

## **Iraq Situation Report**

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## Executive Summary

Operations by Coalition and Iraqi Forces throughout 2007 have transformed the security situation in Iraq. Violence decreased dramatically in the second half of 2007. The number of enemy attacks in Iraq, the number of attacks against Iraqi civilians, and the number of murders in Baghdad, dropped to levels last seen in early 2006.<sup>1</sup> The mission shift to an aggressive counterinsurgency strategy, with an emphasis on population security, which occurred in January 2007, solidified these gains more quickly than many had predicted. Unexpected developments, like the emergence of Awakening movements and the unilateral Sadrist ceasefire, further helped to accelerate the ground level improvements in security. By late 2007, Al-Qaeda in Iraq had been defeated in Anbar, and its network and safe havens in Baghdad and the belts were largely disrupted. Al-Qaeda in Iraq has been steadily pushed north, into isolated pockets, often far from population centers. Coalition Forces have also aggressively targeted Shi'a militia extremists and Iranian-backed Special Groups, with encouraging results.

The Institute for the Study of War has created this situation report to document the dramatic changes from January 2007 to December 2007. This report details the organization of Coalition and Iraqi Forces, the various enemy groups in Iraq, and operations across Iraq over the last year to defeat these enemy actors and improve security throughout the country.

### Key Points:

- In 2007, the enemy groups in Iraq were al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Sunni rejectionists, Ansar al-Sunna, the Kurdish Workers Party, Shi'a extremists, and Iranian-backed Special Groups. AQI remains the primary enemy of Coalition Forces in 2008, despite the degradation of the terrorist network in Iraq over the last year. The other aforementioned groups also remain serious threats in 2008.
- Coalition operations have degraded the AQI network and fractured the organization's operational capabilities in the last year. Many AQI sanctuaries have been disrupted and denied. Pockets of AQI have been isolated from one another; however, AQI and Sunni insurgents continue to operate between these areas and use them to facilitate money, fighters and weapons to areas of strategic interest.

- In the first half of 2007 Coalition operations in Baghdad and the belts and the Awakening movement in Anbar province drove AQI into MND-North. To combat the “shift” of AQI to the north, MND-North forces conducted a number of division-level operations across northern Iraq since mid-2007. Northern Iraq, particularly Ninewah, Tamim, and northern Salah ad Din provinces, will likely remain the main effort for Coalition offensive operations.
- Coalition and Iraqi Forces aggressively targeted Special Groups and rogue JAM extremists during 2007. These efforts, along with Moqtada al-Sadr’s ceasefire, have contributed to a reduction in violence in central and southern Iraq. However, Special Groups remain active throughout Iraq, and they have continued to target Coalition Forces with especially-lethal explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs).
- The violence between the Sadrist Trend and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq reached unprecedented levels in 2007, culminating in the August 2007 gunfight at the Imam al-Husayn shrine in Karbala. This intra-Shi’a violence will likely continue in 2008, with the potential end of Sadr’s ceasefire and the likelihood of instability in the lead-up to provincial elections and referenda.
- In 2007, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) made strides in growing and maturing the force. The ISF grew from 390,000 to 491,000 and training programs also expanded.<sup>2</sup> However, the ISF still face a number of hurdles in 2008, namely, underdeveloped command and control structures within the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, corruption, logistics, and insufficient training capacity.
- Concerned Local Citizens movements spread throughout Iraq in 2007. Currently, there are more than 80,000 security volunteers. A majority of CLC groups are Sunni; however, Shi’a groups have formed in Baghdad and the belts. In 2007, CLCs were generally deployed at the sub-provincial level in areas where ISF are not present or not trusted due to sectarian acts. It is likely that this type of deployment will continue during the first months of 2008.
- One of the most important issues of 2008 will be whether the Government of Iraq is able to incorporate the existing CLCs into either the Iraqi Police or Iraqi National Police. Failure to do this may have negative consequences for the counterinsurgency mission and for Iraqi security. If the CLCs grow frustrated with the government and are unable to serve Iraq in a more official capacity, they may return to violence or cease fighting Al-Qaeda extremists and militia groups.

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## Multi-National Force-Iraq

### Mission

The current mission of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) is to secure the Iraqi population, particularly in the areas in and around Baghdad. This security is necessary for the Iraq's military and political leaders to develop sustainable and non-violent solutions to Iraq's problems and deliver government services and public goods to the Iraqi people. Additionally, MNF-I aids the Iraqi Government in developing the Iraqi Security Forces, incorporating Concern Local Citizen groups into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and other forms of employment, developing government capacity, and aiding displaced persons as they return.<sup>3</sup>

In order to deliver greater security, Corps commander General Odierno has ordered Coalition Forces to partner with Iraqi Security Forces to "pursue al-Qaeda and other extremists wherever they attempt to take sanctuary." In the last six months, the Corps-level offensives, Operation Phantom Thunder and Phantom Strike, dismantled al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) networks in Baghdad and the belts. The current offensive military operations under Operation Phantom Phoenix focus on Multi-National Division-North, particularly in the Diyala, Ninewah, and Salah ad Din provinces; they will also continue aggressively to pressure AQI networks further south of Baghdad. While Coalition operations have significantly weakened AQI over the past year, General Petraeus views that group as the "most significant enemy that Iraq faces." In addition to operations against al-Qaeda elements, Coalition Forces will continue to target splinters of Jaysh-al-Mahdi (JAM) who do not honor Moqtada as-Sadr's pledge for a ceasefire, organized criminal groups, and Iranian secret cells and all other groups that threaten the security environment.<sup>4</sup>

In line Coalition goals for economic development, General Odierno has planned Operation Phantom Phoenix, which includes an economic component "designed to improve delivery of essential services, economic development and local governance capacity."<sup>5</sup> Coalition efforts in providing economic development rely in part on the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), which allows units to fund local reconstruction projects quickly. CERP funding has been used to great effect in promoting microfinance projects that encourage Iraqi entrepreneurship and build trust.<sup>6</sup>

On the political front, MNF-I continues to help Iraqis "try to come up with Iraqi solutions for Iraqi problems" from the national level to the local level. In 2007, President Bush laid out ambitious goals for Iraq, which would involve a new law for oil revenue sharing as well as reforming de-

Ba'athification laws. Ambassador Crocker has stated that the United States' political role is to "steer, push, prod and pound the table" in order to encourage Iraq's leaders to make progress on their own terms.<sup>7</sup>

## **Area of Operation**

MNF-I is responsible for all operations within Iraq. There are three major subcommands that report to the General David Petraeus, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq. They are: the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I); the Gulf Regional Division, US Army Corps of Engineers; and Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I). MNC-I is the tactical unit responsible for the command and control of all operations in Iraq. Currently, MNC-I is headquartered by the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps and forward deployed to Camp Victory, Baghdad. MNC-I is commanded by Lt. Gen Ray Odierno, and is divided into six major areas of responsibility: Multi-National Division-Baghdad; Multi-National Division-North; Multi-National Force-West; Multi-National Division-Center; Multi-National Division-Center South; and Multi-National Division-South East. U.S forces operate primarily in northern, central, and western Iraq.

## **Enemy Groups**

### *Al-Qaeda in Iraq / Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)*

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is a Sunni insurgent faction commonly referred to as al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers or Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. AQI's goals are to expel Coalition Forces, topple Iraq's central government and establish an Iraqi caliphate based on Sharia. It is one of the largest enemy systems in Iraq with as many as 5,000 fighters and twice as many supporters.<sup>8</sup> 90 percent of the organization is Iraqi, but the 10 percent that are foreign dominate the leadership and conduct a preponderance of the suicide attacks. AQI is responsible for most of the spectacular attacks in Iraq using vehicle bombs (VBIEDs) and suicide attacks. The group also uses IEDs, mortar and rocket attacks, snipers and small arms fire to engage in the fight.

After Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed in June 2006, the organization was led by Abu Ayyub al-Masri, an Egyptian with expertise in explosives who had been personally associated with Zarqawi in Afghanistan. In October 2006, AQI re-labeled itself as the Islamic State of Iraq, attempted to consolidate Sunni insurgent organizations under that umbrella rather than under the Mujahedeen Shura Council. It also emphatically enforced its extreme religious and political agenda on Iraqi communities.

In 2007, Coalition operations and the Awakening movement in Anbar province pushed much of the AQI organization out of Baghdad, the northern and southern belts, and Anbar and into the northern Iraqi provinces of Diyala, Salah ad Din, Tamim and Ninewah. AQI continues to maintain a presence and conduct attacks in these former areas, but is now concentrated in three key areas in the north—Ninewah, Tamim, and Diyala provinces. In addition, former Ba’athists remain in Salah ad Din province, particularly in the vicinity of Bayji, Tikrit, and Samarra. Other AQI elements remain in the vicinity of Mahmudiyah, Latifiyah, and Yusifiyah, the southernmost reaches of the Baghdad belt.

### *Iraqi Sunni Resurgence*

A second enemy group is comprised of former Ba’ath Party members seeking to regain the political and economic power they have lost. There is a distinctive network of former Ba’ath Party elements receiving funding from Saddam Hussein’s family members; as well as a Syrian-based element of Ba’athist exiles.

The CLC movement and AQI/ISI have absorbed many of these resistance groups; however, others have not necessarily reconciled in their entirety. Indeed, some have split as elements have reconciled, as with the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade in Diyala.<sup>9</sup> As General Odierno reported in September, “there are groups that used to be part of the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade who have sworn allegiance to the government of Iraq who are working with Iraqi security forces and Coalition Forces both in Diyala. But there are still some elements that are not. And that’s the point I was trying to make. And they...we continue to conduct operations against them. In fact, in some of these groups there has been a split between the groups, where some have decided they want to reconcile with the government of Iraq and are working with us. There are some that are not. Those that are, we go through a vetting process with them. They pledge their allegiance to the government of Iraq. They have proven over time now that they want to work with us, and they’ve been very helpful. Those that do not... we continue to go after and treat as criminals.”<sup>10</sup>

### *Ansar al Sunna*

Ansar al Sunna is an Iraqi, Sunni terrorist group, which seeks to expel Coalition Forces from Iraq and establish an Islamic state based on Sharia. The exact number of Ansar al Sunna members is unknown, but it is considered the second largest Sunni terrorist group in Iraq behind AQI. The organization is composed mainly of radical Kurds previously associated with the terrorist group Ansar al Islam and also includes some foreign al-Qaeda elements and other Sunni terrorists. Ansar al Sunna operates mostly in northern Iraq, particularly in the Hawijah-Kirkuk area and the northern Diyala River

Valley. Ansar al Sunna has targeted Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi government institutions. However, many of the attacks claimed by the group are unsubstantiated. Ansar al Sunna has links to AQI and has cooperated with AQI in the past, likely serving a key weapons facilitator for AQI.

### *Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)*

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is a Kurdish separatist terrorist group that operates mainly in southeastern Turkey, but has a safe haven and its command and control headquarters in northern Iraq. Approximately 3,000-5,000 members of the PKK currently find safe haven along Iraq's border with Turkey and on Mt. Qaundil on Iraq's border with Iran where the PKK's command and control headquarters are located. The PKK uses northern Iraq as a logistical support area and to plan attacks and train its fighters. Fighters are then sent across the border to conduct attacks in Turkey and often retreat back across the border to Iraq.

### *Iraqi Shi'a Extremists*

In addition to Sunni extremists, there are indigenous Iraqi Shi'a extremist groups which seek to assure their political dominance, often by violent means. The secret cells function alongside the Jaysh al-Mahdi and other militia groups in Iraq. They are not identical, but rather overlapping groups. "They come from militia groups, and they are generally the more extreme members of those militia groups. Some of them have come from Jaysh al-Mahdi. Some have come from other militia groups as well," according to Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, a US military spokesman.<sup>11</sup> Bergner stressed, "While some of these people may have come from or been affiliated with Jaysh al-Mahdi at one point--and these Special Groups were an outgrowth, perhaps, of relationships with Jaysh al-Mahdi—they have in fact broken away from Jaysh al-Mahdi." Furthermore, "... [T]hey are cellular in nature....We believe that these [groups] are operating outside his [Moqtada al-Sadr's] control and that he shares our...concern in the seriousness that they represent..."<sup>12</sup>

The Jaysh al-Mahdi fractured in the spring of 2007. Moqtada al-Sadr publicly ordered his militias not to fight Iraqi Security Forces during Operation Fardh al Qanoon (Enforcing the Law, or the Baghdad Security Plan.) As a result, the Maliki government declared that all militia groups that fought the Iraqi Security Forces were "rogue elements" and therefore were subject to military targeting. Clashes between Iraqi Security Forces and rogue militia elements occurred in Diwaniyah in March and Amarah in June.

Prior to his announcement, in late January, Moqtada al-Sadr left Iraq for Iran. This move further undermined the leadership structure of the militia. In May, the Golden Mahdi Army, a Najaf-based group that claimed to be dispatched by Sadr, attempted to cleanse the Jaysh al-Mahdi of rogue elements not responsive to Najaf.<sup>13</sup> Local groups, calling themselves the Noble Mahdi Army, emerged in Hurriyah in Baghdad to rebuff the attempt of the Golden JAM.<sup>14</sup> The results of these conflicts are not clear.

In addition, criminal elements related to the militias and Special Groups assist and facilitate their extremist activities, even if they are not intentionally promoting these organizations' agendas. "These individuals continue to use violence to incite sectarian hatred for political gain, to promote foreign interests and to achieve personal wealth through criminal activity. They commit extortion, kidnappings, intimidation and murder against the Iraqi people."<sup>15</sup>

### *Special Groups*

According to MNF-I, Special Groups are "militia extremists funded, trained and armed by external sources, specifically, by Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force operatives." They "are largely rogue elements that use a cellular structure to operate independently. Their cellular structure and interactions create a complex web of relationships, which have increasingly been fueled by external influences." As of July 2007, "Qods Force, along with Hezbollah instructors, train[ed] approximately 20 to 60 Iraqis at a time, sending them back to Iraq organized into these Special Groups. They [were] taught how to use EFPs, mortars, rockets, as well as intelligence, sniper and kidnapping operations." "In addition to training, the Qods Force also supplies the Special Groups with weapons and funding of 750,000 to 3 million US dollars a month."<sup>16</sup> Special Groups operate throughout Iraq, but they are concentrated in Sadr City, where they seem to plan their operations.<sup>17</sup>

The goals of the Special Groups are not fully clear. The IRGC-QF and Lebanese Hezbollah may have reorganized their efforts in 2006 to achieve broader political aims in Iraq and for the effect it would have on American policy. Hezbollah in Lebanon exists despite the existence of an elected government there. Lebanese Hezbollah uses existing government structures and personnel to accomplish some of its goals. So the reorganization of Iraqi Special Groups into a Hezbollah-like model implies that the Qods Force might have intended that the Special Groups should operate under the umbrella of Iraqi government institutions in order to compete with (or indeed, effectively replace) Iraq's elected government, as Hezbollah does in parts of Lebanon.

