at http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Missions/NTM-I/NTML_Facts.htm.

emphasis on the development of a functioning noncommissioned officer corps, is essential, though developing leaders will take time to achieve.

Developing Iraqi Army leadership will be the work of a generation and will require long-term Coalition or NATO involvement—at least in an advisory capacity. Although it will take more than 12 to 18 months to develop a functioning noncommissioned officer corps, the strong and effective Iraqi Special Operations Forces noncommissioned officer corps is an encouraging example. The NATO experience in former Eastern bloc countries further demonstrates that long-term engagement can build a world-class noncommissioned officer corps in places it never existed before.

Personnel

***Finding:** The Iraqi Army is currently structured for counterinsurgency operations with a goal of manning 13 divisions by the end of 2008. The current divisions are experiencing absenteeism, both authorized and unauthorized. MOD has established a standard of 85 percent “present-for-duty” at all times. To achieve this, units will be manned at 120 percent of authorized strength, and the abundance of volunteers for service in the new Iraqi Army should make the attainment of this goal possible. This higher manning requirement will place additional strain on equipping and combat training programs.*

In its most recent report to Congress, the Department of Defense estimated the Iraqi Army’s strength to be around 135,000.⁸² Outside analysts put the figure at closer to 100,000.⁸³ The Government of Iraq would like an end strength of 190,000, and it plans to add 24 battalions in 2007 for an increase of approximately 45,000 soldiers.⁸⁴ The force structure is planned to be 13 divisions.

At any given time, Iraqi units are at 60–75 percent of their manning strength, and annual attrition is 15–18 percent in the Iraqi Army.⁸⁵ Iraqi soldiers return home to bring their pay to their families and check on their safety, contributing to a lack of accountability. In addition, assassinations of Iraqi soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers further compound manning problems.

Not only does the Iraqi Army suffer from manning shortages, but many of the soldiers that do report for duty are at different standards of training, owing to the many different training programs in place since 2003. Standardization of the forces and of training is only a recent development. As a result, Iraqi Army divisions are uneven in ability.

The Commission visited a camp of fresh recruits going through five weeks of basic training. Beginning in spring 2007, the earlier thirteen-week basic training course was compressed into five weeks, largely to accelerate force generation efforts. The average Iraqi *jundi* (private or soldier) has a fourth-grade education. He has been familiar with “guns” his whole life but has probably not fought in the military. The minimum age for enlistment in this volunteer force is 18. In basic training,

⁸² 9010 Report, June 2007, p.30.

⁸³ E.g., see Anthony Cordesman, July 24, 2007, p. vii.

⁸⁴ Lieutenant General Martin E. Dempsey, statement before the House U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 110th Cong., 1st sess., June 12, 2007, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Jeremy Sharp, *The Iraqi Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, Congressional Research Service, RS22093: January 18, 2007, p. 4.

soldiers are taught everything from hand washing before meals to proficiency with an M-16 or AK-47 rifle. Discipline is maintained by corporal punishment.

Further complicating basic training efforts is the need to identify those recruits with links to militias, who must either be converted or dismissed from the Iraqi Security Forces. Despite the risks associated with service in the ISF, military pay is high enough to make enlistment attractive, and recruiters are often simply overwhelmed by the sheer numbers in need of vetting.⁸⁶ Following basic training, Iraqi soldiers' collective skills and basic unit skills are frequently developed under combat conditions.

***Finding:** The implementation of an Iraqi code of military discipline, professional development programs, and benefits for members of the armed forces is key to improving readiness. The Commission finds that inadequate implementation of these initiatives adversely affects personnel retention and leadership development. Developing future leaders must be an important objective of personnel programs.*

Currently, mechanisms to prevent Iraqi soldiers from being absent without leave are not enforced. The Commission was repeatedly informed that no penalty is applied for desertion or being absent without leave in the Iraqi Army. Present-for-duty numbers are verified once a month by the Coalition Military Transition Team.⁸⁷ Despite Coalition confidence in these numbers, the military is still plagued by high rates of absenteeism, particularly in Iraqi Army units deployed for combat operations outside their usual area of operation. Such units have leave rates as high as 50 percent.⁸⁸

Although the Iraqi Army is aware of the need to establish a personnel and professional development system that could create positive incentives for soldiers to remain in the military, problems remain. For example, there are currently few rewards for obedience and performance: promotions are slow, time-in-grade pay does not exist, and combat pay for deployments is just coming into being. Battlefield promotions do not occur. The number of captains in the Iraqi Army is very large, reflecting a preliminary rank inflation—captain is the de facto entry grade for officers on the promotion track. Lieutenants are often left without opportunity for promotion and perform the function of noncommissioned officers.

The Commission was struck by one outstanding young Iraqi captain who had been fighting in the Army for the past three years. His American counterparts at a forward operating base were a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, and a major. The Iraqi remained a captain and was frustrated by the slow promotion process. In another case, the Commission discovered that the Sergeant Major of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command is still salaried as a private, despite decades of service to his country and his important position.

⁸⁶ Commissioner interviews at Camp Taji, Iraq, July 10, 2007.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Joseph A. Christoff, Director, International Affairs and Trade, GAO, "Stabilizing Iraq: Factors Impeding the Development of Capable Iraqi Security Forces," testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 110th Cong., 1st sess., March 13, 2007, p. 11; available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07612t.pdf>.

Finally, there is no evidence in Iraq that any social compact has been established with the military. Formal support for wounded veterans and for the families of soldiers killed in action is almost nonexistent. As stated above, in Iraq's economy, the military's high pay is very attractive and likely remains the primary motivator for service in the all-volunteer force. Soldiers earn around \$460 a month—an enormous sum compared with the \$2 per month they were paid during the Saddam era as conscripts. But the risks are significant, and there is no system in place to mitigate them.⁸⁹ When injured, soldiers must endure Iraq's overcrowded, underequipped, and corrupt public hospitals.⁹⁰ They receive no compensation for long-term disabilities, though in a practice that skews unit strength numbers they are often kept on payrolls by commanders, who understand the importance of loyalty to their troops.

To develop a durable and combat-effective Army, the Government of Iraq and Ministry of Defense need to develop the legal framework to support the human capital of the military—the backbone of any armed force. Current deficiencies are presenting obstacles to the development, loyalty, and effectiveness of the military. The Coalition and Government of Iraq are investing far too much in the training and equipping of Iraqi soldiers to allow them to simply walk away. The application of the Iraqi Code of Military Discipline would address this problem, as would establishing a promotion process that recognized time-in-grade and rewards combat performance as incentives for personnel to remain in service.

To address these challenges, the MOD is considering and implementing a number of new policies and requirements. For example, it is weighing the benefits of waiving time-in-grade requirements to accelerate promotions for junior noncommissioned officers, lieutenants, and captains. The MOD is also working to overcome problems in manpower accountability.

Equipment

***Finding:** The Iraqi Army is adequately equipped for counterinsurgency. However, equipping the Army with more armor, artillery, and mobility is tactically advantageous and communicates a powerful message to the Iraqi people and to the enemy about the growing strength and capability of the Iraqi Army.*

Each Iraqi Army soldier is equipped with the standard Iraqi Army uniform, Kevlar helmet, interceptor bulletproof vest, boots, and an M-16 rifle or M-4 rifle for officers. Until May 2007, Iraqi soldiers were issued AK-47 rifles; a program now under way to replace those weapons with M-16 or M-4 rifles, tracked by serial number and biometric data recorded when they are issued, will have beneficial effects when completed.

The Iraqi Army's inventory of assets is limited in comparison to its neighbors'. In Iraq's existing forces are 77 T-72s, 250 Soviet-built BMP-1s, 6 Brazilian EE-9 Cascavels, 61 MT-LB Russian-

⁸⁹ Chilling anecdotes abound about the personal risk to Iraqi soldiers and the lack of support for wounded veterans. See, for example, Karin Brulliard, "For Iraqi Soldiers, A Medical Morass," *Washington Post*, May 6, 2007; Ben Gilbert, "An Army Where Wounded Soldiers Are on Their Own," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 10, 2006.

⁹⁰ Coalition forces must follow strict guidelines in offering medical support to Iraqis to ensure that their own capabilities are not overwhelmed.

