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REBUILDING IRAQ

Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police

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Highlights of [GAO-05-431T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform; Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations; House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the fall of the former Iraq regime in April 2003, the multinational force has been working to develop Iraqi military and police forces capable of maintaining security. To support this effort, the United States provided about \$5.8 billion in 2003-04 to develop Iraq's security capability. In February 2005, the president requested a supplemental appropriation with an additional \$5.7 billion to accelerate the development of Iraqi military and police forces.

GAO provides preliminary observations on (1) the strategy for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi military and police forces; (2) the data on the status of forces, and (3) challenges that the Multi-National Force in Iraq faces in transferring security missions to these forces.

To prepare this statement, GAO used unclassified reports, status updates, security plans, and other documents from the Departments of Defense and State. GAO also used testimonies and other statements for the record from officials such as the Secretary of Defense. In addition, GAO visited the Iraqi police training facility in Jordan.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-431T.

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

Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police

What GAO Found

The Multinational Force in Iraq has developed and begun to implement a strategy to transfer security responsibilities to the Iraqi military and police forces. This strategy would allow a gradual drawdown of its forces based on the multinational force neutralizing the insurgency and developing Iraqi military and police services that can independently maintain security.

U.S. government agencies do not report reliable data on the extent to which Iraqi security forces are trained and equipped. As of late February 2005, the State Department reported that about 82,000 police forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and almost 60,000 military forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Defense have been trained and equipped. However, the reported number of Iraqi police is unreliable because the Ministry of Interior does not receive consistent and accurate reporting from the police forces around the country. The data does not exclude police absent from duty. Further, the departments of State and Defense no longer report on the extent to which Iraqi security forces are equipped with their required weapons, vehicles, communications equipment, and body armor.

The insurgency in Iraq has intensified since June 2003, making it difficult to transfer security responsibilities to Iraqi forces. From that time through January 2005, insurgent attacks grew in number, complexity, and intensity. At the same time, the multinational force has faced four key challenges in increasing the capability of Iraqi forces: (1) training, equipping, and sustaining a changing force structure; (2) developing a system for measuring the readiness and capability of Iraqi forces; (3) building loyalty and leadership throughout the Iraqi chain of command; and (4) developing a police force that upholds the rule of law in a hostile environment.

The multinational force is taking steps to address these challenges, such as developing a system to assess unit readiness and embedding US forces within Iraqi units. However, without reliable reporting data, a more capable Iraqi force, and stronger Iraqi leadership, the Department of Defense faces difficulties in implementing its strategy to draw down U.S. forces from Iraq.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss challenges in transferring security responsibilities from the multinational force to the Iraqi military and police forces. In April 2005, we will issue a classified report to the Congress that provides additional analysis on this subject.

The former Iraqi regime fell in April 2003, and the United Nations recognized an interim administration—the Coalition Provisional Authority. On May 23, 2003, the Authority dissolved the military and paramilitary organizations of the former Iraqi regime and announced plans to create a new national self-defense capability for Iraq. In June 2004, the Authority transferred sovereignty to an interim government. At the time of Iraq's January 2005 elections, more than 159,000 U.S. forces and 24,500 coalition forces were operating throughout Iraq.

As of March 2005, the United States has made available about \$5.8 billion to develop Iraq's security capability. In February 2005, the President requested a supplemental appropriation for Iraq, Afghanistan, and other purposes that included an additional \$5.7 billion to accelerate the development of Iraqi security forces.

Today, I will provide preliminary observations on (1) the strategy for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi military and police forces, (2) data on the status of Iraqi forces, and (3) challenges the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) faces in transferring security missions to these forces.

This statement only includes unclassified information. (See appendix I for details on our scope and methodology.) We conducted work for this statement in February and March 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Summary

Since fall 2003, MNF-I has developed and refined a plan to transfer security responsibilities to the Iraqi military and police forces.¹ The plan's objective was to allow a gradual drawdown of coalition forces first in conjunction with the neutralization of Iraq's insurgency and second with

¹GAO, *Rebuilding Iraq: Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues*, [GAO-04-902R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 28, 2004).

the development of Iraqi forces capable of securing their country. In summer 2004, MNF-I developed and began implementing a comprehensive campaign plan with this transition concept. The campaign plan is classified. As of March 2005, the Commander, U.S. Central Command, stated that Iraqi security forces were growing in capability but were not ready to take on the insurgency without the presence, help, mentoring, and assistance of MNF-I.