Ryan Crocker, the US Ambassador to Iraq, suggested that the Qods Force might have the goal of assuring that southern Iraq remains beyond the control of the central government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces. In this scenario, the Qods Force might desire an end-state in which those who receive their funding, weapons, and military training from Special Groups provide security and services in southern Iraq and hold political offices there. Ambassador Crocker stated, “The fact that we have arrested the Lebanese Hezbollah trainer and have had many long conversations with the head of the secret cells, so called, of the Jaysh al-Mahdi, who has gone on at length about Iranian connections, has to leave you with the issue out there, is Iran intending a Lebanization or a Hezbollahization of parts of the south. So in addition to...criminally driven violence, you cannot rule out the possibility of an overlay of not just politically directed violence but politically directed violence with outside support.”<sup>18</sup>

General Petraeus emphasized that secret cells are “different from JAM [Jaysh al-Mahdi].” Unlike the standard militiaman in the Mahdi Army, the secret cells “have had extra training and selection,” the training being conducted by the Qods Force.<sup>19</sup> These “secret cells” function as enablers, facilitating Iranian support for the Jaysh al-Mahdi and coordinating continued attacks. Sadr City is the support base for the secret cells, JAM, and many rogue JAM militias within Baghdad. These networks overlap extensively.

A militia commander seized in Najaf illustrates a common relationship between the current Special Groups and the Jaysh al-Mahdi organization. “The former commander’s Jaysh al-Mahdi cell is suspected of conducting aggressive insurgent attacks using EFPs throughout southern Iraq during late 2005 and early 2006. After leaving Jaysh al-Mahdi, he allegedly formed an independent cell of more than 150 Shi’a extremists that is believed to have conducted attacks on Iraqi and Coalition Forces.”<sup>20</sup> US Forces captured another extremist in Sadr City who broke from Jaysh al-Mahdi, ran his own cell, and had ties to weapons provided by Special Groups.<sup>21</sup>

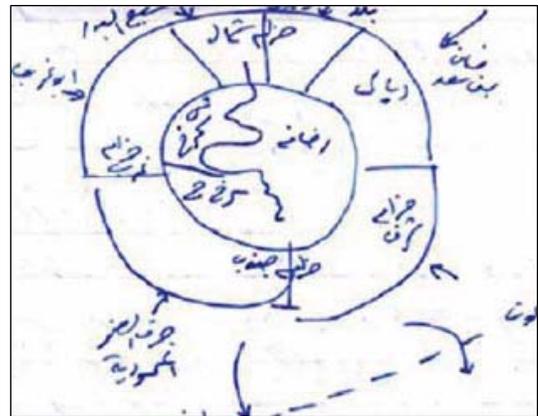
## **Enemy Situation**

### *Background 2007: Al-Qaeda Loses the Battle of the Belts*

The Battle for Baghdad in 2007 focused on clearing the capital city and the belts surrounding it. The Baghdad belts are residential, agricultural, and industrial areas that encircle the city, and networks of roadways, rivers, and other lines of communication that lie within a twenty or thirty mile radius of Baghdad and connect the capital to the rest of Iraq. Beginning in the north, the belts include the cities of Taji, clockwise to Tarmiyah, Baqubah, Buhriz, Besmaya and Nahrwan, Salman Pak, Mahmudiyah, Sadr al-Yusufiyah, Fallujah, and Karmah.

The enemy, both al-Qaeda in Iraq and rogue Shi'a militias, controlled locations in the Baghdad belts between 2004 and 2006. They were able to use the terrain around Baghdad to project forces and funnel supplies into the capital, and to move freely around the city into the provinces. As General Odierno explained, "Attacks occurring in Baghdad often originate in these outerlying regions. Sectarian lines begin to blur in these belts, creating a flashpoint for extremists looking to assert their control over Baghdad. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Shi'a extremists want to control these areas."<sup>22</sup>

General Odierno made his assessment that the belts were important to securing Baghdad in part based upon a key piece of intelligence. In 2006, Coalition Forces captured a hand-drawn map by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, then the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, depicting the battle for the belts.<sup>23</sup> Zarqawi's map of the belts demonstrated al-Qaeda in Iraq's campaign plan for 2006. The organization prioritized controlling the belts in 2006 as a method for controlling terrain and making gains against enemy groups. The map also illustrated the way in which al-Qaeda divided the terrain around the city into sectors for organizational purposes, and it likewise displayed supply routes in the city.



Map 1: Zarqawi's Map of the Baghdad Belts

In late 2006 through early 2007, al-Qaeda's capabilities in Iraq, and particularly in Baghdad, depended on its ability to move around the capital, as well as through it. The strong links around the city made it possible for al-Qaeda to transport weapons and fighters, finance their activities, run kidnapping rings that terrorized locals and used victims to emplace vehicle bombs, and run vehicle-bomb-making factories; all of which were necessary for the network to operate. Consequently, Generals Petraeus and Odierno determined that they had to expel fighters from the Baghdad belts and deny them sanctuary there in order to secure the population of Baghdad. Disrupting al-Qaeda's operations in Baghdad required disrupting the enemy's freedom to move through the belts around Baghdad, rather than expelling them from any one safe haven.

Generals Petraeus and Odierno placed three additional “surge” brigades plus support units in the belts in the spring, while operations in Baghdad continued with two new “surge” brigades (The deployment is described in Iraq Report 5). They also created a new division command, namely Multi-National Division Center, to take responsibility for the terrain in the southern and eastern belts. They reinforced Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, in March and May 2007. In April, they also deployed a new surge brigade in Besmaya, east of Sadr City, and these new US forces began to maneuver in the eastern and southeastern belts of the capital in May. Additional troops reinforced the southwestern belt that runs from Sadr al-Yusifiyah to Mahmudiyah. The new Marine Expeditionary Unit began operating northeast of Fallujah and northwest of Baghdad, along the southern shore of Lake Tharthar, in summer 2007. Finally, General Odierno re-positioned US forces north and west of Baghdad so that they operated as seamlessly as possible through that terrain. General Odierno’s deployment constituted a deep encirclement of Baghdad that aimed to prevent the enemy from moving freely around Iraq or from sector to sector around the city during Operation Phantom Thunder, the Corp-level offensive launched on June 15, 2007, that disrupted enemy sanctuaries in the belts.

Operation Phantom Strike, the follow-on to Operation Phantom Thunder, began on August 13, 2007. Like Phantom Thunder, Phantom Strike was a Corps-level offensive designed to prevent al-Qaeda, Sunni, and Shi’a insurgent elements from reconstituting their forces in Baghdad, its belts, or elsewhere. US and Iraqi forces sought to destroy the remnants of enemy groups and eliminate any new safe havens they tried to establish. Their operations also aimed to prevent Shiite militias from taking over territory once controlled by al-Qaeda.

These Corps offensives, which combined raids and strikes with the intensive projection of US and Iraqi forces into local communities, rendered al-Qaeda’s belt system inoperable even as pockets of local al-Qaeda and a few foreign leaders remained in those areas. General Odierno briefed in November 2007, “...it's clear that they [AQI] no longer have significant sanctuaries and logistics capabilities to (support ?) numerous simultaneous attacks against large portions of the population. However, they still maintain some capability to conduct vicious attacks across parts of Iraq against the civilians. ... [T]op levels of the leadership have been taken either killed or captured. Some of them have been replaced, but those who replace them are not as good as those who were there before. And we continue to see a slow degradation in al-Qaeda's capability here in Iraq.”<sup>24</sup>

### *AQI Operational Concept 2008*

Coalition operations have degraded the AQI network and fractured the organization's operational capabilities in the last year. Many AQI sanctuaries have been disrupted and denied. Pockets of AQI have been isolated from one another; however, AQI and Sunni insurgents continue to operate between these areas and use them to facilitate money, fighters and weapons to areas of strategic interest like Baghdad and Baqubah. It is still unclear whether the enemy command and control nodes in central and northern Iraq are well-linked. It is possible that there are three distinct enemy systems (although some individuals, logistics, and funding move from one to another), or that there is a consolidated enemy system that responds to a more centralized command-and-control apparatus.<sup>25</sup>

Because AQI is on the defensive, its current operational concept is less evident than it was in late 2006 and early 2007. Nevertheless, its priorities seem to be 1) reestablishing support areas for storing weapons and manufacturing VBIEDs, along with sanctuaries for long-term and newly recruited fighters; 2) undermining the CLC movements by assassinating its leaders and intimidating its participants; 3) destabilizing major urban areas.

### *Special Groups and Shi'a Extremists in 2008:*

Aggressive targeting of Special Groups has limited their ability to project force and to move supplies along the lines of communication south of Baghdad. Nevertheless, several trends are evident. 1) The arrest of numerous suspects involved in "train the trainer" activities demonstrates that the IRGC and Special Groups are sponsoring an ongoing training program and an advisory effort. 2) Special Groups are moving weapons, fighters, funding, and resources between Diyala and East Baghdad. 3) Special Groups continue to target officials in southern and central Iraq who oppose their activities. 4) Shi'a extremists, whether part of Special Groups or not, continue to exploit mechanisms for sectarian cleansing, working in conjunction with official government apparatuses attached to the Ministry of the Interior such as the Emergency Response Unit in Khalis in Diyala Province, or the National Police brigade in Saydiyah in Baghdad.

Moqtada al-Sadr has continued to support a ceasefire to which the Jaysh al Mahdi still loyal to him are adhering. It is not clear whether Special Groups aim to peel elements of Jaysh al Mahdi off from the Sadrist Trend. The 8<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army's defeat of Special Groups, rogue elements, and regular Jaysh al Mahdi in Diwaniyah has diminished the power of the Sadrist trend in Qadisiyah.

## **Multi-National Division-Baghdad**

### **Mission**

The mission of Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B) is to improve the security situation in Baghdad. Within Baghdad, Coalition Forces have focused on securing the population by clearing enemy elements from the city, establishing a permanent presence to prevent enemy reinfiltration, and encouraging reconstruction efforts.

### **Area of Operation**

The primary area of responsibility for MND-B is the city of Baghdad. MND-B is also responsible for the areas immediately north and northwest of the capital and west of Baghdad. The city's population is between 6 and 8 million; the population displacements of 2006 cause the divergence in these estimates. Approximately one-third of Iraq's population lives in Baghdad and its suburbs. Baghdad is divided into nine security districts: 9 Nissan; Adhamiyah; Kadhimiyah; Karadah; Karkh; Mansour; Rasheed; Rusafa; and Sadr City.

### **Disposition of Forces**

In 2007, MND-B was headquartered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. As of January 2008, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division assumed responsibility for MND-B. They are based out of Camp Victory, Baghdad. There are currently six brigades in Baghdad, in addition to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry Regiment which is the quick-reaction force in the capital. The 1<sup>st</sup> Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division is responsible for Taji and the areas north and northwest of Baghdad. The 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (ID) is responsible for the Rasheed security district. The 3<sup>rd</sup> HBCT, 4<sup>th</sup> ID will assume the Adhamiyah security district from the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in the next couple of weeks and Sadr City in March. The 4<sup>th</sup> IBCT, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division has just assumed responsibility for the Karadah, 9 Nissan, and Rusafa security districts. The 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne is currently responsible for the Adhamiyah and Sadr City districts and will be redeploying over the next few weeks. The 2<sup>nd</sup> IBCT, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division has recently assumed responsibility for the Kadhimiyah, Karkh, and Mansour districts in northwest Baghdad.



Map 2: Baghdad (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

**Enemy System**

Baghdad has been one of the most violent areas in all of Iraq. The scale of violence in Baghdad is due primarily to the strategic importance of the city and the complexity of its enemy system. Baghdad has contained vital strongholds for both Shi'a extremists and Sunni insurgent groups. These groups have competed for control of terrain in the district. Consequently by late 2006, as both groups were deeply embroiled in a sectarian turf war, violence in the city reached unprecedented levels. US operations in Baghdad and its surrounding areas over the last year have targeted both Shi'a and Sunni enemy networks operating in the region. Now, a year after the Baghdad Security Plan began, violence has

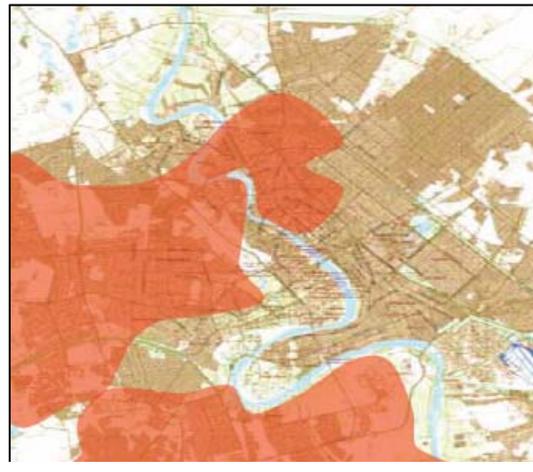
declined and enemy groups have been fragmented across the capital. However, these security improvements are by no means assured; extremist elements remain and enemy groups seek to reinfiltate former strongholds.

The enemy system in Baghdad is composed of two distinct enemy groups—Shi'a militia extremists, who are predominantly members either of the Moqtada as-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) or Iranian-backed Special Groups, and Sunni insurgents, the largest and most lethal of which is al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). These groups have interacted in southern Baghdad in a way that has escalated violence and instability in the region. Shi'a death squads have violently cleansed Sunni residents of many mixed neighborhoods, while AQI has targeted Shi'a and Christian populations via car bombs and execution-style killings.

#### *Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)*

AQI is the most important and most lethal Sunni insurgent group in Baghdad. From 2005 to 2006, AQI infiltrated a number of neighborhoods, primarily in west Baghdad, and began to establish control, often under the auspices of protection from Shi'a death squads. AQI conducted a violent campaign to cleanse the neighborhoods of its Shi'a and Christian residents and impose its radical agenda on the Sunni citizens. AQI's violence was not limited to Shiites; scores of Sunni residents were also killed al-Qaeda death squads and IEDs.<sup>26</sup> By late 2006, AQI had heavily-fortified strongholds in the following areas: the Mansour district, Doura, and the Adhamiyah neighborhood.