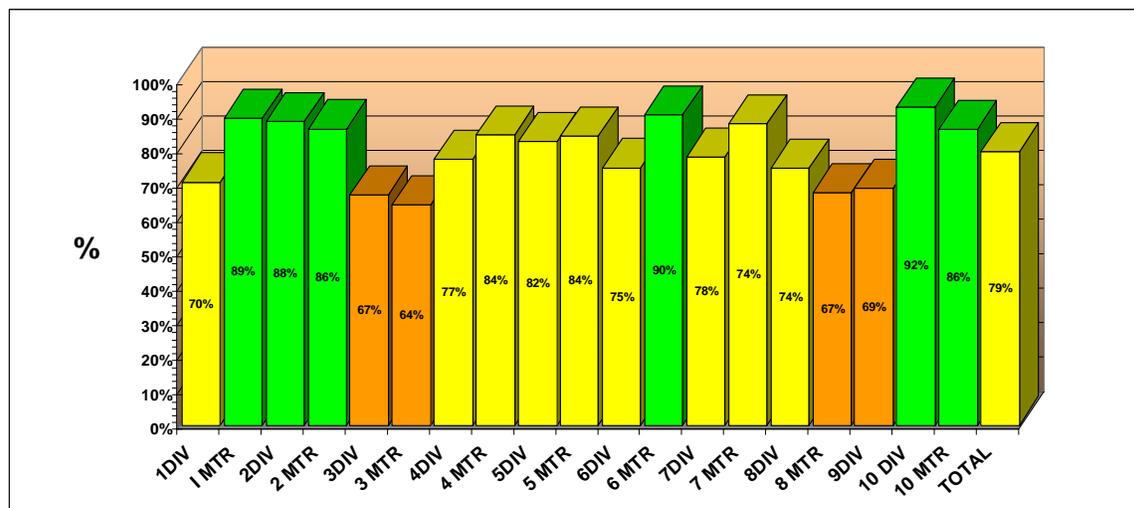
built tracked vehicles, 69 BTR-80 Russian-built six-wheel vehicles, 353 Polish DZIK four-wheel-drive vehicles, 291 Textron T-6 Badgers, 2,647 AM General Humvees, 600 Land Rover armored jeeps, and 60 small armored vehicles. Shortages of equipment include modern armor, heavy firepower, tactical mobility, air support, and proper medical capabilities. Orders have been placed for delivery by the end of 2007 of 110 BMPs and 29 Cascavels, 29 BTR-80s, 247 DZIKs, 149 Badgers, and 952 Humvees (for a July 2007 snapshot of Iraqi Army unit equipment levels, see Figure 15).

Iraqi units are regularly subjected to direct and indirect fire throughout the country. In almost all cases, Coalition forces must supply the counterfire, close air and artillery support, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance needed to target the enemy. The Iraqi Army is also significantly supported by Coalition airlift to quickly transport and surge forces to the fight.

As the Commission has stated, the Iraqi Army should continue to focus on its mission of internal defense while beginning to transform itself into a force capable of dealing with the longer-term challenge of external threats. Tactically advantageous to both missions are armor, artillery, and mobility (especially rotary airlift and aircraft capable of providing close air support). Acquiring and implementing these platforms, however, should not distract from the current counterinsurgency mission.

As a first step, existing platforms such as the T-72 tanks donated by NATO to the 9th Mechanized Division should be strategically arrayed around the country to leverage their psychological effect. Entering these platforms into the fight would send a powerful message to the Iraqi people and to the enemies of the Iraqi people, including neighboring states supporting terrorism and insurgents. Outward, visible indications of strength in the form of heavy armor—displayed in the capital and elsewhere—would demonstrate that the Iraqi Army has been reborn with the strength necessary to protect the nation and its people.

Figure 15: Iraqi Army Equipment by Unit



Source: MNF-I

DIV = Iraqi Army Division
MTR = Iraqi Army Motor Transport Regiment

Logistics

***Finding:** Logistics remains the Achilles' heel of the Iraqi ground forces. Although progress is being made, achieving an adequate forcewide logistics capability is at least 24 months away.*

Although the Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq's 2007 goal is to "transition equipment, sustainment and infrastructure expenditures to Iraqi responsibility," completing this transition poses a great challenge to the independent operation of the Iraqi Army. Iraqi commanders and officials are assigning priority to getting soldiers into the fight; sustaining combat power remains a secondary goal.

