



Highlights of [GAO-06-953T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In November 2005, the National Security Council (NSC) issued the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq (NSVI) to clarify the President's strategy for achieving U.S. political, security, and economic goals in Iraq. The U.S. goal is to establish a peaceful, stable, and secure Iraq. In addition, in June 2006, the administration issued a fact sheet at Camp David discussing current progress and goals in Iraq.

This testimony (1) discusses the extent to which the NSVI and its supporting documents address the six characteristics of an effective national strategy, and (2) assesses how security, political, and economic factors will affect achieving the U.S. strategy for Iraq. In this testimony, the NSVI and supporting documents are collectively referred to as the U.S. strategy for Iraq.

What GAO Recommends

A GAO report issued today recommends that NSC, along with the Departments of Defense and State, complete the strategy by addressing all six characteristics of an effective national strategy in a single document. State commented that the NSVI's purpose is to provide a broad overview of the U.S. strategy in Iraq, not all details. GAO's analysis was not based exclusively on the NSVI but included all key supporting documents. Consequently, GAO retained the recommendation for a more complete and integrated strategy.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-953T.

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

REBUILDING IRAQ

More Comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals and Overcome Challenges

What GAO Found

The NSVI is an improvement over previous U.S. planning efforts for stabilizing and rebuilding Iraq. However, the NSVI and supporting documents are incomplete as they do not fully address all the characteristics of an effective national strategy. Among its positive attributes, the strategy's purpose and scope is clear; it identifies U.S. involvement in Iraq as a "vital national interest and the central front in the war on terror." Also, the strategy generally addresses the threats and risks facing the coalition forces and provides a comprehensive description of U.S. political, security, and economic objectives in Iraq. However, the discussion of outcome-related performance measures to assess progress in achieving these goals and objectives is limited. Moreover, the strategy falls short in at least three areas. First, it only partially identifies the agencies responsible for implementing key aspects of the strategy. Second, it does not fully address how the U.S. will integrate its goals with those of the Iraqis and the international community, and it does not detail Iraq's anticipated contribution to its future needs. Third, it only partially identifies the current and future costs of U.S. involvement in Iraq, including maintaining U.S. military operations, building Iraqi government capacity, and rebuilding critical infrastructure. Furthermore, the June 2006 Camp David fact sheet provides additional detail but does not address these key shortfalls.

Security, political, and economic factors will hamper U.S. efforts to stabilize Iraq and achieve key U.S. goals. First, the U.S. and Iraq are trying to stabilize Iraq by training and equipping additional Iraqi security forces and securing Baghdad and other strategic cities. However, increases in attacks against the coalition and its Iraqi partners and the growing influence of militias will adversely affect U.S. and Iraqi efforts. Second, the U.S. and Iraq are trying to improve Iraq's capacity to govern by reconciling sectarian groups and building the capacity of national and provincial governments to provide security and services. However, sectarian conflicts, the lack of capacity in the ministries, and corruption serve to hinder these efforts. Third, the U.S. and Iraqi governments are trying to revitalize Iraq's economy and restore the oil, electricity, and other key sectors. However, these efforts have been impeded by security, corruption, fiscal, and other challenges.

The formation of a permanent Iraqi government gives the U.S. an opportunity to re-examine its strategy for Iraq and align its efforts with Iraq and the international community. As a first step, NSC should complete the strategy by defining and disseminating performance metrics, articulating clear roles and responsibilities, specifying future contributions, and identifying current costs and future resources. In addition, the United States, Iraq, and the international community should (1) enhance support capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, (2) improve the capabilities of the national and provincial governments, and (3) develop a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy.