



Highlights of [GAO-06-1094T](#), a statement for the record to the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations; Committee on Government Reform; House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal years 2003 through 2006, U.S. government agencies have reported significant costs for U.S. stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. In addition, the United States currently has committed about 138,000 military personnel to the U.S.-led Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I). Over the past 3 years, worsening security conditions have made it difficult for the United States to achieve its goals in Iraq.

In this statement, we discuss (1) the trends in the security environment in Iraq, and (2) progress in developing Iraqi security forces, as reported by the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State. We also present key questions for congressional oversight, including:

- What political, economic, and security conditions must be achieved before the United States can draw down and withdraw?
- Why have security conditions continued to deteriorate even as Iraq has met political milestones, increased the number of trained and equipped forces, and increasingly assumed the lead for security?
- If existing U.S. political, economic, and security measures are not reducing violence in Iraq, what additional measures, if any, will the administration propose for stemming the violence?

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1094T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff, (202) 512-8979, christoffj@gao.gov.

STABILIZING IRAQ

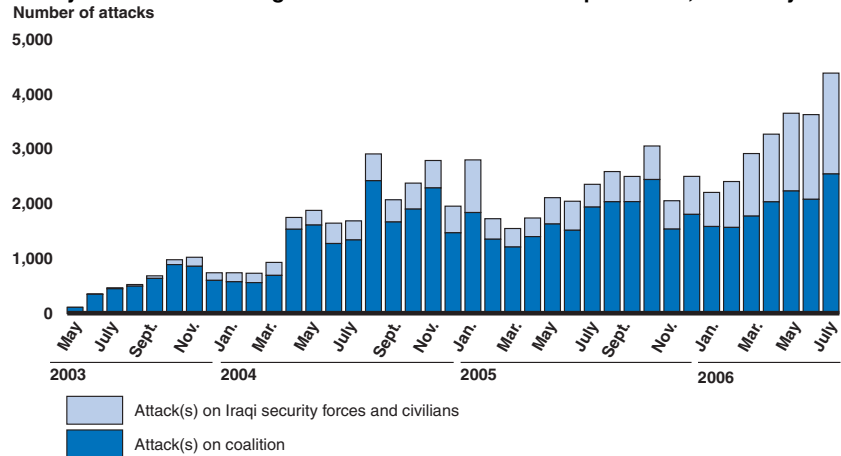
An Assessment of the Security Situation

What GAO Found

Since June 2003, the overall security conditions in Iraq have deteriorated and grown more complex, as evidenced by increased numbers of attacks and Sunni/Shi'a sectarian strife, which has grown since the February 2006 bombing in Samarra. As shown in the figure below, attacks against the coalition and its Iraqi partners reached an all time high during July 2006. The deteriorating conditions threaten the progress of U.S. and international efforts to assist Iraq in the political and economic areas. In July 2006, the State Department reported that the recent upturn in violence has hindered efforts to engage with Iraqi partners and noted that a certain level of security was a prerequisite to accomplishing the political and economic conditions necessary for U.S. withdrawal. Moreover, the Sunni insurgency and Shi'a militias have contributed to growing sectarian strife that has resulted in increased numbers of Iraqi civilian deaths and displaced individuals.

DOD uses three factors to measure progress in developing capable Iraqi security forces and transferring security responsibilities to the Iraqi government: (1) the number of trained and equipped forces, (2) the number of Iraqi army units and provincial governments that have assumed responsibility for security in specific geographic areas, and (3) the capabilities of operational units, as reported in unit-level and aggregate Transition Readiness Assessments (TRA). Although the State Department reported that the number of trained and equipped Iraqi security forces has increased, these numbers do not address their capabilities. As of August 2006, 115 Iraqi army units had assumed the lead for counterinsurgency operations in specific areas, and one province had assumed control for security. Unit-level TRA reports provide insight into the Iraqi army units' training, equipment, and logistical capabilities. GAO is working with DOD to obtain the unit-level TRA reports. Such information would inform the Congress on the capabilities and needs of Iraq's security forces.

Enemy-initiated Attacks Against the Coalition and Its Iraqi Partners, as of July 2006



Source: Multi-National Force-Iraq, July 2006.