As many U.S. commanders and trainers noted, the Coalition's desire to keep Iraqi forces from failing sometimes has the effect of rewarding bad behavior. For example, although Iraqis ostensibly took over responsibility for fuel distribution months ago through the Ministry of Oil, the Coalition often has to intervene to ensure that Iraqis have enough diesel and benzene to operate generators and continue their daily operations. This is only one symptom of "phantom" Coalition logistics support—provision of off-the-books Coalition logistics—to prevent Iraqis from failing. Phantom logistics mask the true depths of the problems not only in fuel distribution but also in maintenance and repair, ammunition, and other basic support.

Even when Iraqi Army units have the necessary equipment, faulty maintenance of that equipment can be a critical weakness. U.S. commanders and soldiers in the field repeatedly informed the Commission that the Iraqis in general fail to maintain equipment. Iraqis are unfamiliar with many of the new systems and platforms they have purchased in the past few years.⁹¹ When a vehicle becomes non-operational, there are no backup or reserve vehicles to replace it. Preventive maintenance is an alien concept to Iraqis, an attitude that exacerbates the lack of spare or backup vehicles. Where maintenance teams do exist and Iraqi commanders do make upkeep of equipment a priority, they face the further hurdle of acquiring spare parts from Taji National Depot, which appears unable to keep up with requirements.

As discussed in the previous chapter on the Ministry of Defense, the Commission found that the national logistics system cannot yet address the needs of Iraqi units fighting the war. The Taji National Depot is full of new vehicles, hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition, boots, uniforms, and many other end items that should be made available quickly to Iraqi soldiers fighting the war. According to the Department of Defense, 100 percent of individual authorized items were distributed to the Iraqi Army by the end of 2006, though there were some admitted problems of "cross-leveling between and within units that . . . [led] to shortages in some subordinate units."⁹² Despite reported distribution of all individual equipment, the Commission heard repeatedly of deployed Iraqi units encountering fundamental difficulties when trying to obtain needed war materials to remain combat-ready.

⁹¹ The Iraqi Army has, for instance, dozens of different types of light-transport trucks and lacks part and maintenance know-how for the different systems.

⁹² 9010 Report, March 2007, p. 40.

Finding: *The current shortfall in logistics is emblematic of the urgent need to solve a major issue in terms that the Iraqi government and military can adopt. U.S. strategies and solutions rely heavily on outsourcing of logistics, an approach that has met resistance from the Iraqi leaders. In many cases, the “Iraqi way,” though not always optimal, is sufficient. The solutions for the Iraqi armed forces must be developed with the goal of achieving an Iraqi standard that allows for Iraqi culture, traditions, and abilities.*

Logistics are a problem in large part because the MOD bureaucracy can be complex and cumbersome, and has very little expertise in logistics. Its weaknesses have an adverse trickle-down effect to the Iraqi armed forces. At lower levels of the logistics chain, it is also clear that the Iraqi Army’s Headquarters and Service Companies are undermanned and not independently capable.

The absence of support from the MOD bureaucracy frequently leaves commanders to rely on their creativity, on their thrift, and on whatever resources are available. An Iraqi commander told the Commission of using confiscated weapons caches to make repairs and provide additional ammunition for ongoing operations. To acquire the ammunition through the existing Iraqi logistics system, this commander would have had to send an officer in person to the MOD in Baghdad with a requisition request. Upon receipt of this personally delivered request, the MOD might then take months to fill and distribute the requested ammunition—all this despite the ready availability of ammunition in the MOD system.

The Iraqi Army is not enthusiastic about a contractor-based logistics and maintenance system, which might be at least part of the solution to existing capability shortfalls. The Iraqi Army staff is unimpressed with the contracts they have seen executed, and they seek to foster independence in their operations across the board. While this is a laudable goal, it is not producing results. Every command post and headquarters the Commission visited had vehicles and equipment that were inoperable—and more often than not, the Commission found that Iraqis were waiting for the Coalition to take care of the problem for them. Coalition forces recognize this dependency but find it difficult to lessen while simultaneously maintaining the pace of current operations.