U.S. government data do not provide reliable information on the status of Iraqi military and police forces. The goal of the multinational force is to train and equip about 271,000 Iraqi security forces by July 2006. As of late February 2005, the State Department reported that about 82,000 police forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and almost 60,000 military forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Defense have been trained and equipped. However, the reported number of Iraqi police is unreliable because the Ministry of Interior does not receive consistent and accurate reporting from the police forces around the country. The data also include police absent from duty. Further, State no longer reports on the extent to which Iraqi security forces have their required weapons, vehicles, communication equipment, and body armor.

The insurgency in Iraq has intensified since June 2003, making it difficult to transfer security responsibilities to Iraqi forces. According to Department of Defense officials and documents, the insurgency has grown in intensity and sophistication. Attacks against the coalition and its Iraqi forces have increased in number over time, with the highest peaks of attacks occurring in August and November 2004 and in January 2005. At the same time, MNF-I faces four challenges in building an Iraqi security force capable of combating the insurgency. First, the Iraqi force structure for the military and police is changing with the creation of new units by MNF-I and the Iraqi ministries. This makes it difficult to provide effective support—the training, equipment, and sustaining of Iraqi forces. Second, MNF-I is still developing a system to assess the readiness of Iraqi military and police forces so they can identify weaknesses and provide them with effective support. Third, developing strong Iraqi leadership and ensuring the loyalty of all personnel throughout the chain of command has proven difficult. Fourth, MNF-I and the Iraqi ministries find it difficult to train a national police force that abides by the rule of law while operating in a hostile environment.

MNF-I is aware of these challenges and is working to address them. For example, MNF-I is developing a system to measure the readiness of the

Iraqi military and police and is moving to expand a system of embedded U.S. trainers to help develop strong Iraqi leadership.

Background

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), established in May 2003, was the U.N.-recognized coalition authority led by the United States and the United Kingdom that was responsible for the temporary governance of Iraq. In May 2003, the CPA dissolved the military organizations of the former regime and began the process of creating or reestablishing new Iraqi security forces, including the police and new Iraqi army. Over time, multinational force commanders assumed responsibility for recruiting and training some Iraqi defense and police forces in their areas of responsibility.² On June 28, 2004, the CPA transferred power to a sovereign Iraqi interim government, the CPA officially dissolved, and Iraq's transitional period began. Under Iraq's transitional law,³ the transitional period covers the interim government phase and the transitional government period, which is scheduled to end by December 31, 2005.⁴

The multinational force (MNF-I) has the authority to take all necessary measures to contribute to security and stability in Iraq during this process, working in partnership with the Iraqi government to reach agreement on security and policy issues. A May 2004 national security presidential directive required the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) to direct all U.S. government efforts to organize, equip, and train Iraqi security forces. The Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, which operates under MNF-I, now leads coalition efforts to train, equip, and organize Iraqi security forces.

MNF-I Plan for Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Forces

In October 2003, the multinational force outlined a four-phased plan for transferring security missions to Iraqi security forces. The four phases were (1) mutual support, where the multinational force establishes conditions for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi forces; (2) transition to local control, where Iraqi forces in a local area assume responsibility for security; (3) transition to regional control, where Iraqi forces are responsible for larger regions; and (4) transition to strategic

²The CPA was responsible for police training at the Baghdad and Jordan academies. The Iraqi army units were trained by the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.

³*Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period*, March 2004.

⁴See *Iraq's Transitional Law*, [GAO-04-746R](#), May 25, 2004, for more information on key events during Iraq's transitional period.

over watch, where Iraqi forces on a national level are capable of maintaining a secure environment against internal and external threats, with broad monitoring from the multinational force. The plan's objective was to allow a gradual drawdown of coalition forces first in conjunction with the neutralization of Iraq's insurgency and second with the development of Iraqi forces capable of securing their country.⁵

Citing the growing capability of Iraqi security forces, MNF-I attempted to quickly shift responsibilities to them in February 2004 but did not succeed in this effort. In March 2004, Iraqi security forces numbered about 203,000, including about 76,000 police, 78,000 facilities protection officers,⁶ and about 38,000 in the civilian defense corps. Police and military units performed poorly during an escalation of insurgent attacks against the coalition in April 2004. According to a July 2004 executive branch report to Congress, many Iraqi security forces around the country collapsed during this uprising. Some Iraqi forces fought alongside coalition forces. Other units abandoned their posts and responsibilities and in some cases assisted the insurgency.

A number of problems contributed to the collapse of Iraqi security forces. MNF-I identified problems in training and equipping them as among the reasons for their poor performance. Training of police and some defense forces was not uniform and varied widely across Iraq. MNF-I's commanders had the leeway to institute their own versions of the transitional police curriculum, and the training for some defense forces did not prepare them to fight against well-armed insurgents. Further, according to the CPA Director of Police, when Iraqi police voluntarily returned to duty in May 2003, CPA initially provided limited training and did not thoroughly vet the personnel to get them on the streets quickly. Many police who were hired remain untrained and unvetted, according to Department of Defense (DOD) officials.

