

Iraq

Iraq entered 2007 mired in sectarian, civil, and terrorist violence. Stalled political progress both was a function of and contributed to spiraling insecurity. By midyear, however, violence had begun to decline substantially, and by December 2007 indices such as the number of multiple-casualty bombings per month were registering their lowest levels since late 2004. While violence continues, such progress nevertheless prompted many analysts—crediting the decline in violence to a combination of local political dynamics in some regions, improved strategy under Force Commander David Petraeus, and the “surge” in US troop levels in and around Baghdad—to suggest that Iraq faced a moment of opportunity to make critically necessary political progress.

Beginning in May 2003, Iraq was governed by the Coalition Provisional Authority, led by the United States under its obligations as an occupying force following the ousting of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Iraqi sovereignty was restored with the establishment of an interim government on 28 June 2004. The Multi-national Force Iraq (MNF-I), which succeeded the coalition forces, was deployed at the request of the Iraqi government and authorized by Security Council Resolution 1546 (8 June 2004). Apart from the United States, which supplies the large majority of the MNF-I’s troops, leading contributors as of late 2007 included the United Kingdom, South Korea, Poland, Australia, Georgia, Romania, and Denmark.

The MNF-I’s mandate is subject to ongoing Iraqi consent, as was most recently expressed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in a letter to the Security Council on 7 December 2007. Its mission is to contribute to security in Iraq, including through combat operations against forces hostile to the transition

and by training and equipping Iraqi security forces. Pursuant to the prime minister’s letter, in December 2007 MNF-I’s mandate was extended for one year with Security Council Resolution 1790 (18 December 2007).

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was established in 2003. Following a 19 August 2003 bomb attack on the UN headquarters, which killed Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and twenty-one staff members, the remaining staff relocated to Jordan and Kuwait. UNAMI staff began returning to the Baghdad headquarters in April 2004, to resume their mandated task of supporting the Iraqi people in forming new governing structures.

With Prime Minister al-Maliki installed through democratic elections in 2005, it was hoped that consensus around an agenda for national reconciliation would follow soon thereafter. However, the steady deterioration of both the political and the security situation in Iraq disappointed those hopes.

The well-documented spiral that ensued over the next two years drove US president George W. Bush in early 2007 to announce a change in the MNF-I’s approach in Iraq. Otherwise known as “the surge,” the plan called for the enlargement of the US commitment in and around Baghdad by approximately 30,000 troops, which brought the total number of US forces to over 170,000 when deployment was completed in June 2007. The heightened troop strength resulted in increased numbers of MNF-I counterinsurgency operations and an overall heightened, more sustained presence.

In parallel, the UN undertook an enhanced diplomatic approach at the onset of the year, initiating a series of meetings that culminated with the creation of the Interna-

Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I)

- Authorization Date 16 October 2003 (UNSC Res. 1511),
8 June 2004 (UNSC Res. 1546)
- Start Date November 2003
- Force Commander General David H. Petraeus (United States)
- Strength as of 30 September 2007 Troops: 180,009

NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I)

- Authorization Date 8 June 2004 (UNSC Res. 1546),
30 July 2004 (Establishment of NATO
Training Implementation Mission in
Iraq), 16 December 2004 (modified
into full-fledged training mission)
- Start Date August 2004
- Force Commander Lieutenant-General James Dubik
(United States)
- Budget \$21.6 million
(October 2006–September 2007)
- Strength as of 30 September 2007 Troops: 160

UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI)

- Authorization Date 14 August 2003 (UNSC Res. 1500),
expanded 8 June 2004 (UNSC Res.
1546), expanded 10 August 2007
- Start Date 14 August 2003
- SRSG Staffan de Mistura (Sweden)
- Budget \$245.8 million (1 January 2006–
31 December 2007)
- Strength as of 31 October 2007 Troops: 223
Military Observers: 7
International Civilian Staff: 278
Local Civilian Staff: 354

For detailed mission information see p. 238.

tional Compact with Iraq in May 2007. The Compact is an agreement between the UN and the government of Iraq for continued efforts to consolidate what peace has been achieved and to pursue political, economic, and social development over the next five years.

On 10 August 2007, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1770, changing UNAMI's mandate and expanding its charge to involve greater political efforts in Iraq, including advising on and assisting in political facilitation and national reconciliation, and promoting regional cooperation between Iraq and the countries of the region, notably through the continued role of the United Nations in the International Compact with Iraq.

By the end of September 2007, civilian casualties in Iraq had declined to an estimated 1,100 per month. While still high, the figures of late 2007 are striking in contrast to those from January 2007 and November 2006, when 2,800 and 3,500 civilian casualties were recorded, respectively.¹

Against this backdrop, and despite the acknowledgment of the prevailing restrictive security situation in which UNAMI operates, in his October 2007 report to the Security Council, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon cited an opportunity for UNAMI to exploit its comparative advantage and take a leading political role in Iraq. As the year came to a close, Iraq's leaders and the international community were faced with an opportunity but also a challenge: to foster and support the significant political steps that would be required to take advantage of the decline in insecurity and prevent a resurgence of violence.

Note

1. Brookings Institution, *The Iraq Index*, 31 October 2007, pp. 13–14, <http://www.brookings.edu/saban/~media/files/centers/saban/iraq%20index/index20071029.pdf>.