As critical as the development of a functioning logistics capability is for the Iraqi military, Coalition experts may be imposing on them a more complex and elaborate logistics system than is necessary. The logistics force structure plan developed by the Coalition for the Iraq Army appears to reflect the Coalition’s preferences rather than the Iraqis’ needs. Over time it is likely that the current plan will be modified and an “Iraqi solution” will emerge. The Iraqi solution is one that gets the job done to an adequate level, even if not with optimal efficiency and speed. Those innovations will come in time.

Recommendation: *To operate independently, the Iraqi Army must develop a functioning logistics and maintenance system. The Coalition should continue working with the MOD to develop a system that meets Iraqi needs.*

Although the lack of an adequate logistics and maintenance system is a critical shortfall, it is clear that solutions that are imposed on an unwilling organization will not work. A sustainable solution will require patient and consistent efforts to work with MOD officials and Iraqi Army commanders to develop systems that are consistent with the realities of Iraqi culture and

bureaucratic incentives. The Coalition should work with the MOD and Iraqi Army to simplify processes wherever possible and adjust them to an Iraqi standard, which may be more effective in the near term if not necessarily as efficient as we would like.

Conclusion: The Iraqi Army and Special Forces possess an adequate supply of willing and able manpower and a steadily improving basic training capability. The Army has a baseline supply of equipment for counterinsurgency, but much of this equipment is unavailable for operations owing to maintenance and supply chain management problems. They are making efforts to reduce sectarian influence within their ranks and are achieving some progress. Their operational effectiveness, particularly that of the Special Forces, is increasing, yet they will continue to rely on Coalition forces for key enablers such as combat support (aviation support, intelligence, and communications), combat service support (logistics, supply chain management, and maintenance), and training. Despite progress, they will not be ready to independently fulfill their security role within the next 12 to 18 months. Nevertheless, the Commission believes that substantial progress can be achieved to that end.

CHAPTER 5: THE IRAQI AIR FORCE

In 2004, the Iraqi Air Force had 35 people and possessed no aircraft. This meager beginning and late start as compared to the new Iraqi Army help put in context the progress the Air Force has made since then. Its personnel now number approximately 1,100 airmen equipped with 45 aircraft that are capable of 130 to 150 sorties a week.⁹³ They are engaged in supporting the domestic counterinsurgency fight, and as the Iraqi Air Force's capacity improves, so too will its ability to be a force multiplier for Iraqi ground forces. However, the delayed start-up of the new Iraqi Air Force resulted in a considerable lag behind the Iraqi Army's current level of maturity. Moreover, the creation of effective operational, maintenance, and support systems for an air force, with its advanced technical requirements, demands a longer period of development. The net effect of this asymmetry is that Coalition support will likely be required for a longer period for the Iraqi Air Force than for the Army. Despite steady progress and its strong future potential, today's Iraqi Air Force is heavily reliant on Coalition forces for support and training; and though its capabilities are improving, it remains far from operational independence.

Overview of the Iraqi Air Force

The Iraqi Air Force was established in the early 1930s and originally consisted of five pilots and a supporting crew of less than three dozen. From 1931 until the arrival of Coalition forces in 2003, the Air Force took part in a number of armed conflicts, including the May 1941 war against British occupation and the 1948 and June 1967 wars against Israel. The Air Force contributed significantly at the end of the protracted Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s by quashing Iran's final offensive; during that war, it grew to roughly 950 aircraft. By the time of the first Gulf War, the Iraqi Air Force was the largest in the Middle East, though it suffered from uneven quality in both aircraft and aircrew.⁹⁴

In general, Saddam Hussein preferred not to use his air force for combat, saving it instead as a reserve force to defend Baghdad. It proved most effective against fixed economic targets such as oil facilities, and Hussein structured his air defenses along the Soviet model.⁹⁵ During the Gulf War, U.S.-led coalition forces devastated the Iraqi Air Force, greatly degrading its overall capacity. Most of the aircraft that did survive the war are now in Iran, where they were moved before the Gulf War to save them from being destroyed. Although the Commander of the Iraqi Air Force has expressed a desire to retrieve some of those aircraft, this retrieval has not yet occurred.⁹⁶

Lieutenant General Kamal al-Barzanji, who leads the new Iraqi Air Force, reports to the Iraqi Joint Headquarters.⁹⁷ The main objectives of the new Iraqi Air Force are to organize, train, and equip air operations; to conduct day/night/all-weather counterinsurgency operations; and to provide homeland capabilities to the Government of Iraq.⁹⁸ The Iraqi Air Force is focused mainly on

⁹³ Briefing from Iraqi Air Force officials, July 2007.