⁵For more information on the security transition concept, see [GAO-04-902R](#).

⁶The Departments of State and Defense stopped counting the Facilities Protection Service as part of the Iraqi security force structure in September 2004. The mission of the Facilities Protection Service is to guard and secure individual ministry and municipal buildings against vandalism and theft.

MNF-I completed a campaign plan⁷ during summer 2004 that elaborated and refined the original strategy for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi forces at the local, regional, and then national levels. Further details on this campaign plan are classified.

On March 1, 2005, the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Iraqi security forces were growing in capability but were not yet ready to take on the insurgency without the presence, help, mentoring, and assistance of MNF-I. He cited a mixed performance record for the Iraqi security forces during the previous 11 months. The commander further testified that focused training and mentoring of Iraqi Intervention Forces, Iraqi Special Operations Forces, and National Guard forces contributed to successful coalition operations in places such as Najaf and Kufa during August 2004 and Fallujah during November 2004, and during the January 2005 elections. On the other hand, he also cited instances of poor performance by the police in western Baghdad from August through October 2004 and Mosul during November 2004.

Data on Iraqi Security Forces Has Limitations

U.S. government data does not provide reliable information on the status of Iraqi military and police forces. According to a March 2005 State Department report, as of February 28, 2005, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense had 59,695 operational troops, or roughly two thirds of the total required. The Ministry of Interior had 82,072 trained and equipped officers on duty, or almost half of the total required. Table 1 shows status of Iraqi forces under the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

⁷According to *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (JP 1-02; Nov. 30, 2004), a campaign plan is a plan for a series of related military operations to accomplish a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space.

Table 1: Status of Iraqi Security Forces as Reported by the Department of State

Ministry	Component	Required ^a	Operational/ Trained and Equipped ^b	Percentage of Required
Defense	Iraq Army	94,656	58,992	62
	• Regular Army			
	• National Guard			
	• Intervention Force			
	• Special Operations			
	Air Force	453	186	41
	Navy	582	517	89
	Sub-total	95,691	59,695^c	62
Interior	Iraqi Police Service	135,000	55,274	39
	Highway Patrol	6,300		
	Other forces	34,050	26,798	79
	• Civil Intervention			
	• Special Police			
	• Emergency Response			
	• Border Enforcement			
	• Dignitary Protection			
	Sub-total	175,350	82,072^d	47
	Total	271,041	141,761	52

Source: State Department reports.

^aRequired numbers are from 1/19/05 Iraq Weekly Status Report.

^bThe term “operational” refers to Ministry of Defense forces. The term “trained and equipped” refers to Ministry of Interior forces. Numbers are from 3/2/05 Iraq Weekly Status Report.

^cUnauthorized absent personnel are not included in Ministry of Defense numbers.

^dUnauthorized absent personnel are included in Ministry of Interior numbers.

MNF-I’s goal is to train and equip a total of about 271,000 Iraqi security forces by July 2006. However, the numbers of security forces, as reported in table 1, are limited in providing accurate and complete information on the status of Iraqi forces. Specifically:

- The reported number of security forces overstates the number actually serving. Ministry of Interior reports, for example, include police who are absent without leave in its totals. Ministry of Defense reports exclude the absent military personnel from its totals. According to DOD officials, the number of absentees is probably in the tens of thousands.

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- The reported number of Iraqi police is unreliable. According to a senior official from the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, MNF-I does not know how many Iraqi police are on duty at any given point because the Ministry of Interior does not receive consistent and accurate reporting from police stations across Iraq.
 - The Departments of Defense and State do not provide additional information on the extent to which trained Iraqi security forces have their necessary equipment. As recently as September 2004, State issued unclassified reports with detailed information on the number of weapons, vehicles, communication equipment, and body armour required by each security force compared to the amount received. State had also provided weekly unclassified updates on the number of personnel trained in each unit.

In addition, the total number of Iraqi security forces includes forces with varying missions and training levels. Not all units are designed to be capable of fighting the insurgency. For example, the police service, which numbers about 55,000 of Iraq's 141,000 personnel who have received training, has a civilian law enforcement function. As of mid-December 2004, paramilitary training for a high-threat hostile environment was not part of the curriculum for new recruits. The missions of other units, such as the Ministry of Defense's commando battalion and the Ministry of Interior's Emergency Response Unit, focus on combating terrorism. Required training for both forces includes counterterrorism. Table 2 provides information on the types of military and police units, their missions, and their training.