The Mansour district is located in western Baghdad, in the area that stretches from the Abu Ghraib area and the Baghdad airport to the Karkh district. A predominantly Sunni district, Mansour neighbors the Shi'a-dominated areas of Kadhimiyah to the north and East Rasheed to the south. Prior to the 2003 invasion, the district was home to many wealthy Sunnis and Ba'athist officials. Hence, when Saddam Hussein's regime fell, it quickly became stronghold for the Sunni insurgency. Throughout 2005 and 2006, AQI became increasingly embedded in the district; by late 2006, the neighborhoods of Ghazaliyah, Ameriyah, Khadra, Jamia, Yarmouk, and Hateen were thoroughly-infiltrated by AQI.<sup>27</sup> These western neighborhoods were important strongholds because they were located along AQI's lines of



Map 3: Areas of AQI Control in Baghdad, December 2006 (Source MNF-I)

communication to its sanctuaries west of Baghdad and in Anbar province. Al-Qaeda would traffic fighters, funds, weapons, and ammunition along routes that ran from the Syrian border, through its strongholds in Anbar province to Abu Ghraib, directly into Mansour. The primary AQI rat lines in Mansour, known as Alternate Supply Route (ASR) Sword and ASR Michigan, run directly into the center of Baghdad.<sup>28</sup> Operations Together Forward I and Together Forward II tried to clear the Mansour district in the summer and fall of 2006, but instead introduced elements of the Shi'a-dominated National Police that carried out sectarian killings and kidnappings. These activities were consistent with persistent attempts by Jaysh al-Mahdi to penetrate Mansour from Kadhimiya to the north and Bayaa and Aamel to the south.

The Doura area in northeast Rasheed was also, until recently, a major AQI stronghold in Baghdad. Like Mansour, Doura also occupies strategic terrain—situated along the Doura expressway, a main thoroughfare into eastern Baghdad, and Route Jackson (the main road leading to both Sunni and Shi'a areas south of Baghdad). It is also home to an oil refinery and power plant.<sup>29</sup> The primary neighborhoods of Doura include Masafee, Jazeera, Hadar, and Mechanics. Prior to 2003, Doura was a mixed area with Shi'a, Sunni, and even Christian populations. Throughout 2005 and 2006, Sunni insurgents concentrated in Doura and carried out an intensely violent campaign against Shi'a and Christian residents, conducting bomb attacks and extra-judicial killings.<sup>30</sup> By late 2006, AQI positions in Doura were heavily-fortified with deep-buried improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Their strongholds in Doura functioned as an important transit point for car bombs and other weapons flowing into Baghdad from other al-Qaeda sanctuaries just south of the capital in Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour.

The third major al-Qaeda stronghold, and the only one in eastern Baghdad, is the Adhamiyah neighborhood. The working-class Adhamiyah neighborhood is located along the Tigris River on the western edge of the Adhamiyah district. It remains the main Sunni enclave in predominantly Shi'a eastern Baghdad. It had traditionally been home to Sunni Arabs, many of whom supported Saddam Hussein's regime and remain hostile to current the Shi'a-led government.<sup>31</sup> The Sunni neighborhoods of Adhamiyah and nearby Waziriya are almost completely surrounded by Shi'a-dominated areas. In early 2006, Shi'a death squads began to enter the Adhamiyah neighborhood, perpetrating kidnapping and execution-style killings.<sup>32</sup> In response, many Sunni residents turned to al-Qaeda in Iraq for protection. Consequently, the Adhamiyah neighborhood became a heavily-fortified al-Qaeda stronghold. Moreover, Adhamiyah's location in northern Baghdad along the Tigris makes it a node on the AQI lines of communication that run along the Tigris River Valley from Mosul, in northern Iraq, to the capital.

From these strongholds, AQI was able to conduct attacks not only on Iraqi civilians in predominantly Shi'a neighborhoods, but also on Coalition and Iraqi forces throughout the city. Al-Qaeda's tactics include suicide bombings, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, kidnapping and

murder, sniper fire, mortar and rocket attacks.<sup>33</sup> By the start of the Baghdad Security Plan, in February 2007, AQI had established a formidable network operating in its many sanctuaries in Baghdad and the belts. Although AQI's network has been substantially degraded within Baghdad over the course of 2007, it has proven its ability to reinfiltrate formerly cleared areas and conduct destabilizing attacks, and therefore, it remains the primary enemy target for Coalition and Iraqi Forces.

### *Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM)*

The Jaysh al-Mahdi (Mahdi Army) is the militia of Moqtada as-Sadr, a major Shi'a political figure in Iraq. The Jaysh al-Mahdi, commonly referred to by its Arabic acronym, JAM, first became prominent in April 2004 when it fought against US forces in East Baghdad and in Najaf. In addition to fighting US and Coalition Forces, JAM has actively contested control of Baghdad - engaging in a long-running territorial struggle with AQI and other Sunni groups for control of the city. It has been held responsible for much of the sectarian cleansing in the Sunni neighborhoods in 2005 and 2006. JAM also effectively infiltrated units of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) during this period, including both the Iraqi Army and the National Police. In retrospect, evidence suggests that Special Groups that did not respond to Moqtada as-Sadr conducted some of the sectarian cleansing, operating under the banner of this militia.

According to Col. J.B. Burton, who commanded the Dagger Brigade in northwest Baghdad, "When we initially came in, we read the expansion being propagated by the Jaysh al-Mahdi, because that was the only Shi'a extremist group that we knew of. But what we didn't understand was that there were multiple flavors of Jaysh al-Mahdi, and that there were also multiple actors moving across our area of responsibility that were operating under the banner of Jaysh al-Mahdi, that may not have been responsive to the directives of Moqtada al-Sadr or to the Office of the Martyr Sadr."<sup>34</sup>

While JAM operates throughout Baghdad, it has several important strongholds, namely, the neighborhoods in Sadr City, Kadhimiyah, and West Rasheed. Sadr City is the hub of JAM activity in Baghdad. The sprawling slum in northeastern Baghdad is home to over 2 million Iraqis and has the largest Shi'a population in Baghdad. Sadr City is rather isolated and hence, protected from the mixed and Sunni areas of Baghdad. The Army Canal forms the western border of Sadr City. The Army Canal and the roads along its edges (Imam Ali Street and Umar bin Khalab Street) bisect eastern Baghdad, running from northwest to southeast. Another canal forms Sadr City's eastern border. Sadr City presents one of the biggest security challenges for US forces in Baghdad. The area is heavily controlled by the

Jaysh al-Mahdi. Militiamen have controlled the entrances to that neighborhood and its thoroughfares, protecting residents from outsiders and inducing residents to join the militia. The residents of Sadr City rely entirely on the Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Office of the Martyr Sadr, the political wing of the Sadrist trend, for security and essential services. US forces do not have a permanent presence in Sadr City, and those US forces responsible for Sadr City operate out of Joint Security Stations and Combat Outposts on the southern and eastern edges of the district. Hence, it remains the center of JAM militia activity.

From Sadr City, JAM elements have expanded into the surrounding districts of eastern Baghdad. The east Baghdad districts of 9 Nissan, Karadah, and Rusafa are all dominated by JAM. The Shaab and Ur neighborhoods, on the eastern edge of the Adhamiyah district, are also heavily influenced by JAM. Because of the road network, these are the neighborhoods through which militiamen probably travel when entering or leaving the northern or western fringes of Sadr City. Since 2006, Sunnis in these eastern districts have been targets of forced displacements and execution-style killings by JAM militia elements.

By early 2006, JAM had expanded into western Baghdad along rat lines that ran from Sadr City, through the Adhamiyah and Rusafa districts, and across the Tigris into Kadhimiyah. The Kadhimiyah district in northwest Baghdad neighbors the Tigris River to the east, and the districts of Karkh and Mansour to the south. The Kadhimiyah neighborhood, on the eastern edge of the district, is home to a revered shrine for the seventh Shi'a Imam, Musa al-Kazimi. Control of this neighborhood, and therefore the shrine, is critical for JAM, both symbolically, for obvious reasons, and strategically, as the donations from pilgrims can generate great revenues. JAM has used Kadhimiyah as the base for its expansion program in western Baghdad. Over the course of 2006, JAM militias pushed further west into Kadhimiyah, displacing Sunni families from Hurriyah and Shula in late 2006. From their Kadhimiyah stronghold, JAM militias have also expanded down through Karkh and Mansour into the neighborhoods of West Rasheed.<sup>35</sup> The attempts by JAM death squads to target the Sunni families in these areas brought them into conflict with AQI and other insurgent groups in these areas.

The neighborhoods of West Rasheed form the base for JAM expansion in southern Baghdad. The neighborhoods of Aamel and Bayaa are located in northwest Rasheed, along Route Irish (the road leading to the Baghdad International Airport). Aamel and Bayaa were once mixed, working-class neighborhoods;<sup>36</sup> however, following the infiltration of Shi'a militias throughout 2006 and the intensification of their campaign against Sunni residents in 2007, the area is now predominantly Shi'a.<sup>37</sup> In these neighborhoods, JAM militias have also controlled local government and access to basic services, further isolating any remaining Sunni residents.<sup>38</sup> The JAM militias and death squads have not

limited their activity to Aamel and Bayaa. From these neighborhoods, these extremists have expanded further into the district, into the neighborhoods of Jihad, Shurta, and Risalah, conducting extra-judicial killings and forced displacements of Sunni residents.<sup>39</sup>

South of Bayaa along Route Jackson is the neighborhood of Saydiyah. Located at the heart of the district, Saydiyah sits along key routes that not only link East and West Rasheed, but also link Baghdad with outlying Sunni areas and Shi'a strongholds further south. Hence, the neighborhood holds strategic importance for Shi'a, Sunni, and US forces alike. Saydiyah also sits between the JAM dominated areas to the west, and Sunni insurgent strongholds to the east. As a result, Saydiyah has been one of the primary battlegrounds for the contest between AQI insurgents and Shi'a militias.<sup>40</sup> Though Saydiyah remains a mixed neighborhood, it was once predominantly Sunni and home to many Ba'athist government officials.<sup>41</sup> In 2004, Sunni insurgent groups, including AQI, began to infiltrate Saydiyah; and over the course of the next year, the Sunni insurgency became more deeply rooted in the neighborhood.<sup>42</sup> Despite a push by US forces to clear the area in late 2006, AQI continued its attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces as well as Shi'a civilians in Saydiyah.<sup>43</sup> Violence only escalated further in 2006, as the competition AQI and other Sunni insurgent factions intensified; as AQI stepped up its bombing campaign against Shi'a civilians;<sup>44</sup> and as Shi'a militia cleansing of Sunni civilians increased on the heels of nominal US clearing operations under OTF I and II.<sup>45</sup> By the end of 2006, sectarian violence in Saydiyah had reached unprecedented levels as the contest between AQI and Shi'a death squads raged.<sup>46</sup> Today, Saydiyah remains one of the more dangerous neighborhoods in Baghdad.

### *Special Groups*

In addition to JAM and other militia criminal elements, Iranian-backed Special Groups have become increasingly active in Baghdad and central Iraq since mid-2007. These groups principally target US forces operating in the area, in the hopes of prompting their eventual withdrawal.<sup>47</sup> They also actively seek to undermine the Maliki government. The hallmark weapon of Special Groups is the explosively-formed penetrator (EFP), an especially lethal IED capable of penetrating heavily-armored vehicles.

Special Groups operate throughout Iraq – specifically in Baghdad and the belts using the major road networks leading from Iran to the capital for facilitation. Within Baghdad, Special Groups extremists have been found to operate in many of the JAM-dominated areas, primarily in the districts of Sadr City, 9 Nissan, Kadhimiyah and West Rasheed. Special Groups lines of communication and transit routes run northwest of the capital in Diyala province and south of the capital in Babil and Wasit

provinces. These northern routes run from the border crossing near Khanaqin south along the Diyala River or west from Mandali and Balad Ruz to the Khalis corridor north of Baghdad. A number of Special Groups operatives and weapons caches have been found in the cities of Khalis, Qasarin, and Khan Bani Saad. South of Baghdad in Wasit province, EFPs, weapons, recruits for Special Groups, and smuggled goods have flowed through the major border crossing between Mehran, Iran and Zurbatiya, Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

Intelligence from the January 20, 2007 Special Groups attack on a Karbala Province Joint Coordination Center led to the captures and kills of the high-ranking network leaders in the spring. The captures of Qods Force operatives in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah have also generated a great deal of information on the Special Groups networks in Iraq. The increased pace of Coalition raids has also resulted in the capture of numerous other Special Groups cell leaders, weapons facilitators, and trainers. Coalition Forces have actively targeted Special Groups extremists since mid-2007.

### **Developments in 2007**

In the wake of the failed effort to secure Baghdad from mid to late-2006 under Operations Together Forward I and II (OTF I and II), President Bush announced a new US strategy in Iraq in early January 2007. Termed a “New Way Forward,” this strategy emphasized securing the Iraqi population. When the Baghdad Security Plan, or Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, was launched month later in February 2007, US forces began to fan out throughout the city, conducting clearing operations and establishing permanent bases in the neighborhoods at Joint Security Stations (JSSs) and Combat Outposts (COPs). Within Baghdad, the mission has remained focused securing the population by clearing enemy elements from the city, establishing a permanent presence to prevent enemy reinfiltration, and encouraging reconstruction efforts.