⁹⁴ "Iraqi Air Force [IQAF]," GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/airforce.htm>.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Ross Colvin, "Iraq Air Force Wants Iran to Give Back Its Planes," *Washington Post*, August 5, 2007.

⁹⁷ Briefing from Iraqi Air Force Officials, July 2007.

⁹⁸ Briefing from Coalition Air Force Transition Team, July 2007.

counterinsurgency missions, particularly aerial observation and surveillance and air transportation, and units perform daily operational missions that collect intelligence for Iraqi and Coalition forces.

The Iraqi Air Force operates with a small mix of platforms: intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms; fixed wing transport; and rotary wing capabilities. The intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms are now eight SAMA CH-2000s, two Sea Bird Seekers, and three Cessna Caravans used by two squadrons.⁹⁹ By December 2007, this capability will include one more advanced platform, the King Air 350ER. In addition, a training squadron will receive its first intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms of four Cessna 172s and two Cessna 208Bs. The fixed wing transport capability is currently supported by three C-130 transport planes, and the Ministry of Defense has requested three more to bring the squadron size to six.¹⁰⁰ The three rotary wing platforms, used mostly for battlefield mobility and casualty evacuation by three Iraqi Air Force squadrons, are 10 Bell Huey II helicopters, 14 Mi-17 battlefield mobility helicopters, and 5 Jet Ranger training helicopters. By December 2007, the number of Huey IIs should reach 16 and the number of Mi-17s should be 28. The 5 Jet Rangers will provide the initial capability to another training squadron, which will also receive its own 8 Huey IIs.¹⁰¹

In short, if procurement proceeds as intended, the Iraqi Air Force platforms will increase in number from the current 45 to 80 by December 2007. By 2010, the Iraqi Air Force also has plans to bring on line a counterterrorism capability with both greater numbers of existing platforms and more sophisticated platforms. These would include 18 King Air 350s, 6 Caravans, and 8 CH2000s for the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance component; 6 C-130s and 4 King Air 350s for greater fixed wing airlift capacity; 41 Mi-17s and 40 Huey IIs for increased rotary wing capability; and 32 T6/Super Tucano/L-39 class aircraft for a new light attack capability.¹⁰²

The Iraqi Air Force currently operates out of four air bases throughout Iraq. New Al Muthana Air Base handles the Iraqi Air Force's fixed wing transport functions. Because the 23 Squadron there features all-Iraqi flight crews with Iraqi Air Force maintenance technicians performing all basic maintenance, U.S. Air Force Military Training Team personnel have been able to reduce their presence. The Taji Air Base houses an interim Air Force Academy as well as most of the Iraqi Air Force's rotary wing platforms. The Basra and Kirkuk Air Bases are focused on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities in support of the counterinsurgency mission.¹⁰³ To that end, units from these air bases run daily missions throughout Iraq to provide actionable intelligence back to Coalition and Iraqi ground forces.

The current capacity of the Iraqi Air Force includes a growing number of personnel. The force totals more than 1,100 at present, and aggressive recruitment efforts are seeking to raise the number of airmen above 3,000 by the end of 2007.¹⁰⁴ Most early manning has derived from the pre-

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, June 2007, p. 43 (reports of this title, submitted to Congress in accordance with section 9010 of various Department of Defense appropriation acts, are cited hereafter as 9010 Report).

¹⁰¹ Briefing from Coalition Air Force Transition Team, July 2007.

¹⁰² Briefing from Iraqi Air Force officials, July 2007.

¹⁰³ Briefing from Coalition Air Force Transition Team, July 2007.

¹⁰⁴ 9010 Report, June 2007, p. 42.

2003 Iraqi Air Force, consisting mainly of older men who have done little flying since 1991. The current pilots are considered sufficient for the low-end counterinsurgency fight until younger, more highly trained pilots can be fielded. All current leadership is also drawn from the pre-2003 Air Force, and in general their survival skills exceed their capacity for leadership. Over time, they will need to be replaced so that the development of true quality can be fostered in the new service.