Table 2: Missions and Training of Iraqi Security Forces

Ministry	Unit	Mission	Training
Defense	Iraqi Army		
	• Regular Army	Defend Iraq against external threats. When directed, assist in providing defense against internal threats.	Eight weeks of basic training. Before deployment units receive follow-on operational training.
	• National Guard	Conduct stability operations to support internal security. Conduct constabulary duties in support of internal security.	Abbreviated 3-week basic training. Follow-on training similar to that given the regular army.
	• Intervention Force	Conduct operations to defeat anti-Iraqi forces, with primary focus on urban areas. Assist in the restoration of a secure and stable environment.	Four weeks of cadre training (for officers and noncommissioned officers); 13 weeks basic and urban operations training.
	• Commando Battalion	Support the Iraqi Counter-Terrorist Force. Similar in organization, training, and mission to the U.S. Army Ranger Battalion.	Regular army basic training. Instruction includes counter terrorism and unconventional warfare.
	• Counter-Terrorist Task Force	Direct action counter-terrorism similar mission, and training to U.S. Special Forces with counter-terrorist function.	Regular Army basic training; specialized 13-week course.
	Air Force	Provide aerial reconnaissance and rotary and fixed-wing transport for Iraqi Security Forces and authorities.	Training consists of 1 to 4 month familiarization instruction.
	Navy	Conduct security operations on Iraqi territorial waters, including gas and oil platforms, and, in conjunction with Department of Border Enforcement, conduct police operations on Iraq's coastline and territorial waters to counter piracy, smuggling, and other unlawful actions.	Regular Army basic training; follow-on training for land- and sea-based troops, advanced seamanship training.
Interior	Police	Provide law enforcement, public safety and internal security.	New officers: 8-week academy training. Serving officers: 3-week course.
	Highway Patrol	Provide law enforcement, internal security, and convoy security along Iraq's highways.	N/A
	Other forces		
	• Civil Intervention Force	Provide a national level, high end, rapid response police capability to counter large-scale disobedience and insurgents.	N/A
	• Special Police Commando	Provide a direct action, special operations, and counter insurgency capability in support of Ministry of Interior.	N/A
	• Emergency Response Unit	Provide a special operations police capability in support of the Iraqi Police Service.	Standard regular police training; 8-week specialized training focusing on terrorist incidents, high-risk searches, and weapons of mass destruction.

Ministry	Unit	Mission	Training
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Border Enforcement 	Protect the integrity of Iraq's border and monitor and control the movement of persons and goods.	4-week academy training.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureau of Dignitary Protection 	Provide close protection, convoy security, and fixed-site security for Iraqi key political leaders.	N/A

Source: MNF-I documents and DOD testimonies before Congress.

Note: N/A = Not available from an unclassified source.