Coalition and Iraqi Forces have focused largely on clearing AQI strongholds throughout Baghdad. With the launch of the Baghdad Security Plan in February 2007, operations began in northeast Baghdad, particularly in the Adhamiyah neighborhood. Operation Arrowhead Strike 6 focused clearing operations and an increased patrol presence to Adhamiyah.<sup>49</sup> A new Combat Outpost (COP) was established in the Adhamiyah security district near the Rusafa border on February 11, 2007, with the purpose of enhancing the presence of US forces in the area.<sup>50</sup> Clearing operations also continued to target insurgent and militia activity in the neighborhoods of Adhamiyah, Shaab, and Ur. From April to May, Coalition Forces constructed a concrete barrier wall around the Adhamiyah neighborhood, as part of the Baghdad Security Plan’s “Safe Neighborhood” project.<sup>51</sup> These temporary barriers were erected to protect the local population from sectarian attacks, while at the same time, prevent insurgents within

Adhamiyah from carrying out violent attacks elsewhere.<sup>52</sup> According to US military officials, “Murders [were] down 61 percent in Adhamiyah between the beginning of April, when construction began, and May 28.”<sup>53</sup>

Large-scale clearing operations were also conducted in northwest Baghdad throughout the spring and early summer. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division (the Dagger Brigade), led by Col. J.B. Burton, teamed with the troops from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stryker Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division (Arrowhead Brigade) to clear the Mansour district, beginning in mid-March 2007. Operation Arrowhead Strike 9, as the clearing was termed, targeted AQI elements in the Mansour security district, specifically Ghazaliyah and Ameriyah.<sup>54</sup> By May 1, 2007, Arrowhead Strike 9 was completed. In all, US forces reduced 3,200 roadside bombs, captured 161 insurgents, 42 of whom were placed in long-term detention, and seized “enough weapons and explosives to outfit an enemy infantry battalion.”<sup>55</sup> Clearing operations also expanded to the neighborhoods of Khadra, Yarmouk, and Mansour during Arrowhead Strike 9.<sup>56</sup>

Following the major clearing operations in each of these former AQI strongholds, Coalition and Iraqi Forces continued to target any remaining AQI elements, in order to maintain control over the cleared areas and prevent enemy reinfiltration. To solidify these security gains, they also worked with Sunni residents who had come forward as security volunteers, particularly in Ghazaliyah, Ameriyah, and Adhamiyah. Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) groups like the Ghazaliyah Guardians, Knights of Ameriyah, and Adhamiyah Critical Infrastructure Guard Force (CIGF) have partnered with Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, manning joint checkpoints and protecting local infrastructure.<sup>57</sup> This partnership has contributed to the significant security improvements in the district and the degradation of the AQI network in Baghdad. Currently, the monthly salaries of the security volunteers are paid by the US military’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP). Eventually, US forces would like to see these security volunteers integrated into the Iraqi Security Forces, as members of the Iraqi Police.

The clearing of Doura, perhaps the most difficult AQI stronghold to clear, began shortly after the launch of Fardh al-Qanoon in the market area. During March and April, Coalition Forces began to fan out into the neighborhoods of East Rasheed, beginning construction on JSSs and COPs throughout the area.<sup>58</sup> US forces began operations in northwestern Doura with the clearing of the market area. In an effort to secure and revive the Doura market, Coalition Forces also constructed hardened blast walls around the perimeter.<sup>59</sup> By the spring of 2007, Rasheed clearing operations had become the main effort for MND-B Soldiers, as they expanded into further into the AQI-controlled neighborhoods. In late May, Coalition Forces expanded the aggressive clearing operations into East Rasheed during Operation Dragon Fire East. Roughly 2,000 US Soldiers took part in Dragon Fire East, along with Iraqi forces from the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> National Police Division.<sup>60</sup> Coalition Forces actively targeted AQI networks across Doura. On May 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, US and Iraqi Soldiers discovered 18 IEDs in Doura, due in large

part to tips from local residents.<sup>61</sup> By June 1<sup>st</sup>, over 170 weapons caches had been recovered and more than 100 individuals had been detained.<sup>62</sup>

Coalition and Iraqi Forces worked to hold these cleared areas throughout the summer, by continuing to target AQI remnants and prevent the reinfiltration of insurgents. In the fall of 2007, they maintained their offensive momentum by conducting another large-scale operation in Rasheed. On September 16, 2007, US Soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry and 4<sup>th</sup> BCT, 1<sup>st</sup> ID launched Operation Dragon Talon II in Rasheed.<sup>63</sup> While the brigade-level offensive involved operations across the district, the primary focus for clearing were the areas of southeast Doura, in particular the Hadar neighborhood.<sup>64</sup> Following the clearing of AQI from northern Doura and Masafee in the spring, and Saydiyah in the summer, insurgents reconstituted in Hadar, making it one of the last remaining concentrations of AQI in all of Baghdad.<sup>65</sup> From September to December 2007, US and Iraqi forces conducted daily operations to capture or kill enemy elements, seize weapons, and clear Hadar.<sup>66</sup> Over the course of these months, over 100 IEDs were discovered and reduced in Hadar and more than 50 caches were seized.<sup>67</sup>

Coalition successes against al-Qaeda in Iraq and the larger Sunni Arab insurgency have permitted the re-allocation of resources and effort against a problem that has plagued attempts to establish a stable government in Iraq from the outset. Throughout the last six months, US forces have also conducted an aggressive campaign against Shi'a militias and Special Groups in Baghdad and central Iraq. Coalition and Iraqi Forces have worked to cut Special Groups and JAM supply lines in and around Baghdad, by targeting extremist leaders, facilitators, trainers, and operatives. From July to October, operations against Shi'a extremists continued almost daily. In August 2007, Moqtada as-Sadr ordered a Jaysh al-Mahdi ceasefire following an outbreak of violence in Karbala, revealing that significant elements of the movement were no longer under his control.<sup>68</sup> For now, he is accommodating US operations against rogue JAM elements and Special Groups. It is unclear at this point, however, whether he will renew his ceasefire in February 2008.



Map 4: Areas of AQI Influence in Baghdad,

In the fall and winter of 2007, it became clear that the operations to dismantle the enemy system in Baghdad were having their desired effect. From November 2006 to December 2007, the number of attacks on civilians in Baghdad decreased roughly 80 percent.<sup>69</sup> During this same period, the number of

murders has declined by 90 percent, while IEDs are down by 70 percent.<sup>70</sup> Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces have continued their efforts to solidify these security gains. They have continued operations to control cleared areas, by targeting remnants of AQI, rogue JAM elements, and Special Groups extremists who have continued to target Iraqi civilians. US Forces have continued to work with CLC movements and increased pressure to incorporate these security volunteers CLCs into the ISF. They have also worked to improve governance, promote economic development and reconstruction across Baghdad.

AQI, though severely degraded in the capital, remains the primary enemy target. While they are by no means in control of any area of Baghdad, they remain present in small numbers in some areas of Rasheed, western Mansour, and Adhamiyah.<sup>71</sup> Al-Qaeda insurgents have responded to the developments of the last six months by attacking leaders of the CLC movements and members of the ISF in Baghdad. Suicide bombs and IEDs have especially targeted Iraqi police, soldiers, and concerned citizens in the districts of Adhamiyah, Karadah, and Mansour.<sup>72</sup>

## **Multi-National Division-North**

### **Mission**

Task Force Iron's primary mission is to disrupt and dismantle al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist groups in order to provide security for the Iraqi people and promote reconciliation. To that end, Coalition Forces have worked Iraqi Security Forces in several division-level operations across MND-N in the last six months including Operation Lightning Hammer I & II, Operation Iron Hammer, Operation Iron Reaper and the ongoing Operation Iron Harvest.

### **Area of Operation**

MND-N controls the northern provinces of Diyala, Salah ad Din, Tamim, and Ninewah, which stretch north from Baghdad to the Iranian border in the east, the Syrian border in the west and the Kurdish Regional Government in the north. Altogether this area is about the size of Georgia. The terrain is largely rural with arable land in the Diyala and Tigris River Valleys, drier more desert-like conditions to the west and north and mountainous terrain to the north and east. The Diyala and Tigris Rivers, in addition to the Hamrin Ridge which runs northwest from northern Diyala to northern Salah ad Din, are distinctive terrain features. Important cities include Baqubah, Khalis, and Muqdadiyah in Diyala; Balad, Samarra, Tikrit, and Bayji in Salah ad Din; Hawijah, Kirkuk in Tamim; and Mosul, Tal'Afar, and Sinjar in Ninewah. The population in MND-N is mixed. Southern Diyala has a mixed Sunni and Shi'a Arab population. Northern Diyala has a mixed Sunni and Shi'a Arab population, but becomes increasingly Kurdish above Lake Hamrin. Salah ad Din is largely Sunni Arab. Tamim has a mixed Sunni Arab and Kurdish population with smaller populations of Turcomans and Assyrians. Ninewah has a mixed Sunni Arab and Kurdish population with smaller populations of Shi'a Arabs, Turcomans, Assyrians and Yezidis.

### **Disposition of Forces**

Coalition Forces in MND-N are headquartered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division at Contingency Operating Base Speicher outside of Tikrit. Altogether there are approximately 24,000 Coalition force soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors in MND-N. They include the 4<sup>th</sup> SBCT, 2<sup>nd</sup> ID, which is responsible for Diyala province; the 1<sup>st</sup> IBCT, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, which is responsible for Salah ad Din province; the 1<sup>st</sup> IBCT, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, which is responsible for Kirkuk and Tamim province; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR, which is responsible for Mosul and Ninewah province.

There are currently about 50,000 Iraqi Army forces in MND-N.<sup>73</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> ID is headquartered at Kirkush Training Base east of Baqubah and is responsible for Diyala province. Several battalions are currently in Baqubah, and a battalion each is in Muqdadiah, Khalis, and Mandali. The 4<sup>th</sup> ID is headquartered in Samarra and is responsible for Salah ad Din province and Tamim province. Several battalions are in Samarra, Tikrit, Baiji and Kirkuk. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ID is headquartered in Mosul and is responsible for Mosul and the surrounding area. Several battalions are in Mosul, as well as Qayyarah to the southeast. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Motorized Division is also headquartered in Mosul, but operates in western Ninewah province in Tal' Afar and Sinjar.<sup>74</sup> There are also approximately 80,000 Iraqi police and 15,000 concerned local citizens in the MND-N area.<sup>75</sup>



Map 5: Northern Iraq (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

## Enemy System

### *Al-Qaeda in Iraq*

During the Phantom Thunder and Phantom Strike Corps offensives, much of AQI was pushed out of safe havens in central and western Iraq and into northern Iraq. AQI continues to maintain a presence and conduct attacks in these former areas, but is now concentrated along a number of key lines in the north: Ninewah province, specifically in cities of Mosul, Tal' Afar, Sinjar, and Rabiah; Tamim province, specifically from Hawijah to Kirkuk; Diyala province, especially in the northern Diyala River valley north of Muqdadiyah and around Lake Hamrin; and Salah ad Din province, near Bayji, Tikrit, and Samarra.

The Ninewah province has only a small contingent of US forces, and is the key point of entry for foreign fighters coming to Iraq from Syria and is an attractive region for AQI to find a safe haven by exploiting tensions between Sunni Arabs and Kurds. Mosul is the provincial capital and the proclaimed capital of the Islamic State of Iraq. Abu Ayyub al-Masri has twice transited through Mosul in recent months indicating that AQI leadership is operating in and around the Mosul area.<sup>76</sup> Tamim province also has only a small contingent of US forces. Its main cities, Kirkuk and Hawijah, sit on the ethnic fault line between Sunni Arabs and Kurds and are lie along strategic communication lines above the Hamrin Ridge and along the road network connecting Mosul to the upper Diyala River Valley. The area north of Muqdadiyah was one of the main areas where AQI was thought to have regrouped after being pushed out of Anbar, Baghdad, and the belts. In the last few months it has served as an AQI safe haven and a logistical base to project force down the Diyala River Valley. Coalition operations recently cleared the area north of Muqdadiyah targeting 50-60 senior AQI members and 200 lower level fighters. Salah ad Din province is the traditional home of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq and the cities of Bayji, Tikrit, and Samarra serve as a strategic line of communication down the Tigris River Valley to Baghdad and southern Diyala province.

Coalition operations have degraded the AQI network and fractured the organization's operational capabilities in the last year. As a result, these four key areas have been partly isolated from one another and likely operate somewhat independently. AQI, however, continues to operate between these areas and uses them to facilitate money, fighters and weapons to areas of strategic interest like Baghdad and Baqubah.

### *Special Groups in the North*

In MND-North Special Groups operate in the Diyala River Valley using the highways and roads that lead from Iran into Baghdad and the belts. This road network begins at the legitimate border crossing on a major highway at Khanaqin and the secondary road at Mandali. The secondary road leading from Mandali is the preferred smuggling and facilitation route. Both roads lead from these border crossings to Baqubah, the capital of Diyala. From Baqubah, a major highway leads south to Baghdad, while another major road leads west to the Khalis Corridor. The Khalis Corridor connects the Diyala and Tigris River Valleys and runs from Khalis south through Qasarin into Baghdad. These lines have been used to facilitate trainers and fighters to and from Iran and to funnel EFP's, other weapons and money into Baghdad and the belts.

Special Groups operational activities have focused on the southern portion of Diyala province. In 2007, Special Groups were active in the Khalis Corridor and Baqubah fighting both AQI and Coalition Forces. Throughout the year Coalition Forces discovered a number of EFP caches and made a number of key arrests among the Special Groups leadership decreasing the network's operational capabilities. Special Groups, however, remain a fundamental threat to Coalition Forces and continue to operate between a few key nodes in southern Diyala and Baghdad. Coalition Forces have recently captured Special Groups facilitators in Qasarin, Huwaysh and Khan Bani Saad.<sup>77</sup> Based on these continuing raids and the lack of attacks on Coalition Forces and Sunni groups by Special Groups individuals in Diyala, it is likely that Special Groups continue to be active in Diyala using the lines of communication through the province for facilitation and intelligence, but have concentrated attacks elsewhere.

### **Developments in 2007**

In the first half of 2007 Coalition operations in Baghdad and the belts and the Awakening movement in Anbar province drove AQI into MND-North. To combat the "shift" of AQI to the north, MND-North forces conducted a number of division-level operations across northern Iraq since mid-2007.

As a part of the Corps-level offensive Operation Phantom Thunder, which aimed to stop insurgents in the provinces from supporting violence in Baghdad, MND-North conducted Operation

Arrowhead Ripper in June and July. Arrowhead Ripper cleared AQI out of Baqubah and blocked the organization from reestablishing safe havens west of the city in the Khalis Corridor and to the south in Khan Bani Saad. As Baqubah was cleared, Coalition Forces reconnoitered northeast of the city to pursue AQI and destroy enemy positions above Baqubah in the Diyala River Valley.

The Corps-level offensive Operation Phantom Strike was launched on August 13<sup>th</sup> and aimed to continue to pursue AQI and other insurgents from reestablishing in Baghdad, the belts or the surrounding areas. As part of Phantom Strike, MND-North launched Operation Lightning Hammer I, which spread out from the urban centers in Diyala clearing approximately 50 villages and establishing security up the Diyala River Valley to Muqdadiyah. Beginning in early September 2007, Operation Lightning Hammer II prevented the reestablishment of AQI in areas previously cleared in Diyala and in October the city of Muqdadiyah was cleared. A series of coordinated raids up the Tigris River Valley and in northern Iraq were also conducted, seeking to disrupt the AQI network that was trying to regroup in MND-North in the cities of Samarra, Tikrit, Bayji and Mosul.