Training the growing numbers of Iraqi Air Force personnel is an ongoing challenge. The training, generally conducted in conjunction with Iraqi Training and Doctrine Command, has been run largely by Coalition Air Force Transition Teams. Basic Iraqi Air Force training consists of pilot sustainment and conversion training and maintenance training. C-130 training has taken place in United States, while language training and flight training have been conducted in Iraq, currently at Al Muthana Air Base. Some additional crews previously received training in Jordan on UH-1Hs and Seekers.¹⁰⁵ Advisory Support Teams provide U.S.-based training for reconnaissance missions, including courses for pilots, navigators, maintenance officers, flight engineers, and loadmasters, and courses in Iraq for maintenance and aircrew personnel.¹⁰⁶ The Iraqi Air Force also has two training squadrons located at Kirkuk Air Base, where a flight school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2007.¹⁰⁷

Challenges Facing the Air Force

During the course of this assessment, the Commission met with virtually all of the Iraqi Air Force general officers (including the Commander and Deputy Commander), numerous field and company grade officers, officer trainees, warrant officers, and enlisted personnel. The Commission visited all the Iraqi Air Force installations save one, plus numerous training and operational facilities. One member of the Commission flew four separate missions with Iraqi Air Force crews and aircraft. On the basis of these numerous meetings and site visits, the Commission developed a number of key findings that are outlined in the sections to follow.

Woven throughout these findings, the Commission notes three particular challenges:

- Identifying, recruiting, and training personnel who are technically capable and motivated to pursue a demanding military profession.
- Molding a leadership and management approach in the emerging officer corps that is consistent with Iraqi culture yet rejects the risk aversion and obsequiousness of the Saddam era.
- Inculcating the need for and developing the skills to synchronize air capabilities with joint (special operations and army) missions.

¹⁰⁵ 9010 Report, July 2005, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ 9010 Report, February 2006, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷ Briefing from Coalition Air Force Transition Team, July 2007.

Recruiting and Training

***Finding:** The long-term capability of the Iraqi Air Force will depend on its success in recruiting quality personnel, and will require greater emphasis on basic and technical training.*

The Commission found that although Air Force recruitment is proceeding at a numerically satisfactory rate, the quality of the available recruiting pool leaves much to be desired. Much of Iraq's middle class, from which technically inclined recruits are normally drawn, has left the country. For those Iraqis remaining in the country, military service, regardless of its personal appeal, carries with it significant risk of insurgent retaliation. The future of an effective Iraqi Air Force depends on recruiting quality candidates who can absorb high standards of training and also adapt to a new culture of responsibility and choice unknown during the Saddam era. Improved screening methods and recruiting tools that reach deeper into the available recruiting pool are required.

Filling the requirement for pilots is a twofold problem: near-term requirements can be filled only by Saddam-era pilots, most of whom had questionable original training and have not flown seriously since 1991. These men generally require significant retraining even at elementary levels, and often seem more interested in enjoying the status of being pilots than in undertaking the hard work of improving their skills. To their credit, they do seem willing, even eager, to engage in the counterinsurgency fight.

The Iraqi Air Force has developed an expansive training plan that, as mentioned, it is now being implemented. Basic enlisted and officer training began in spring 2007, and technical training is scheduled to grow incrementally to adequate capacity by the summer of 2008, when the output of undergraduate pilots should be 30 per year. According to Iraqi Air Force officials, going forward the training plan will have three main facets. First, they will run Air Force Officer training at the Iraqi Military Academy in Rustamiyah. Second, they will use an interim Air Force Academy in Taji for technical training in areas such as maintenance, intelligence, and fuels, as well as for basic enlisted and warrant officer training. Third, the air base in Kirkuk will host air wing training, with a focus on rotary wing training on Jet Rangers and Huey IIs, and fixed wing training on Cessna 172 and Cessna Caravan platforms.¹⁰⁸ At present, absenteeism, particularly among enlisted and warrant officers, is very high (35–40 percent), effectively lengthening the training time for new technicians.

The Iraqi Air Force has shown more enthusiasm for updating its platforms than for training qualified technicians and airmen and building the necessary infrastructure to support them. The latter are more difficult tasks, but they are critical to any successful air force.