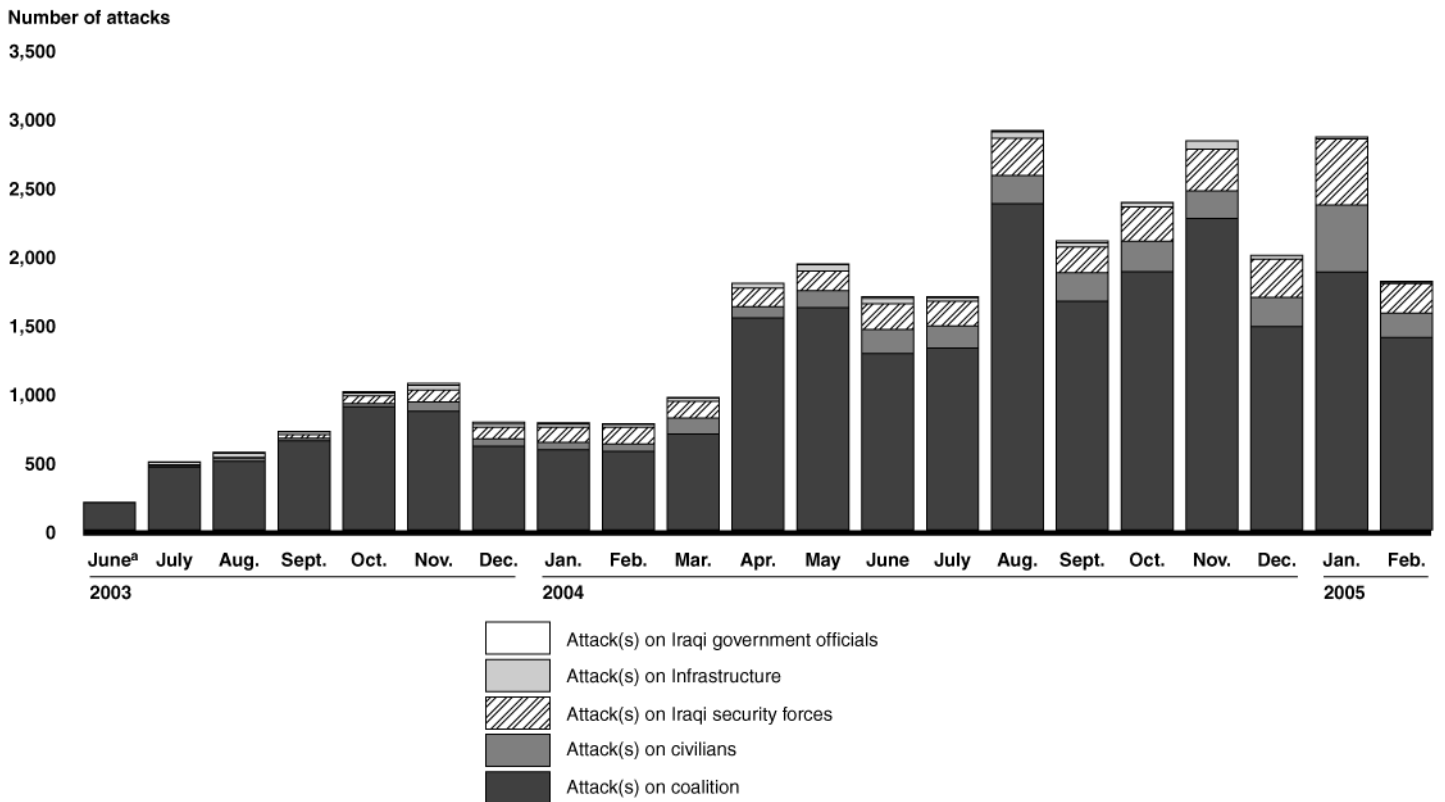
Challenges to Transferring Security Missions to Iraqi Control

The multinational force's security transition plan depends on neutralizing the insurgent threat and increasing Iraqi security capability. The insurgent threat has increased since June 2003, as insurgent attacks have grown in number, sophistication, and complexity. At the same time, MNF-I and the Iraqi government confront difficulties to building Iraqi security forces that are capable of effectively combating the insurgency. These include programming effective support for a changing force structure, assessing progress in developing capable forces without a system for measuring their readiness, developing leadership and loyalty throughout the Iraqi chain of command, and developing police who abide by the rule of law in a hostile environment.

The Insurgency Has Intensified

According to senior military officials, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—has grown in number, complexity, and intensity over the past 18 months. On February 3, 2005, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the insurgency in Iraq had built up slowly during the first year, then became very intense from summer 2004 through January 2005. Figure 1 provides Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) data showing these trends in enemy initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure. Overall attacks peaked in August 2004 due to a rise in violence in Sunni-dominated regions and an uprising by the Mahdi Army, a Shi'a insurgent group led by radical Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Although the November 2004 and January 2005 numbers were slightly lower than those for August, it is significant that almost all of the attacks in these 2 months took place in Sunni-majority areas, whereas the August attacks took place countrywide. MNF-I is the primary target of the attacks, but the number of attacks against Iraqi civilians and security forces increased significantly during January 2005. On March 1, 2005, the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that more Iraqi security forces than Americans have died in action against insurgents since June 2004.

Figure 1: Violent Incidents Against the Coalition and Its Partners, by Month, June 2003 Through February 2005



Source: MNC-I SigActs, 050000CMAR05

^aAccording to DIA officials, June 2003 data are incomplete.

Insurgents have demonstrated their ability to increase attacks around key events, according to the DIA Director’s February 2005 statement before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. For example, attacks spiked in April and May 2004, the months before the transfer of power to the Iraqi interim government; in November 2004 due to a rise in violence in Sunni-dominated areas during Ramadan and MNF-I’s operation against insurgents in Fallujah; and in January 2005 before the Iraqi elections. The DIA Director testified that attacks on Iraq’s election day reached about 300, double the previous 1 day high of about 150 during last year’s Ramadan. About 80 percent of all attacks occurred in Sunni-dominated central Iraq, with the Kurdish north and Shia south remaining relatively calm.

In February and March 2004, the DIA Director and CENTCOM Commander presented their views of the nature of the insurgency to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Armed Services Committee, respectively. According to these officials, the core of the insurgency consists of Sunni Arabs, dominated by Ba'athist and former regime elements. Shi'a militant groups, such as those associated with the radical Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, remain a threat to the political process. Following the latest round of fighting last August and September, DIA concluded that al-Sadr's forces were re-arming, re-organizing, and training, with al-Sadr keeping his options open to employ his forces. Jihadists have been responsible for many high-profile attacks that have a disproportionate impact, although their activity accounts for only a fraction of the overall violence. Foreign fighters comprise a small component of the insurgency and a very small percentage of all detainees. DIA believes that insurgents' infiltration and subversion of emerging government institutions, security, and intelligence services will be a major problem for the new government.

In late October 2004, according to a CENTCOM document, MNF-I estimated the overall size of active enemy forces at about 20,000. The estimate consisted of about 10,000 former regime members; about 3,000 members of al Sadr's forces;⁸ about 1,000 in the al-Zarqawi terrorist network; and about 5,000 criminals, religious extremists, and their supporters. In February and March 2005, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that it is difficult to develop an accurate estimate of the number of insurgents. The CENTCOM commander explained that the number of insurgent fighters, supporters, and sympathizers can rise and fall depending on the politics, problems, and major offensive operations in a given area. He also acknowledged that gaps exist in the intelligence concerning the broader insurgency, particularly in the area of human intelligence.

The CENTCOM commander and MNF-I commanding general recently cited Iraq's January 2005 elections as an important step toward Iraqi sovereignty and security but cautioned against possible violence in the future. In March 2005, the MNF-I commanding general stated that the insurgency has sufficient ammunition, weapons, money, and people to maintain about 50 to 60 attacks per day in the Sunni areas. The CENTCOM

⁸MNF-I refers to the al-Sadr's forces as Muqtada Militia.

Challenges to Increasing the Capability of Iraqi Security Forces

Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the upcoming processes of writing an Iraqi constitution and forming a new government could trigger more violence, as the former regime elements in the insurgency seek a return to power. The MNF-I commanding general stated that a combination of political, military, economic, and communications efforts will ultimately defeat the insurgency.

On March 1, 2005, the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Iraqi security forces are not yet ready to take on the insurgency without the presence, help, mentoring, and assistance of MNF-I. MNF-I has faced four key challenges in helping Iraq develop security forces capable of combating the insurgency or conducting law enforcement duties in a hostile environment. These key challenges are (1) training, equipping, and sustaining a changing force structure; (2) determining progress in developing capable forces without a system for measuring their readiness; (3) developing loyalty and leadership throughout the Iraqi chain of command; and (4) developing police capable of democratic law enforcement in a hostile environment.

Iraqi Security Force Structure Is Constantly Changing

The Iraqi security force structure has constantly changed in response to the growing insurgency. This makes it difficult to provide effective support—the training, equipping, and sustaining of Iraqi forces. DOD defines force structure as the numbers, size, and composition of units that comprise defense forces.⁹ Some changes to the Iraqi force structure have resulted from a Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq analysis of needed Iraqi security capabilities during summer 2004 and reported in October 2004.¹⁰ The Iraqi government has made other changes to forces under the Ministries of Defense and Interior to allow them to better respond to the increased threat. According to a February 2005 DOD budget document, MNF-I and the Iraqi government plan to increase the force structure over the next year.

According to the October report, a number of enhancements in Iraqi force capabilities and infrastructure were critically needed to meet the current threat environment. Based on this review, the MNF-I Commander decided to increase the size of the Iraqi Police Service from 90,000 to 135,000 personnel; the Iraqi National Guard by 20 battalions to 62 battalions; and

⁹DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.

¹⁰Office of Management and Budget, *Quarterly Update to Congress, Section 2207 Report*, (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 2004).

the Department of Border Enforcement from 16,000 to 32,000 border officers. The review also supported in the creation of the Civil Intervention Force, which consists of nine specialized Public Order Battalions and two Special Police Regiments under the Ministry of Interior. This force is designed to provide a national level, high-end, rapid response capability to counter large-scale civil disobedience and insurgency activities.

Over the past year, the Iraqi government has created, merged, and expanded Iraqi security forces under the Ministries of Defense and Interior. For example, according to a DOD official, the Iraqi Army Chief of Staff created the Iraqi Intervention Force in April 2004 in response to the unwillingness of a regular Army battalion to fight Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah. This intervention force will be comprised of nine battalions and is the counter-insurgency wing of the Iraqi Army. According to Iraq's national security strategy,¹¹ the Iraqi government decided to increase the Iraqi Army from 100,000 soldiers to 150,000 personnel by the end of this year and extend the time required to complete their training from July 2005 to December 2005. The government planned to form this larger army by including the Iraqi National Guard and accelerating the training and recruitment of new troops. In addition, in late 2004, the Ministry of Interior added the Mechanized Police Brigade, a paramilitary, counter-insurgency unit that will consist of three battalions that will deploy to high-risk areas. It also created the paramilitary, army-type Special Police Commando brigades.

According to DOD document supporting the February 2005 supplemental request, the Iraqi government planned to add a number of additional military elements, primarily support units, to the force structure over the next year. These include logistics units at the division level and below, a mechanized division, and a brigade each for signals, military police, engineering, and logistics.

System for Measuring Iraqi Readiness Has Not Been Developed

MNF-I officials stated that, as of March 2005, MNF-I and the Iraqi government do not yet have a system in place to assess the readiness of Iraq's various security forces to accomplish their assigned missions and

¹¹*Strategy for National Security and the Role of the Army and Internal Security Forces*, January 2005.

Developing an Effective Iraqi Chain of Command

tasks.¹² However, in early 2005, the commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq said that MNF-I had begun work on a system to assess Iraqi capabilities. MNF-I plans to develop a rating system along the lines of the U.S. military readiness reporting system. According to the commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, this system most likely would have Iraqi brigade commanders evaluating such things as the training readiness of their units, their personnel field, and their equipping levels. They also would provide a subjective judgment of the units' readiness. The commanding general said that this rating system would take time to implement.

It is unclear at this time whether the system under development would provide adequate measures for determining the capability of Iraqi police. Because the police have a civilian law enforcement function rather than a military or paramilitary role in combating the insurgency, MNF-I may have to develop a separate system for determining police readiness.

On March 1, 2005, the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the establishment of an effective Iraqi chain of command is a critical factor in determining when Iraqi security forces will be capable of taking the lead in fighting the counterinsurgency. The CENTCOM Commander added that the Iraqi chain of command must be loyal and capable, take orders from the Iraqi head of state through the lawful chain of command, and fight to serve the Iraqi people. MNF-I faces several challenges in helping to develop an effective chain of command, including questionable loyalty among some Iraqi security forces, poor leadership in Iraqi units, and the destabilizing influence of militias outside the control of the Iraqi government.

The executive branch reported in July 2004 that some Iraqi security forces had turned to fight with insurgents during the spring uprising.¹³ In October 2004, in response to questions we submitted, CENTCOM officials indicated that it is difficult to determine with any certainty the true level of insurgent

¹²*DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defines readiness as the synthesis of two distinct but interrelated levels: (1) unit readiness, which is the ability to provide capabilities required by combatant commanders to execute their assigned missions; this is derived from the ability of each unit to deliver the outputs for which it was assigned; and (2) joint readiness, which is the combatant commander's ability to integrate and synchronize ready combat and support forces to execute his or her assigned missions.

¹³*Section 2207 report.*

infiltration within Iraqi security forces. Recent reports indicate that some Iraqi security personnel continue to cooperate with insurgents. For example, a February 2005 report cited instances of insurgent infiltration of Iraqi police forces. Police manning a checkpoint in one area were reporting convoy movements by mobile telephone to local terrorists. Police in another area were infiltrated by former regime elements.

In February 2005 press briefings, the Secretary of Defense and the commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq cited the leadership of Iraqi security forces as a critical element in developing Iraqi forces capable of combating insurgents. MNF-I officials indicated that they plan to expand the use of military transition teams to support Iraqi units. These teams would help train the units and headquarters and accompany them into combat. On March 1, 2005, the CENTCOM Commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee that there is broad, general agreement that MNF-I must do more to train, advise, mentor, and help Iraqi security forces. CENTCOM has requested an additional 1,487 troops to support these efforts and must have the continued support of the new Iraqi government.

The continued existence of militias outside the control of Iraq's central government also presents a major challenge to developing an effective chain of command. In late May 2004, the CPA developed a transition and reintegration strategy for disbanding or controlling militias that existed prior to the transfer of power to the Iraqi interim government.¹⁴ Detailed information on the current status of militias in Iraq is classified. However, the CENTCOM Commander acknowledged the continued existence of older militias and the recent creation of new militias. He said that their presence will ultimately be destabilizing unless they are strictly controlled, come under government supervision, and are not allowed to operate independently.

