

Iraq

After enormous efforts in 2005 to deliver three elections and restore constitutional government, 2006 should have been a year when security and political stability were consolidated in Iraq. Instead, with the active insurgency conducting nearly 800 attacks each week, the country looked closer to territorial breakup than to sustainable peace. The new government of national unity, under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, initially provided hope of building some consensus around an agenda for national reconciliation, but the prevailing security situation cast doubt on any substantial progress.

From May 2003 to June 2004, Iraq was governed by the Coalition Provisional Authority, led by the United States under its obligations as an occupying force. Iraqi sovereignty was restored with the creation of an interim government, established on 28 June 2004. The Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I), which succeeded the coalition forces, is deployed at the request of the Iraqi government under arrangements set out in a pair of letters from the interim prime minister Ayad Allawi and then US secretary of state Colin Powell to the Security Council on 5 June 2004. Its mission is to contribute to security in Iraq, including through combat operations against forces hostile to the transition and by training and equipping the Iraqi Security Forces.

MNF-I was authorized by Security Council Resolution 1546 (8 June 2004), and later was extended until 31 December 2006. Apart from the United States, which supplies 87 percent of its troops, leading contributors as of October 2006 included the UK, South Korea, Italy, Poland, Australia, Georgia, Romania,

and Denmark. By then, Japan and Italy had begun the incremental drawdown of their participating troops. The force's mandate is subject to ongoing Iraqi consent, most recently expressed by Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari in a letter to the Security Council on 9 June 2006.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was established in 2003. After the 19 August 2003 bomb attack on its headquarters, which killed Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and twenty-one staff members, many staff were relocated to Jordan and Kuwait. But UNAMI continued to function, receiving a new mandate in Security Council Resolution 1546, and played a role in facilitating the constitutional process and in the conduct of the 2005 elections. At Iraq's request, UNAMI's mandate has been extended each year, most recently in August 2006 for a further twelve months.

In 2006, MNF-I and UNAMI faced spiraling sectarian violence that accompanied months of negotiations over Iraq's new government. Final election results were declared on 10 February. A 22 February suicide bomb attack on a Shi'a shrine at Samarra killed over eighty people, triggering reprisals that derailed the negotiations and made March 2006 one of Iraq's most violent months since 2003. This was surpassed in October when the UN estimated that more than 3,700 were killed, most in sectarian attacks. In the period 1 May to 30 June 2006, UNAMI's human rights unit estimated 100 civilians were killed each day, and that between February and June a further 100,000 were displaced from their homes. Some 600

US troops were killed in the year to October, as were over 1,700 members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Against this backdrop, UNAMI conducted human rights monitoring, and provided good

offices and constitutional expertise in support of the political process. The mission also continued to work on donor coordination and efforts to develop medium-term funding mechanisms for Iraq's reconstruction. UNAMI aimed to expand its activities in other areas, including development of public services and the judiciary. However, its operations remain severely restricted by security concerns. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General's repeated appeal for dedicated air assets to support the mission finally bore fruit, with Denmark offering an aircraft in June. Additionally, in September, Japan began a dedicated airlift support mission solely for UNAMI-related passengers and cargo.

MNF-I claimed further progress in training the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), which it undertakes in conjunction with the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I). By September 2006, about 307,800 military and police had reportedly been trained, approaching the overall target of 325,000. In the same month, the Iraqi Security Forces assumed autonomous responsibility over the southern Dhi Qar province from 1,800 Italian troops. NTM-I, which leads officer training, made progress on a major objective with the opening of Iraq's Training and Doctrine Command in July.

There remain serious concerns about ISF development. Even the more capable army units are heavily reliant on MNF logistics, communications, and intelligence, desertion rates are high, and units in Sunni areas are especially understrength. Sectarian divisions are most worrying in the police, where poor vetting and politicized appointments have allowed Shi'a militias to infiltrate and control the powerful National Police counterinsurgency units. The year 2006 has been declared "Year of the Police," with MNF-I stepping up efforts to reform the force. An additional 41,000 police were trained at the Jordan International Police Training Center, bringing the total active Iraqi police up to 188,000.

MNF-I and ISF ran a series of operations against insurgent and militia activity, one of which resulted in the 9 June 2006 killing of

Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I)

- Authorization date 16 October 2003 (UNSC Res. 1511)
8 June 2004 (UNSC Res. 1546 modified)
- Start date November 2003
- Head of mission General George W. Casey Jr. (United States)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006 Troops: 162,000

NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I)

- Authorization date 8 June 2004 (UNSC Res. 1546)
30 July 2004 (NAC establishment of Training Implementation Mission)
16 December 2004 (modification into full-fledged training mission)
- Start date August 2004
- Head of mission Martin E. Dempsey (United States)
- Budget \$16 million (October 2005–September 2006)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006 Troops: 200

UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

- Authorization and start date 14 August 2003 (UNSC Res. 1500)
- Budget \$179.6 million (1 January–31 December 2006)
- SRSO Ashraf Jehangir Qazi (Pakistan)
- Senior military adviser Colonel Peter Jeffrey (Australia)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006 Troops: 223
Military advisers/liaison: 11
International staff: 228
Local staff: 352

For detailed mission information see p. 250.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, head of Al-Qaida in Iraq. In an effort to crack down on Shi'a militias in Baghdad, 50,000 Iraqi and 12,000 US troops deployed under a new security plan that seemed initially to provoke a sharp rise in violence.

The summer saw promising developments on the political front. On 20 May, Iraq's Council of Representatives successfully approved a government of national unity under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Appointing a broad-based cabinet including Sunni and other opposition figures, al-Maliki announced a national reconciliation plan on 25 June, establishing the Iraqi Reconciliation and National Dialogue Committee, a new mechanism for the disarmament of militias, and a review of policy toward former members of the Ba'ath Party. In late August, a conference of 700 tribal leaders endorsed the program and called for an end to sectarian killing and human rights violations—including by ISF and MNF-I forces.

October 2006 saw the adoption of a regional autonomy law by the Iraqi parliament. The legislation moved Iraq closer to a federalist model of statehood, allowing provinces to merge into regions where they would be afforded substantial governing autonomy. The law was adopted by only 138 of the parliament's 275 members, as Sunni and Shi'a elements abstained from the

vote, citing the divisive impact the law would have on Iraq. A 22 percent spike in sectarian violence between the Sunni and Shi'a ensued. The single deadliest attack since the March 2003 intervention occurred on 23 November, killing about 200 and injuring 250 in Sadr City, a Shi'a area of Baghdad. In subsequent reprisals, thirty were killed in a Sunni-Arab area of the Iraqi capital. Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death on 5 November.

As civil violence and terrorist attacks continue, contributors are under increasing pressure to identify a timetable for withdrawal (including in the US Congress, control of which passed to the Democratic Party in the November 2006 mid-term elections), which would require handing over to the Iraqi Security Forces, whose capacity and neutrality are patchy at best. The December report of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group chaired by James Baker III and Lee Hamilton fueled further debate in the United States about the need for a fundamental change in course. With more and more commentators describing the conflict as civil war, risks of a further deterioration remain, bringing the prospect of a territorially divided Iraq, regional conflict, and foreign forces, international terrorists among them, ungoverned in a country awash with sophisticated weaponry.