***Recommendation:** Together with its Coalition partners, the Iraqi Air Force must increase the quality of its recruits and the capacity of current and planned training programs, while also increasing the manpower authorizations to compensate for chronic absenteeism. Emphasis on the value of training must be relentless.*

¹⁰⁸ Briefing from Iraqi Air Force officials, July 2007.

Maintenance

***Finding:** Although aircraft procurement has been adequate to date, maintenance and sustainment systems lag well behind the procurement program and thus impede overall Iraqi Air Force capability.*

At present, the Iraqi Air Force does not have an air force-wide maintenance or supply system, in part because of the low training output mentioned above, and in part because of its resourcing priorities. In general, the enthusiasm to buy more and better platforms far exceeds the desire to purchase spare parts or perform maintenance on existing platforms and equipment. Moreover, using contractor support as a stepping-stone to developing an organic maintenance capability is often viewed with suspicion by the Iraqi Air Force leadership, who see it as a ruse to get Iraqis to give their money to U.S. firms. In the absence of a sufficient capability within the Iraqi Air Force, much of the responsibility for maintenance currently rests with Coalition advisors.

The inherently technical nature of air force equipment makes the lack of a functioning maintenance and supply system a significant problem, in terms both of establishing operational independence for the Iraqi Air Force and of supporting its growth over time.

***Recommendation:** Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq must redouble its efforts to inculcate the value of quality maintenance and support into the culture of the MOD in general, and of the Iraqi Air Force in particular.*

Training in proper maintenance, including preventive maintenance and the timely purchase of appropriate levels of spare parts, must become the very foundation on which a capable new Iraqi Air Force is built. Until the Iraqi Air Force can take responsibility for its own maintenance, it will continue to require significant Coalition assistance. The key, then, is determining at what point the Iraqi Air Force is ready to assume this critical responsibility. It is important to wait long enough to ensure that the capability to perform the tasks adequately is present, but not so long that the motivation to take responsibility never develops. Once the transition of responsibility for maintenance occurs and a sufficient emphasis on maintenance is embedded in the culture of the Iraqi Air Force, greater numbers of more sophisticated aircraft can be absorbed and managed effectively. However, the Commission believes that even with success in this area, the Iraqi Air Force will likely require Coalition assistance for the next two to three years.

Overall Air Force Direction and Progress

***Finding:** Although the Iraqi Air Force has had a very late start compared to the Iraqi Army, the present design of the Iraqi Air Force is appropriate for its current mission and it is making significant progress.*

The current design of the new Iraqi Air Force is focused on supporting the domestic counterinsurgency operations while using mainly low-tech aircraft. This design appears appropriate for its present stage of development, given its relatively limited lift capacity; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability; and rotary wing insert and retraction capabilities. The Iraqi Air Force's overall capacity is still very small compared with the size of the ground forces that

it is designed to support, and it has almost no lethal capability. The procurement process has begun to acquire low-tech, fixed wing close air support aircraft. When that capability is added to those above, a balanced air force will emerge capable of fully supporting the military's counterinsurgency mission. At that point, Coalition air forces may begin a prudent drawdown.

Current deficiencies in the Iraqi Air Force include the lack of fixed wing close air coverage to fully support the counterinsurgency capability of ground forces, a command and control program that is still largely in its infancy, and the lack of a demonstrable ability to operate jointly with other services. The Iraqi Air Force must develop operating techniques compatible with those of the ground forces that it is intended to support. Traditional independence and cultural habits among its personnel of thinking primarily of their own family or tribe may contribute to the challenge of fostering its seamless integration into joint operations. The Commission discerned some faint progress in this area, but a considerable distance remains to be traveled.

***Recommendation:** Given its good progress to date, the new Iraqi Air Force should stay its present course of developing a counterinsurgency air force with a view toward establishing quality operations and maintenance capability for integration into the joint fight. As these skills are refined, reliance on Coalition support can diminish.*

Conclusion: The Iraqi Air Force's relatively late establishment hampers its ability to provide much-needed air support to ground operations. It is well designed as the air component to the existing counterinsurgency effort, but not for the future needs of a fully capable air force. Though limited by the availability of properly skilled personnel, and by an inclination to value force size and acquisition over operational effectiveness, it is nonetheless progressing at a promising rate during this formative period.