In November 2007, Operation Iron Hammer was launched, which focused heavily on the Za'ab triangle. The Za'ab triangle comprises the area between Bayji, Sharqat and Hawija in northern Iraq. Before September, Coalition Forces did not have a significant presence in the Za'ab triangle and military planners believed that many of the AQI elements pushed out of Diyala and elsewhere would attempt to regroup in this area. As the operation progressed it expanded into all four provinces—Diyala, Ninewah, Salah ad Din, and Tamim. Coalition Forces captured a number of high value targets and discovered 79 weapons caches during Iron Hammer. Operation Iron Reaper was the follow on to Iron Hammer. Iron Reaper continued to target pockets of AQI in the Za'ab triangle and the Tigris River Valley. But the main effort was to clear the Khalis Corridor that connects the Tigris and Diyala River Valleys and push out to the area north of Muqdadiyah. Coalition Forces conducted important reconnaissance in force operations north of Muqdadiyah in order to determine how AQI functioned in Diyala and set forces for the next phase of operations.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq launched a new corps-level offensive Operation Phantom Phoenix, which continued to pursue AQI as they fled previous sanctuaries and attempted to regroup in smaller areas throughout Iraq. As part of Phantom Phoenix, MND-North launched Operation Iron Harvest, which simultaneously targeted AQI in Diyala, Ninewah, Salah ad Din, and Tamim provinces. The main thrust of Iron Harvest was the brigade-level Operation Raider Harvest, which targeted the AQI sanctuary in Diyala north of Muqdadiyah. 5,000 Coalition Forces along with the 5<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division fanned out into the villages of the “breadbasket” northwest of Muqdadiyah clearing

the area and pushing AQI further north above Lake Hamrin and along the remote and sparsely populated Hamrin Ridge. The brigade-level Operation Warrior Harvest was launched at the same time in the Za'ab triangle area also targeting AQI. Battalion-level operations under Iron Harvest have targeted Tikrit, Samarra, Mosul and to the southeast of Mosul in conjunction with the Za'ab triangle operations.

Operations in MND-North in the last six months have continued to push AQI further north into smaller, more remote areas of decreasing relevance. A large portion of AQI has been essentially pushed above the Hamrin Ridge to a line that runs from the Syrian border through Mosul to Hawija and down to Lake Hamrin. The AQI elements that remain in Diyala and the Tigris River Valley above Baghdad have been fragmented and cannot conduct sustained operations or transit elsewhere easily. As MND-North forces have cleared areas in the north the goal has been to bring in Iraqi Security Forces to maintain security and allow for the establishment of local councils that can then be tied into the provincial and federal governments so that Coalition Forces can continue to pursue AQI as it flees and attempts to regroup further north. As Operation Phantom Phoenix unfolds Coalition Forces will likely be realigned to shift some forces to MND-North in order to continue to pursue and dismantle AQI, particularly in Ninewah province.

## **Multi-National Division-Center**

### **Mission**

Task Force Marne's mission is to secure and clear the areas south and east of Baghdad in order to stop the flow of weapons and accelerants to violence into Baghdad. To that end, Coalition Forces are teaming with Iraqi Security Forces under Operation Marne Fortitude to move into this zone – which had previously seen no Coalition presence for two years – in order to provide security. Under Operation Marne Fortitude II (which began in January, 2008), this focus shifted somewhat to development and reconstruction.<sup>78</sup>

### **Area of Operation**

Multi-National Division – Center (MND-C) controls the belts to the south and east of Baghdad, ranging from the Iraqi border with Saudi Arabia to the border with Iran – altogether an area the size of West Virginia. This includes the provinces of Babil, Baghdad (namely the Mada'in and Mahmudiyah Qadas), Karbala, and Wasit. The terrain in this area is largely rural farmland. The main population centers include smaller cities like Salman Pak, Al-Mahmudiyah, Al-Iskandariyah, and Al-Musayyib that are close to Baghdad as well as al-Hillah, Karbala, and al-Kut, which are located further south. The population of this territory is mixed between Sunni and Shi'a Arabs in the northern areas of the area of operations, though the southern Iraq is overwhelmingly Shi'a.

### **Disposition of Forces**

Coalition Forces in MND-C are headquartered by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (ID) at Camp Victory in Baghdad. They include the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCTs) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade from the Republic of Georgia.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> HBCT of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID is headquartered at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Kalsu, in Al-Iskandariyah and commanded by Col. Terry Ferrell. The 2-3 Infantry is responsible for the west bank of the Tigris River immediately south of Baghdad in the north Babil and Wasit Provinces. The 3<sup>rd</sup> HBCT (Sledgehammer Brigade) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID is made up of 3,500 soldiers and has the responsibility for areas somewhat further to the east of 2<sup>nd</sup> HBCT and includes the Salman Pak area. It is headquartered at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Hammer, in Besmaya and is commanded by Col. Wayne Grigsby. 3,000 Soldiers of the 4<sup>th</sup> HBCT (Vanguard Brigade) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID are located in Iskandariyah, at FOB Kalsu

and are led by Col. Tom James. Their area of operations is south of the 2<sup>nd</sup> HBCT and includes Karbala Province and Southern Babil province. The 3<sup>rd</sup> IBCT of the 101<sup>st</sup> Division operates out of Camp Striker in Baghdad and is led by Col. Dominic Caracillo. It is responsible for areas to the immediate southwest of Baghdad and has been involved in many reconstruction and transition operations. Finally, 2,000 soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade from the Republic of Georgia operate out of FOB Delta and are responsible for most of Wasit province. They man six checkpoints with a goal of inspecting every truck coming from Iran on the al-Kut highway, which is the main route from Iran to Baghdad.<sup>79</sup> These soldiers also provide troops for a joint quick reaction force.<sup>80</sup>

There are currently roughly 10,000 Iraqi Army forces in MND-C. They are drawn primarily from the 8<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division in Diwaniyah and a battalion from the 6<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division in Arab Jabour.<sup>81</sup> The Iraqi army has moved from static operations that focused on checkpoints and patrol bases and is able to execute offensive actions, clear IEDs and carry out complex coordinated actions in a way that they were previously not capable of doing.<sup>82</sup> In addition, there are over 10,000 Iraqi National Police and border guards and over 30,000 Concerned Local Citizens operating in MND-C.<sup>83</sup>



Map 6: Multi-National Division-Center (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

## Enemy System

AQI previously relied upon much of the territory in the northern parts of MND-C as a safe haven which it used to fuel violence inside Baghdad. Former AQI strongholds included Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab, which are to the immediate south of Baghdad and Salman Pak, which is approximately 30 miles southeast of Baghdad.

In the southern areas, there is an intra-Shi'a competition between Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Badr Corps. These Shi'a groups have been supported by Iranian activity. Iran has supplied rockets and explosively formed projectiles to militia groups and has trained some Shi'a militants who have then passed that training on to others inside of Iraq. Beyond this, General Lynch has estimated that there are approximately fifty Iranian agents operating with Special Groups within the MND-C area.<sup>84</sup>

Enemy capabilities have degraded substantially since Task Force Marne was put in place. At the start, there were approximately 40 attacks per day. At present, however, MND-C troops are coming under attack fewer than five times per day. Though some of this seems to be because of Jaysh al-Mahdi's declaration of a six month cease-fire, much of it is due to the degradation of AQI's capabilities within the area of operations.<sup>85</sup>

### *AQI in Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab*

Insurgent activity in the MND-C area of operations has been concentrated most heavily in Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab, former AQI sanctuaries. These areas have been critical support zones for AQI insurgents in the Doura area of southern Baghdad. The village of Hawr Rajab is situated immediately south of Baghdad proper. The surrounding area of the same name is composed mainly of farmland. To the north, it borders the Abu Disheer neighborhood of the Rasheed Security District. The population of Hawr Rajab is overwhelmingly Sunni.<sup>86</sup> The small villages that comprise Arab Jabour are located just east of Hawr Rajab. Karb de Gla in Rasheed neighbors to the north; and the Tigris River runs along the north and eastern edges of Arab Jabour. According to Lt. Colonel Ken Adgie, the commander of the 1-30 Infantry Regiment currently responsible for Arab Jabour, "The terrain is defined by thick palm groves; lots of canals, both large, wide ones and smaller ones; and then dirty, dusty roads."<sup>87</sup> Unlike the Rasheed district, the population of Arab Jabour is very homogenous. Roughly 99.8 percent of is Sunni, 95 percent of which comes from the al-Jaburi tribe.<sup>88</sup> Both Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour were Sunni Ba'athist strongholds prior to the 2003 invasion. Indeed, many affluent Ba'athist officials had large vacation homes along the Tigris River in Arab Jabour.

In the years following, the Sunni insurgency took root in these areas as there was no sustained US force presence. By October 2006, when the 1-40 Cavalry arrived in Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour, these areas were tightly controlled by AQI. The farmlands and dense palm groves gave al-Qaeda a strong advantage in carrying out its asymmetric strategy. AQI had heavily fortified sanctuaries using defensive belts and a sophisticated command-and-control structure across this area. The abundance of fertilizer offered an almost limitless supply of chemicals that could be used for explosives. Furthermore, the dense palm groves offered AQI numerous hiding places for weapons caches.

Arab Jabour, in particular, became critical insurgent support zone, where al-Qaeda could assemble and stockpile vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), IEDs, and other munitions, which could then be easily transported into Baghdad.<sup>89</sup> Because the 1-40 was responsible for such a large and hostile area, the unit was limited in its ability to target AQI safe havens. Major operations to dismantle these insurgent networks didn't begin until the arrival of the 1-30 Infantry Battalion in June 2007. At that time, the 1-30 assumed responsibility for Arab Jabour, while the 1-40 remained responsible for Hawr Rajab.

Upon 2<sup>nd</sup> HBCT's arrival in June 2007, when Coalition offensive clearing operations began, there was an average of 42 attacks per week for the first several weeks. By December, this had fallen to 14 to 15 attacks per week, illustrating a qualitative decline in AQI capabilities. Furthermore, the initial attacks involved deep-buried IEDs. The IED threat declined substantially as Coalition Forces successfully acted on intelligence from Iraqis and arrested AQI members while finding IEDs and weapons caches. AQI did not carry out kidnapping or murder operations in this territory and there were no EFP attacks.<sup>90</sup> At present, it seems that AQI has been forcibly removed from the area. There are currently remnants of AQI in Arab Jabour, but these are not high-level members. Major airstrikes on that area in January 2008 were followed by a reinforced ground offensive that sought to clear the area of all AQI remnants from Arab Jabour.<sup>91</sup>

### *Mada'in Qada*

3<sup>rd</sup> HBCT's area of operations includes a mix of Sunni extremists, Shi'a extremists, and has some Iranian influence. Prior to the surge, Sunni extremists, Shi'a extremists and Iranian operatives essentially owned the battle space and could operate with relative impunity. They used this territory as a means to smuggle weapons and people ("accelerants to violence) into Baghdad, often by way of boat traffic on the Tigris River. The different groups are no longer able to operate with such freedom as the

brigade's operations have been successful in securing much of the contested territory.<sup>92</sup> There was a history of sectarian strife within Mada'in Qada, but this appears to have dropped as the different groups' capabilities have degraded.<sup>93</sup>

The Sunni extremists' capabilities have been degraded throughout the area of operations, just as they have been throughout all of MND-C. Much of this seems to be a result of successful operations against al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2<sup>nd</sup> HBCT's area of operations. Shi'a extremist groups, particularly Jaysh-al-Mahdi have been pushed southwards as the local population has become less tolerant of their presence.<sup>94</sup> Generally, the Sunni groups would rely upon deep-buried IEDs while Shi'a groups would use EFP devices in their attacks on Coalition Forces.

Iranian influence appears to be declining in Mada'in Qada as well, as indicated by the reduction in attacks from EFP devices from fifteen per month to nearly zero. The threat does still exist, though, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> HBCT foiled an apparent rocket attack that involved Iranian-made rockets pointed at the brigade's headquarters.<sup>95</sup> Iranians had been using this area of operations (particularly the al-Kut highway) as a major artery to supply weapons into Baghdad.<sup>96</sup>

### *Euphrates River Valley*

In the Euphrates River Valley in the northwest portion of Babil province, there were approximately 30 members of AQI that were terrorizing the population and using the territory as a sanctuary. These groups are less capable, primarily relying on IEDs made from artillery rounds as well as some home-made explosives.

Additionally, southern Babil has a combination of Shi'a criminals and extremists, including Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM, or the Mahdi Army) and the Badr Corps. These groups primarily rely on EFP devices for assassinations and ambushes. Shi'a groups recently successfully assassinated the Babil Police Chief, General Qais, using EFPs.<sup>97</sup>

### **Developments in 2007**

MND-C conducts operations in the belts to the south and east of Baghdad, with a goal of keeping accelerants to violence out of Baghdad. In the second half of 2007, Coalition Forces focused primarily on removing insurgents from their safe havens through a series of offensive operations. Under

the larger Corps-level offensives Phantom Thunder and Phantom Strike, Task Force Marne undertook a series of month-long offensives. These operations began by uprooting AQI from areas closest to Baghdad and then began to push out a bit further to the south and east. The offensives did not seek to continue pushing out, but sought to secure the populations in the newly-cleared areas by building five patrol bases. On the whole, the offensives were largely successful in destroying much of the AQI infrastructure from the northern areas of MND-C. Concerned Local Citizens groups provided a great deal of intelligence that led to numerous arrests and kills of insurgents as well as the discovery of many IEDs and weapons caches. Despite these gains, AQI has proven more resilient than expected in the Arab Jabour area, which lies a few miles south of Baghdad, just to the west of the Tigris River, and was the site of major airstrikes in January 2008.<sup>98</sup>

Beginning January 1, 2008, MND-C shifted its focus somewhat towards regional capacity building even though major security operations continue with the most recent offensive, Operation Marne Thunderbolt. On the economic front, MND-C aims to help the Iraqis with entrepreneurship on a smaller scale using microgrants as small as a few hundred dollars as well as on a macro-scale by re-developing the Iskandariyah Industrial Complex. As far as aiding Iraqis in developing government capacity, MND-C is going to continue to build schools and health clinics. On the political front, MND-C will work to integrate the Concerned Local Citizens programs with existing political structures as well as the Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>99</sup>

### *Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour*

While the major clearing operations in Baghdad removed al-Qaeda elements from many of their strongholds in the city, as long as AQI was able to funnel weapons, funding, and fighters from its sanctuaries in the southern belts, the threat of enemy reinfiltration was high. On June 15, 2007, with the final surge brigades in place, Coalition Forces launched Operation Phantom Thunder. The 1-30 Infantry had just arrived in Arab Jabour, leaving the 1-40 Cavalry responsible for Hawr Rajab. This troop increase enabled Multi-National Division-Center (MND-C) to conduct a large-scale offensive to finally deny al-Qaeda sanctuary the southern belts. On June 16th, Operation Marne Torch I, the Phantom Thunder division-level offensive in MND-C was launched in the Arab Jabour region. Marne Torch I sought to disrupt and deny AQI safe havens in Arab Jabour that were being used to transport men, weapons, funds, and car bombs into the capital.<sup>100</sup> From mid-June to mid-July, Coalition Forces conducted a series of kinetic and non-kinetic operations that sought to clear AQI from the rural villages and farmland southeast of Baghdad along the Tigris River Valley. In addition to these raids, US forces built a number of patrol bases in the villages of Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab, from which they would conduct frequent presence patrols. Coalition Forces also initiated a number of projects to revive the economy and improve governance.