Developing a Police Force in a Hostile Environment

MNF-I's efforts to develop a police force that abides by and upholds the rule of law while operating in a hostile environment have been difficult. U.S. police trainers in Jordan told us in mid-December 2004 that Iraqi police were trained and equipped to do community policing in a permissive security environment. Thus, Iraqi police were not prepared to

¹⁴Nine militias accepted the transition plans, but others either had not agreed or decided to continue hostile operations against the coalition rather than take part in the transition and reintegration process. See [GAO-04-902R](#) for more information on Iraq's militias and earlier efforts to disband them.

withstand the insurgent attacks that they have faced over the past year and a half. According to the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2004, more than 1,500 Iraqi police have been killed between April 2003 and December 2004. To address this weakness, MNF-I and the Iraqi government report taking steps to better prepare some police to operate during an insurgency. In a December 2004 press briefing, the MNF-I Commander stated that MNF-I was moving to add paramilitary-type skills to the police training program to improve some units' ability to operate in a counterinsurgency environment. U.S. police trainers in Jordan told us that the curriculum was being revised to provide police paramilitary capabilities. In addition, according to the Iraq's national security strategy, the Iraqi government is in the process of upgrading security measures at police stations throughout the country.

According to State's 2004 human rights report, police have operated in a hostile environment. Attacks by insurgents and foreign terrorists have resulted in killings, kidnappings, violence, and torture. Bombings, executions, killings of government officials, shootings, and intimidation were a daily occurrence throughout all regions and sectors of society. The report also states that members of the Ministry of Interior's security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses. For example, in early December 2004, the Basrah police reported that the Internal Affairs Unit was involved in the killings of 10 members of the Baath Party and the killings of a mother and daughter accused of prostitution. The report further states that, according to Human Rights Watch, torture and ill treatment of detainees by the police was commonplace. Additionally, the report states that corruption continued to be a problem. The Iraq Commission for Public Integrity was investigating cases of police abuse involving unlawful arrests, beatings, and theft of valuables from the homes of persons detained.

Conclusion

The multinational force has been working to transfer full security responsibilities for the country to the Iraqi military and police. However, the multinational force and Iraq face the challenges of an intense insurgency, a changing Iraqi force structure, the lack of a system to measure military and police readiness, an Iraqi leadership and chain of command in its infancy, and a police force that finds it difficult to uphold the rule of law in a hostile environment. MNF-I recognizes these challenges and is moving to address them so it can begin to reduce its presence in Iraq and draw down its troops. Of particular note is MNF-I's effort to develop a system to assess unit readiness and to embed MNFI-I transition teams into units to mentor Iraqis.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the other Subcommittee members may have.

Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

For further information, please contact Joseph A. Christoff on (202) 512-8979. Individuals who made key contributions to this testimony were Lynn Cothorn, Mattias Fenton, Laura Helm, Judy McCloskey, Tet Miyabara, Michael Rohrback, and Audrey Solis.

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

We provided preliminary observations on 1) the strategy for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi military and police forces, 2) the data on the status of the forces, and 3) challenges the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) faces in transferring security missions to these forces. We conducted our review for this statement during February and March 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We used only unclassified information for this statement.

To examine the strategy for transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi forces, we focused on the 2003 security transition concept plan. We obtained and reviewed the transition plan and related documents and interviewed officials from the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Departments of State and Defense. Our work on this issue is described in June 2004 GAO report entitled *Rebuilding Iraq: Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues* ([GAO-04-902R](#)). To update information on the transition concept, we reviewed statements for the record from the Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander and the MNF-I commanding general on the campaign plan and on the capability and recent performance of Iraqi security forces. These statements focused on Iraqi security forces' ability to perform against the insurgency, as well as the training and mentoring of forces that contributed to successful operations.

To determine the data on Iraqi security forces, we reviewed unclassified Department of State status reports from June 2004 to March 2005 that provided information about the number of troops by the Ministries of Defense and Interior. We interviewed State and Department of Defense (DOD) officials about the number of Iraqi police on duty and the structure of the Iraqi police forces. To identify the type of training the Iraqi security forces receive, we reviewed and organized data and information from the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. We also visited the Jordan International Police Training Center in Amman, Jordan to determine the training security forces receive. This approach allowed us to verify that Iraqi security forces have varying missions and training levels and not all are designed to be capable of fighting the insurgency.

To discuss the insurgency in Iraq, we reviewed statements for the record from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the CENTCOM Commander on the status of the insurgency. We obtained data and reports from DIA on the number of reported incidents from June 2003 through February 2005. We obtained written responses from CENTCOM on the strength and composition of the insurgency. To address the challenges to increasing the capability of Iraqi

security forces, we reviewed statements for the record by the CENTCOM Commander, the MNF-I commanding general, and DOD officials. We also examined the Iraqi National Security Strategy, funding documents from the Office of Management and Budget and State Department, and the fiscal year 2005 Supplemental Request of the President. We obtained and reviewed further breakdowns of briefings on the supplemental request. To identify challenges in developing the Iraqi police force, we interviewed police trainers in Jordan and reviewed the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2004.

We obtained comments on a draft of this statement from State and DOD, including CENTCOM. All generally agreed with our statement and provided technical comments that we have incorporated as appropriate.

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