While Marne Torch I ended in mid-July, the 1-30 Infantry and 1-40 Cavalry continued to relentlessly target AQI south of Baghdad. During Marne Torch I, many AQI insurgents, including a number of foreign fighters, were displaced from Arab Jabour and fled to Hawr Rajab.<sup>101</sup> The influx of insurgents brought an even more radical strain of extremist ideology to the area. By early July, residents of Hawr Rajab had grown tired of the ruthless practices of AQI. That month, two sheikhs reached out to US forces, hoping to form a security alliance that would kick al-Qaeda out of Hawr Rajab.<sup>102</sup> Throughout August, Soldiers from the 1-30 and the newly-formed Concerned Local Citizens group fought together to wrest control of the area from al-Qaeda's hands.<sup>103</sup> This fight continued into early September, when it became clear that AQI no longer controlled Hawr Rajab.<sup>104</sup> By September 15, when Operation Marne Torch II began, al-Qaeda networks were severely fragmented and fledgling CLC movements had taken root in Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour. After consolidating its gains for some time, MND-C launched Operation Marne Thunderbolt, which began January 1, 2008 and sought to finally remove AQI from Arab Jabour.<sup>105</sup> These operations have relied heavily on intelligence from CLCs to carry out raids and to destroy insurgent caches.

On the economic front, Col. Ferrell has used the Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) as well as microgrants to promote economic development in the areas under his control. Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are working on agricultural revitalization programs. From the governance perspective, soldiers in Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour are attempting to build institutions from the ground up and to connect them to district governments and eventually the central government.<sup>106</sup>

### *Mada'in Qada*

3rd HBCT has made efforts to secure Mada'in Qada against extremists all five lines of operation, including security, governance, economics, transition, and information operations.<sup>107</sup> On the security side, the brigade has taken part in monthly division-wide offensives against insurgents that began in summer 2007. These included Operations Marne Torch, Marne Husky, Marne Avalanche and Marne Torch II. 3rd HBCT capitalized upon its momentum in the summer and has continued to kill and capture many insurgents as well as destroy insurgent weapons through the present.<sup>108</sup> By early December 2007, the 3rd HBCT had killed 128 insurgents, detained 500 more insurgents (25 of whom were considered high-value targets). Additionally, the brigade found and cleared 119 IEDs, seized 43 caches, destroyed 160 boats and cleared 2,785 buildings and searched more than 11,000 vehicles. These gains have come at a cost of twenty-five soldiers' lives as well as 148 combat injuries.<sup>109</sup>

The security situation has also improved according to other metrics. There has been a drastic decline in the numbers of reported homicides and kidnappings which correlates with the surge. The yearly totals of violence were lower than during 2005, when there were 355 murders in Mada'in Qada. After the bombing of the Mosque of the Golden Dome in Samarra, there were 631 reported murders in 2006. As of early December, that number had declined to 232 reported murders in 2007.<sup>110</sup> As 3rd HBCT has been successful in clearing much of the territory closest to Baghdad in its area of operations, over the next months, its major security goal will be to clear and control Salman Pak a city of 300,000 that lies approximately 25 miles southeast of Baghdad.<sup>111</sup>

Coalition Forces have spent \$24.3 million on development, about half of which is dedicated to water purification as well as distribution of water to the various farms in the area. According to Col. Wayne Grigsby, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, this has resulted in the local population's increased cooperation with Coalition Forces and Iraqi security forces as the money sparks the economy and brings back essential services.<sup>112</sup> 25 percent of the local development projects have sought to improve local roads. There is an Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team that is working together with the local Iraqi government and is preparing to spend another \$25 million on development projects.<sup>113</sup>

Soldiers from the 3rd HBCT have also been cooperating with local tribal sheikhs, the Mada'in Qada emir, the local Council chairman as well as local and national police leaders to lay out plans to transition towards greater Iraqi responsibility for security and governance. The primary focus is the future of the Concerned Local Citizens and their transition to jobs within the Iraqi Security Forces and other parts of the economy.<sup>114</sup>

### *Iskandariyah*

Another focus has been on clearing insurgents out of Iskandariyah and the surrounding areas. Operations Marne Courageous and Marne Roundup sought to clear out a small group of AQI insurgents from areas in the Euphrates River Valley from November through December 2007. These operations were to the west of where previous operations focused and seemed effective in rooting out AQI from that area. Further south, the Iraqi Security Forces have taken the lead in containing Shi'a groups in the southern Euphrates River Valley.<sup>115</sup> Al-Qaeda in Iraq seems to have been pushed into these predominantly-Shi'a areas, which are far less fertile ground for their radical Sunni ideology, in order to support AQI operations further north in Babil, where they have suffered severe setbacks.<sup>116</sup>

## **Multi-National Force-West**

### **Mission**

The mission of Multi-National Force-West (MNF-W) is to enable Iraqis to defeat the insurgency by building their own security forces and enhancing the political and economic environments of Al Anbar. To that end, Multi-National Force-West will continue to train and mentor the Iraqi Security Forces, so that they are able to lead counter-insurgency operations in Al Anbar Province independent of United States support. In addition to this objective in security, MNF-W will continue working together with other US agencies to help Iraqi leaders to providing effective and representative government for the Iraqi people.<sup>117</sup>

### **Area of Operation**

MNFW is operating in al-Anbar Province, which is home to 1.2 million people, 95 percent of whom are Sunni. Al-Anbar is 54,000 square miles, making it approximately the size of North Carolina. Though the province itself is quite large, 95 percent of the population is concentrated within five miles of the Euphrates River. Furthermore, 80 percent of the population lives in the 45-mile corridor between Ramadi (the provincial capital) and Fallujah.<sup>118</sup>

### **Disposition of Forces**

MNF-W currently consists of 23,000 Marines, 2,600 Sailors, and 5,000 Soldiers and is currently headquartered by the II Marine Expeditionary Force, which is commanded by Major General W.E. Gaskin. On a brigade level, the 1<sup>st</sup> Heavy Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division is responsible for Ramadi. The Marine Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team is in charge of western Anbar, including the Syrian and Jordanian border regions. For its part, the Marines' 6<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team controls Fallujah and its immediate environs.<sup>119</sup>

There are also over 23,000 Iraqi Police on hand which have responsibility for security in cities in Anbar from the Army. There are 24,000 members of the Iraqi Army's 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions, both of which recently took control of their own battle spaces (outside the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, respectively) and are in the Iraqi chain of command. Additionally, the Iraqi highway patrol controls the major economic corridors that are necessary to secure trade and promote economic growth. Finally,



Map 7: The Euphrates River Valley in Anbar Province (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

there are 2,400 border patrol guards who currently man 32 border forts that cover the 550 miles of al-Anbar's international borders to make up the last ring of defenses.<sup>120</sup>

## Enemy System

In al-Anbar Province, al-Qaeda in Iraq has been dealt a severe blow over the past year. In December 2006, there were 460 weekly incidents ranging from small arms fire, indirect fire, IED attacks, and coordinated attacks. By December 2007, this number had fallen to 40. While this represents a collapse of AQI capabilities, the group is still able to carry out isolated attacks. Unlike before, however, these attacks no longer seem to be able to intimidate the population into tacitly supporting AQI. Rather, attacks are met by outrage and disgust by locals.

Besides al-Qaeda, other groups that began the insurgency with more nationalist aims like the 1920 Brigade have essentially been eliminated. There is, however, organized criminal activity and black marketing that exist and complicate the local security situation.<sup>121</sup>

## Developments in 2007

As has been well-publicized in the press, the security situation in al-Anbar has improved markedly in the aftermath of the "Anbar Awakening," when Sunni tribesmen revolted against the radical interpretation of Islam imposed upon them by al-Qaeda in Iraq and chose instead to align themselves with the Iraqi government. This state of affairs means that the Iraqi government will soon be able to assume provincial control of al-Anbar province from the United States.<sup>122</sup>

According to General Gaskin, the current Coalition strategy is to push remaining al-Qaeda out of the population centers and into the desert, where US and Iraqi forces are able to target and eliminate them. The burden is increasingly shifting towards Iraqi Security Forces. In order to facilitate this shift, MNFW has assigned approximately 1,700 of its personnel to transition teams that partner with the Iraqi security forces. As Iraqi capabilities improve, Coalition Forces will withdraw to an overwatch position. Gen. Gaskin anticipates that Iraqi forces will be capable of operating fully independently within the next eighteen months.

The improved political and security situations have facilitated reconstruction efforts that promote economic development. MNF-W's Provincial Reconstruction Teams and three Embedded PRTs have capitalized on the improved situation to develop economic infrastructure throughout al-Anbar, from the border areas through to the urban population centers.<sup>123</sup>

## Multi-National Division-Center South

### Mission

The mission of the Multinational Division Central South (MND-CS) was to support and advise Iraqi Security Forces in Al Qadisiyah province, particularly in Ad-Diwaniyah. These operations aim to neutralize insurgents, militia groups and to defeat terrorists and irreconcilable extremists, so as to create the conditions necessary for the Iraqi government to take control of their transition responsibilities to local authorities.

MND-CS was successful in creating the conditions for Iraqis to take provincial control in late January 2006.<sup>124</sup> The Iraqi Security Forces are currently charged with providing domestic security while the provincial government now delivers basic services and security. Coalition Forces from MND-CS now performing an operational overwatch role and preparing to redeploy. Presently, MND-CS coordinates Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects and humanitarian assistance actions in order to improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people. In addition, MND CS acts in coordination with Iraqi civil and military authorities in order to correspond to the real needs of the local population and institutions.<sup>125</sup>

### Area of Operation

MND-CS operates out of Al-Qadisiyah province in Southern Iraq and is primarily responsible for the city of Diwaniyah.

### Disposition of Forces

MND-CS is headquartered by the Polish at Diwaniyah and is led by Major General Tadeuz Buk. It is comprised of contingents totaling 2,000 soldiers from Poland, Armenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Romania, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United States of America. In late January, a spokesman for the Polish military announced that all Polish forces would be withdrawn from Iraq by October 31, 2008.<sup>126</sup>



Map 8: Central Iraq (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

Currently MND-CS's main efforts focus on training the 8th Iraqi Army Division as well as local police. To date, MND-CS has prepared over 20,000 soldiers and policemen for duty.<sup>127</sup> Though not under MND-CS command, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne operates in this territory under MNF-I command in order to secure supply routes.<sup>128</sup>

The 8<sup>th</sup> Division of the Iraqi Army is headquartered in Diwaniyah and has approximately 10,800 soldiers.<sup>129</sup> In 2006, the 8<sup>th</sup> Division became the first Army division to come under Iraqi government control since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.<sup>130</sup> At present, the 8<sup>th</sup> Division cooperates with Coalition Forces on counterterrorism missions.<sup>131</sup> MND-CS Commanding General Buk assesses that the local Iraqi police forces are still inadequately trained and equipped to take full control of local security.<sup>132</sup>

## **Enemy System**

In addition to familiar sectarian fighting between Sunni and Shi'a elements in northern and central Iraq, the Shi'a community itself has been riveted by conflict between the Sadrist Trend, a collection of organizations organized around Moqtada as-Sadr, and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), formerly known as SCIRI, run by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim.

### *The Sadrist Trend*

Moqtada as-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and its main Shi'a rival, the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI), have engaged in a violent struggle for supremacy within the Shi'a community, the lucrative income from control of the Shi'a shrines, and control of southern oil fields. Since April 2007, this struggle has increasingly centered on the city of Diwaniyah, located in southern Iraq roughly 100 miles south of Baghdad.

The Sadrist Trend originally emerged from Sadr and his militia, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM, or the Mahdi Army). Over time, however, the Sadrist Trend has also come to encompass other organizations, including the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS). The OMS is the branch of the Sadrist Trend that provides social services; it is named after Moqtada as-Sadr's late father, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a prominent Shi'a cleric.<sup>133</sup>

Over the last eighteen months, Sadr has struggled to maintain control of the militia groups that comprise the Sadrist Trend. Elements known alternatively as “secret cells,” “Special Groups,” “rogue JAM” and “Shi’a extremists” have broken away from the mainstream movement. While these fighters have links to the Sadrist Trend, it is unclear whether they operate independently of the Trend or in conjunction with it. Many of these rogue elements have carried out attacks on Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces, and Iraqi civilians independently of Sadr’s control. Because these groups have not followed Sadr’s August ceasefire, they have been one of the principal targets of Coalition and Iraqi operations in the latter half of 2007.

### *Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq*

The main rival of the Sadrists is the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI). In contrast to the Sadrists, ISCI is more disciplined and better organized. It was founded in Iran during Saddam Hussein’s regime by Iraqi exiles. The Hakim family exerts direct control over the organization. Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim is the head of ISCI. The Shaheed al-Mihrab is ISCI’s equivalent to Sadr’s OMS, and the foundation is run by the son of Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim. Prior to 2007, ISCI was known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). ISCI’s militia, the Badr Brigade, has largely been incorporated into the Iraqi Security Forces. Therefore, ISCI retains close ties to the Army, National Police and local police. ISCI also has powerful political backing. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, while formally neutral, is generally considered an ally of ISCI. Moreover, ISCI controls seven of the nine provinces of southern Iraq, making it a formidable force in the Shi’a south.

### **Developments in 2007**

The major dispute between these two groups centers on whether Iraq’s Shi’a population should create a semi-autonomous in the southern provinces, similar to the Kurdish areas in the North. ISCI has held this as an enduring goal, but Sadrists have a nationalist ideology and oppose plans that would seemingly break up the Iraqi state.

The creation of a semi-autonomous region bestows immense power on the regional government. Unlike provincial governments, the regional government would have the power to raise and control their own independent security forces. To create a Shi’a-dominated southern region, referendums must be held in each province. Hence, it is critical for both ISCI and the Sadrists to control as many provinces as possible, “as the provincial governments will be responsible for organizing the referendum, regulating the campaign prior to the vote, providing security for voting centers, and reporting the results.” This

intra-Shi'a fighting that has occurred in Diwaniyah over the last year can be understood as a battle for control of Qadisiyah province.

The intra-Shi'a violence characteristic of southern Iraq escalated in the summer of 2007, when there were a series of assassinations of figures from both factions. The clash between ISCI and JAM climaxed at the end of August, when Sadrist gunmen attacked the guards at the Imam al-Husayn shrine in Karbala, one of the most sacred Shi'a shrines in Iraq and one that is affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Sistani. Over fifty people were killed in that violence and there were simultaneous attacks against ISCI offices across the country. The Karbala attack was apparently executed without the direction of Moqtada as-Sadr, making it clear to many that Sadr was losing control of his movement. The violence in Karbala prompted Sadr to call a six month ceasefire, during which time he would reorganize his movement and reassert his control.

Coalition Forces and ISCI responded to this first by carrying out a campaign raids targeting Sadrist networks in and around Diwaniyah in September and October. Then, in mid-November they undertook a larger-scale operation to clear Diwaniyah and its surrounding towns of Shi'a extremists. Sadr's ceasefire combined with the aggressive operations dramatically improved security in Diwaniyah for Coalition Forces, Iraqi security forces, and civilians.

Despite these operations and Sadr's ceasefire, targeted and retaliatory attacks persisted. Sadrists attacked clerics and officials affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Sistani, perhaps because of his perceived closeness with ISCI. ISCI and its allies responded by using the Iraqi security forces to go after elements of the Sadrist Trend.

In October, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces conducted Operation Oil Drop in Diwaniyah, which aimed to secure the population with increased patrolling and the provision of humanitarian assistance. Still, Shi'a extremists contested the increased presence of Coalition and Iraqi Forces by repeatedly attacking FOB Echo and by attacking local police officers in the area. Finally, in mid-November, the 8th Iraqi Army Division launched a large operation to decisively clear extremist elements from Diwaniyah. The operation, termed Operation Lions Pounce, also included plans to construct several Joint Security Stations in the northeast quarter, which were hitherto controlled by criminal groups.

Coalition and Iraqi Forces continue to target the rogue elements of the Sadrist Trend and Special Groups. These extremist groups have continued their attacks on the Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces, despite Sadr's ceasefire. It is likely that the pressure mainstream and rogue elements of Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi will continue to be pressured by Coalition and Iraqi Forces. Still, it is likely that intra-Shi'a violence will increase over 2008, in advance of the provincial elections and referenda. ISCI and the Sadrists will likely continue to fight to dominate the local and provincial governments. Furthermore, Moqtada as-Sadr's cease-fire is set to expire in late February 2008, although Sadrist spokesmen have suggested changes to the length of the freeze. If he chooses not to renew it, violence may explode across the south.

## **Multi-National Division-South East**

### **Mission**

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has repeatedly stated that the aim of British forces in Iraq is to “move control to Iraqi authorities, to the Iraqi government and its security forces, as progress is made.” This characterization translates into the British mission, which strongly emphasizes training the Iraqi Security Forces so that they can sustain and maintain themselves. As Iraqi Security Forces have been operating without coalition assistance in Dhi Qar, Al Muthanna and Maysan and have just taken over Basra, Britain’s role is essentially to support Iraqi forces to ensure local security when called upon to do so.<sup>134</sup>

### **Area of Operation**

Multi-National Division – Southeast (MND-SE) is responsible for the four provinces of southern Iraq, Maysan, Dhi Qar, al-Muthanna, and al-Basra. These provinces include population centers like Basra, Amarah, Nasariyah as well as the port of Umm Qasr, some desert land and some marshland. The population in all of these provinces is heavily Shi’a with some small Sunni minorities. Many of these citizens were involved in anti-Saddam uprisings, which in turn led to prolonged neglect of these provinces by the Iraqi government until 2003.

Al-Muthanna is about the size of West Virginia and has a population of about 550,000. On July 13, 2006, Muthanna became the first province that was under Iraqi provincial control. The territory is largely arid and abuts Saudi Arabia.<sup>135</sup> Dhi Qar, a province of 1.45 million mostly-Shi’a Iraqis (most of whom live in an-Nasariyah), became the second province to come under Iraqi control in September, 2006.<sup>136</sup> Maysan province is the eastern-most province in MND-SE and borders Iran. Its capital is al-Amarah, which sits on the Tigris River. The province is home to many Shi’a Marsh Arabs. Maysan was brought under Provincial Iraqi Control on April 18, 2007.<sup>137</sup> Al-Basra province is home to the city of Basra, which is Iraq’s second largest city. The province is home to 2.6 million predominantly Shi’a Iraqis and came under full Iraqi control on December 16, 2007.<sup>138</sup> This brought all of MND-SE’s territory under Iraqi control.

### **Disposition of Forces**

MND-SE is staffed by the British 1st Mechanized Brigade at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Basra and commanded by Major General Graham Binns. This division falls under the control of the Basra Operational Command, one of three operational commands set up to streamline the chain of command within the Ministry of Defense. Following the handover of Basra province to Iraqi control on December 16, Britain reduced its troop levels to around 4,500.<sup>139</sup> This means that though technically a division, the British presence is in reality a brigade. The British expect to be able to further reduce force levels in southern Iraq to around 2,500 by mid-2008. That force will include a small training mission and a rapid response team that is on standby.<sup>140</sup>

The 10<sup>th</sup> and newly-created 14<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Divisions are stationed in Basra and responsible for security in MND-SE.<sup>141</sup> The Iraqi authorities and security forces have shown themselves capable of dealing effectively with security challenges that have arisen with relatively little direct Coalition support. The 10<sup>th</sup> Division, led by General Mohan, proved its capability during Operation Sinbad, which ran from September 2006 to March 2007. As part of the operation, MNF-I and Iraqi Forces conducted security operations and completed around 550 local development projects. Two battalions of 10<sup>th</sup> Division deployed to Baghdad as part of Operation Fardh al Qanoon. They arrived on time and in full strength and performed well.<sup>142</sup>



Map 9: Southern Iraq (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

The local Iraqi police are led by General Gilahl and have been able to handle local security issues without calling for the intervention of Coalition Forces.

### **Enemy System**

In the four provinces of MND-SE, there is no anti-government insurgency or sectarian strife. This is largely because there are few Sunnis in this territory, which removes the popular support for al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni militias. The challenges in MND-SE are organized crime and ongoing criminality, intra-Shi'a violence, and the generally corrosive influence of the Shi'a militias.<sup>143</sup> Basra, in particular, has seen much violence in the form of turf wars between the Badr Corps and JAM, as well as organized crime.<sup>144</sup> The Mahdi Army has notably carried out several assassinations of people who aided the British while they were in control of Basra and has attempted to violently compel local women to dress more conservatively.<sup>145</sup>

### **Developments in 2007**

In MND-SE, UK forces have trained over 13,000 Iraqi troops for the 10th Division of the Iraqi Army.<sup>146</sup> There are continuing issues, but the situation is generally under control and there is little threat of insurgent or anti-government violence in this region. The situation was calm enough for the Iraqi army to devote two battalions from the 10<sup>th</sup> Division to Baghdad.

At the same time, Basra's continued stability is not guaranteed. The British military's withdrawal from Basra has been characterized by some as a military defeat and some seemed dissatisfied with the imperfect security environment that the Iraqi government inherited from the British military.<sup>147</sup>

## **The Iraqi Security Forces**

### **Primary Challenges Facing the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)**

1. Underdeveloped command and control structures within the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Defense (MOD): These ministries are still unable to conduct staff planning, manage existing forces, develop and implement policy, and maintain personnel and equipment accountability. The effects of these deficiencies are evident from the ministry level to the individual unit level.<sup>148</sup>
  
2. Corruption: Corruption is particularly a problem in the MOI but is also present within the MOD.<sup>149</sup> Corrupt practices range from carrying out sectarian killings to misallocating ISF resources such as weapons, fuel, and funds.<sup>150</sup>
  
3. Logistics: The ISF remains unable to sustain its forces without significant assistance from Coalition Forces. The most critical logistics shortfalls in descending order are, maintenance, planning and acquisition, storage and distribution, and fuel shortages.<sup>151</sup>
  
4. Training Capacity: The number of trainers and training facilities is well below the capacity required to teach the large number of untrained Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP). “Rapid hiring over the past two years outstripped academy training capacity,” especially within the IP ranks.<sup>152</sup>

### **Significant ISF Improvements in 2007**

- The Government of Iraq (GOI) increased the number of assigned ISF personnel from 390,000 to 491,000.<sup>153</sup>
  
- The GOI with assistance from Coalition increased the number of Iraqi Army Divisions to 11 with a total of 118 battalions. Ten of these divisions are devoted to counterinsurgency

operations. The GOI has also begun generating and additional 2 Division Headquarters, 6 Brigade Headquarters and 27 battalions.<sup>154</sup>

- The MOI established an Internal Affairs Directorate and trained 1,269 internal affairs investigators to combat corruption. Although they have not eradicated corruption in the ISF, their investigations removed several thousand corrupt ISF personnel from service, including high-ranking officials.<sup>155</sup>
- The Iraqi Parliament passed two military justice laws, the Military Crimes Code and the Military Procedures code in August and September 2007. While not yet implemented, these laws enable Iraqi commanders to punish soldiers and policemen for offenses ranging from absenteeism to unlawful sectarian acts.<sup>156</sup>
- The Iraq Joint Forces established the Iraqi Training and Doctrine Command on 21 February 2007.<sup>157</sup> The ISF also published its own Soldier's Manual and Counterinsurgency Manual.<sup>158</sup>
- Coalition Forces recruited approximately 80,258 Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs).<sup>159</sup> This has allowed community members to assist the Iraqi Security Forces with intelligence about insurgents and militia activity. The CLCs have been "crucial to the counterinsurgency effort."<sup>160</sup>

### **Persistent ISF Problems**

- The MOI and MOD are still unable to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence to the Iraqi Army (IA), Iraqi Police (IP), and Iraqi National Police (INP). This deficiency results from three factors: corruption, the ministries' lack of coordination/training, and the fear of insurgent/militia/AQI retaliation.<sup>161</sup>
- Despite having and assigned strength of 491, 532 personnel, the ISF has only 439, 678 trained personnel, a shortfall of 51, 854.<sup>162</sup>

- The ISF has a distinct officer shortage and has, as of yet, been unable to close the gap with streamlined officer accession and training programs.<sup>163</sup>
- The ISF hiring process is dispersed among too many agencies and has not been standardized. As a result, Coalition Forces have questioned the validity of the ongoing personnel vetting process, especially within the MOI.<sup>164</sup>
- The ISF still rely on the Coalition Forces for numerous combat support functions such as logistics, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and intelligence. The GOI, MOI and MOD have developed plans and programs to remedy their reliance on Coalition support but these initiatives are not expected to produce significant results until after 2009.<sup>165</sup>

## The Iraqi Army

DIVISION	BRIGADE	BATTALION
1 IA	4	12
2 IA	4	14
3 IA	4	12
4 IA	7	30
5 IA	4	13
6 IA	5	20
7 IA	4	12
8 IA	4	15
9 IA	4	12
10 IA	3	9
11 IA	3	9
12 IA	0	0
14 IA	4	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>170</b>

## Summary

DIV	13
BDE	50
BN	12

### Generated Units

Div HQ	11
BDE HQ	38
BN	122*

\* includes 2 BNs that require reconstitution & includes 2 IAIB undergoing conversion (3/5/4 and 4/6/4)

### In Generation

Div HQ	2
BDE HQ	6
BN	27*

+ Includes 12 HQ and Div Troops and 14 HQ and Div Troops

\* Includes IR Bn & 5 Bns of Pres BDE

### Generated; Requires Reconstitution

Div HQ	0
BDE HQ	0
BN	2

### Planned; Not resourced

Div HQ	0
BDE HQ	5*
BN	28**

+ includes 12<sup>th</sup> Div HQ (complete) and 14<sup>th</sup> Div Troops

\*Includes 3 SIB BDEs

\*\*Includes 14 SIB BNs

### Not Planned; Not Resourced

Div HQ	0
BDE HQ	0
BN	5*

Note: The unit counts do not include Division Training Centers, GSU/BSUs.

# Summary

<u>In Generation</u>
11 <sup>th</sup> Div Troops
2/11 IA (+ 3 BNs)
4/7 IA (+ 3 BNs)
2/14 IA (5/10 IA) (+ 3 BNs)
3/14 IA (+ 3 BNs)
4/5 IA (+ 3 BNs)
Presidential BDE (+ 5 BNs)
3/1/8 IA
3/1/10 IA
3/2/10 IA
3/4/8 IA
3/2/8 IA
4/9 IA LOG
Infrastructure Repair BN

<u>Planned: Not resourced</u>
4/3 IA (+3 BNs)
4/1/2 IA
4/3/4 IA
5/1/6 IA
4/3/6 IA
3/3/8 IA
Presidential Brigade (+5 Bns)
EOD Regiment

<u>Not Planned: Not Resourced</u>
4/2/2 IA
4/4/2 IA
4/5/6 IA
4/4/8 IA
5/4/8 IA
4/1/3 IA
4/2/3 IA
4/3/3 IA
4/4/3 IA

<u>Generated: Requires Reconstitution</u>
1/3/2 IA
3/1/6 IA

Source: MNC- I

## The Iraqi Army's Main Shortcomings

1. Planning: The Iraqi Army has not yet demonstrated that it can plan logistics operations and produce effective operations orders without Coalition assistance.<sup>166</sup>

2. Lack of Combat Support and Combat Service Support units: The Iraqi Army does not yet have the organic capability to accomplish a variety of essential battlefield functions including engineering, ordnance disposal, aviation, logistics (maintenance, supply, and transportation), command and control (signal), and medical treatment/evacuation. It still depends on Coalition Forces to provide a substantial portion of these services.<sup>167</sup>

3. Absenteeism: The Iraqi Army has to fill its ranks an average of 12percent above authorized levels to make up for soldiers that do not report for duty. “On average, 2,000 soldiers become absent without leave (AWOL) each week, though an unspecified number return for duty. In 2007, approximately 21,000 Iraqi soldiers have been dropped from the rolls for desertion or AWOL.”<sup>168</sup>

4. Leadership Shortages: The Iraqi Army currently operates just below 45percent of its authorized noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and 60percent of its authorized officers, a total shortage of 30,000 personnel.<sup>169</sup>

### **Iraqi Army Improvements in 2007**

- With the assistance of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NMT-I), the Iraqi Army established four Iraqi Military Academies in Qualachulon, Zakho, Tallil, and Ar Rustamiyah (fully operational in July 2007). These academies are part of the National Defense University which also consists of the National Defense College, the Defense Language Institute, the Defense Strategic Studies Institute, the Center for Military Values, Principles, and Leadership, and the Joint Staff College.<sup>170</sup>
- The IA generated two Motor Transport Regiments (MTRs) and Logistics Support Battalion while increasing the end strength of existing MTRs and Base Support Units (BSUs). Its current maintenance and transportation assets include: 1,869 heavy cargo trucks, 6,441 medium trucks, 7,765 light trucks and 3,078 tool sets. The IA has also improved its “logistics ‘common operational picture’ which allows commanders to have better visibility of logistics assets within the supply, maintenance and transportation systems.”<sup>171</sup>
- The Iraqi Army expanded its training base to include corporal’s courses, organizational maintenance courses, and the Bomb Disposal School opened on September 30, 2007. These enhanced training initiatives have increased training capacity from 14,950 to 25,100 soldiers per training cycle.<sup>172</sup>
- The Iraqi Army began a manning initiative that will increase the number of existing divisions, brigades and battalions by 2, 6, and 27 respectively. There are currently 11 divisions, 38 brigades, and 122 battalions in force.<sup>173</sup>

### **Ongoing Challenges for the Iraqi Army**

- Equipment and personnel accountability
- Casualty rates in the Iraqi Army are two to three times higher than the Coalition force casualty rate. As a result, annual attrition has risen to 17percent.<sup>174</sup>
- 23 percent of IA units are still unable to plan, conduct, and support operations without Coalition assistance.<sup>175</sup> This percentage is likely to increase given the current IA attrition rates, leadership shortfalls, and increasing gap between recruitment and training capacity.

### **Overall Assessment of the Iraqi Army**

The Iraqi Army made significant progress in 2007 with regarding to expanding size and scope of both the force and the training base. It will, however, take time for the IA's to new training facilities, organizations, and units to become functional. For example, projections claim that three new supply and maintenance depots will be completed by late 2008; it could take several more years for the IA's entire logistics system to operate without Coalition assistance.<sup>176</sup>

## **Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Police**

### **Major Challenges for the Iraqi Police (IP) and Iraqi National Police (INP)**

1. **Lack of Planning, Coordination, and Support from the Ministry of the Interior (MOI):** According to the Report of the Independent Commission on the Security forces of Iraq (Jones Report), the MOI is plagued by sectarianism and corruption, does not have the administrative, financial and logistics structures needed to support the IP and INP units it controls.<sup>177</sup> The December 2007 Department of Defense Report echoes these concerns citing evident sectarian behavior and corruption in the MOI as well as dubious hiring and personnel accountability procedures.<sup>178</sup>
  
2. **Sectarian Infiltration and Corruption:** Sectarian behavior and corruption continues to undermine both the IP and INP's ability to establish and maintain security in Iraq. The IP are the largest force in the Ministry of the Interior and its 251,857 personnel remain subject to militia intimidation as well as "intimidation by, or collusion with criminal gangs."<sup>179</sup> The INP has only 32,517 assigned personnel yet proved more dysfunctional than the Iraqi Police. Indeed, the Jones Report claimed, "The National Police have proven operationally ineffective. Sectarianism in its units undermines its ability to provide security; the force is not viable in its current form. The National Police should be disbanded."<sup>180</sup>
  
3. **Incorporating Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs):** In 2007, the United States Military empowered 80,258 Iraqi Citizens to guard areas where IA and IP units were not present or not trusted due to sectarian abuses (i.e. Arab Jabour).<sup>181</sup> The majority of CLCs are Sunnis (64,821) but there are some Shi'a CLCs (15,437).<sup>182</sup> It is true that most of the CLCs (69,307) get paid 300 dollars a month by the US government; however, 10,951 CLCs volunteered to serve without pay.<sup>183</sup>

According to Lieutenant General Odierno, incorporating these groups into the regular Iraqi Police and National Police forces will be the "primary driver of security" in 2008.<sup>184</sup> Unfortunately, two major obstacles exist and are preventing the CLCs from being accepted in the IP and INP respectively. First, the Government of Iraq is hesitant to reconcile with the mostly Sunni CLC members because it fears they will turn against the government.<sup>185</sup> Second, the IP and INP training base is already strained and adding 80,258 CLCs to the forces "will exacerbate the challenge of training all police who are on the force."<sup>186</sup>

4. Shortfalls in Training and Leadership: Of the 288,118 members of the Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Police, the Department of Defense stated that only 210,529 are fully trained.<sup>187</sup> “All police are provided with a minimum 80-hour course as soon as possible after assignment; correspondingly, the training backlog for the full 400 hour training course (9 months) is lengthening as the force expands.”<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the MOI has only 60,000 IP and INP leaders available, a number that is inadequate for the force of 251,857.<sup>189</sup>

### **Significant IP/INP Improvements in 2007**

- 450 Iraq National Police graduated from the Italian Carabinieri training course on December 18.<sup>190</sup> The eight week long course will continue for two years and will focus on leadership skills. It will mesh civilian policing with military skills so that the INP is equipped to serve as a gendarme-like force.<sup>191</sup>
- The Ministry of the Interior established a monthly logistics status report and has continued to improve its equipment accountability.<sup>192</sup>
- The GOI allowed 1,730 CLC members in Abu Ghraib to join the police force and an additional 2,000 in Baghdad.<sup>193</sup>
- The MOI created an internal affairs directorate to combat corruption. As a result, “195 police were fired for militia activity and involvement in corruption.”<sup>194</sup>
- Iraqi Police forces are now present in all of Iraq’s 18 governates.<sup>195</sup>

### **Persistent Problems with the IP and INP**

- The MOI’s hiring process is dispersed among too many agencies and has not been standardized. As a result, Coalition Forces have questioned the validity of the ongoing personnel vetting process.<sup>196</sup>

- Logistics and sustainment functions are still weak, especially maintenance and distribution. Fuel shortfalls also “remain a significant problem and limit mission performance.”<sup>197</sup>
- GOI unwillingness to reconcile with Sunni CLC members.

### **Overall Assessment of the IP and INP**

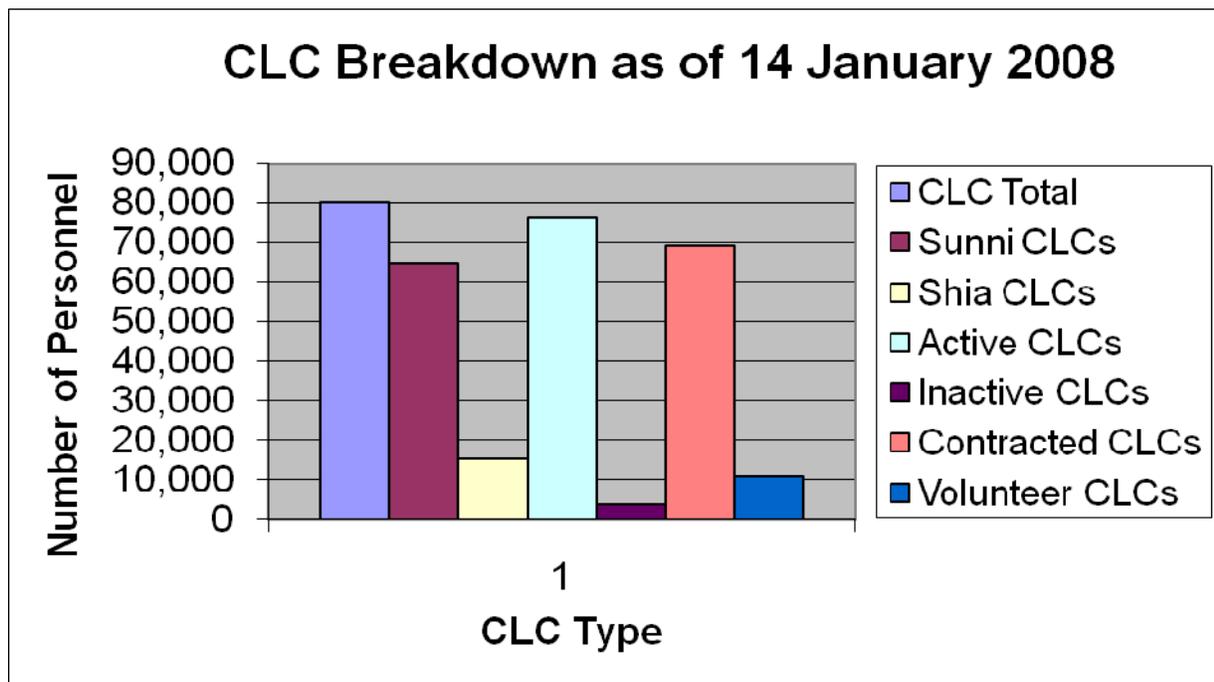
The Ministry of the Interior, Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Police are continuing to initiate essential training and administrative programs and to make progress toward become self-sufficient, professional, and effective security providers. They still, however, have many obstacles to overcome. The most prominent feature of 2008 will be whether the Government of Iraq is able to incorporate the existing CLCs into either the Iraqi Police or Iraqi National Police. Failure to do this may have negative consequences for the counterinsurgency mission and for Iraqi security. If the CLCs grow frustrated with the government and are unable to serve Iraq in a more official capacity, they may return to violence or cease fighting Al-Qaeda extremists and militia groups.

### Concerned Local Citizens in Iraq

Breakdown of Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs) in Iraq (as of January 14, 2008)	
Total Number of CLC Members	80,258
Active CLC Members	76,226
Inactive CLC Members	3,992
Contracted (paid) CLC Members	69,307
Volunteer CLC Members	10,951
Sunni CLC Members	64,821
Shi'a CLC Members	15,437

Source: MNF-I

Note: In 2007, CLCs were generally deployed at the sub-provincial level in areas where ISF are not present or not trusted due to sectarian acts (i.e. Arab Jabour and Baqubah). It is likely that this type of deployment will continue during the first months of 2008.



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<sup>1</sup> DoD News Briefing with Lt. Gen. Odierno, Commander, Multinational Corps-Iraq, November 1, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Defense Report to Congress *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, December 2007, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from General David Petraeus to troops and civilians in Multi-National Force-Iraq, December 12, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq Press Release A080111a, "Coalition Forces capture Special Groups facilitator, disrupt criminal networks," January 11, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Ross Colvin, "US forces in Iraq on offensive against Qaeda" *Reuters*, January 8, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Lieutenant Colonel David Kennedy, Commander, 2-3 Brigade Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division via Teleconference from Iraq, December 14, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Ricks and Karen DeYoung, "For the US, The Goal is Now 'Iraqi Solutions,'" *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Jim Rutenberg, "Bush Distorts Qaeda Links, Critics Assert," *New York Times*, July 13, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Lt.Gen. Ray Odierno, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander provides an operational update, September 20, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Press Briefing by Multi-National Force-Iraq Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Effects Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, Security Operations in Iraq, July 2, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> "US soldiers find tips flowing from rifts within powerful Shiite militia run by young cleric," Lauren Frayer, Associated Press Writer, Associated Press Worldstream, May 16, 2007 Wednesday 12:22 AM GMT; Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Iraq's New Guns for Hire," *Newsweek*, May 7, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Frayer, "US soldiers find tips flowing from rifts within powerful Shiite militia run by young cleric," May 16, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, and Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, commander, Baghdad Operational Command, Update on military operations in Iraq, Oct. 24, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner, spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq, Press Briefing, July 2, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Pentagon Press Briefing with Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Commanding General Multi-National Division Baghdad and 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, December 17, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Press Briefing by US Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Location: The Combined Press Information Center, Baghdad, Iraq, August 21, 2007.

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- <sup>19</sup> Naylor, "Iran Deeply Involved in Iraq, Petraeus Says". It is in this context that General Petraeus stated that the Qods Force reports to the Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
- <sup>20</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Release No. 20070815-08, "Iraqi Army, US Special Forces detain Shi'a extremist leader," August 15, 2007.
- <sup>21</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq, Release A070814b, "Coalition Forces Kill Four Terrorists, Detain Eight in Search for Militant Extremist Leader, Aug. 14, 2007.
- <sup>22</sup> DoD Press Briefing with Lt. Gen. Odierno from the Pentagon, May 31, 2007.
- <sup>23</sup> Jennifer Griffin, "Zarwaqi Map Aided Successes Against Iraqi Insurgency," *Fox News*, November 21, 2007; Michael Duffy and Mark Kukis, "The Surge at Year One," *Time*, January 31, 2008.
- <sup>24</sup> Lt.Gen. Ray Odierno, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander provides an operational update, Nov. 1, 2007.
- <sup>25</sup> BG Joe Anderson, Chief of Staff, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Civilian Defense Experts' Conference Call, January 11, 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> Dan Murphy and Awadh al-Tee, "In the struggle for Iraq, tug of war over one Baghdad neighborhood," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 2006.
- <sup>27</sup> Institute for the Study of War Interview with Col. J.B. Burton, Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, November 14, 2007.
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- <sup>29</sup> Sam Dagher, "Patrolling Baghdad's Dora neighborhood, where 'gators' lurk; The predominantly Sunni Arab district has become a byword for lawlessness and mayhem," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 30, 2007.
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- <sup>31</sup> Edward Wong, "Sunni District in Baghdad Is Sealed Off," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2006.
- <sup>32</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "Iraqi Death Toll Exceeded 34,000 in 2006, U.N. Says," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2007; Sudarsan Raghavan, "Distrust Breaks the Bonds of a Baghdad Neighborhood; In Mixed Area, Violence Defies Peace Efforts," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2006.
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- <sup>35</sup> Institute for the Study of War Interview with Col. J.B. Burton, Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, November 14, 2007.
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