

Iraq Status Report January 28, 2009



Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs U.S. Department of State

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HIGHLIGHTS



- Iraqis and International Entities Get Ready for Provincial Elections on January 31 After Thousands Participate in Special Voting (*POLITICAL*, page 6).
- Oil Revenue Fall Will Effect Iraqi Reconstruction Budget (ECONOMIC, page 16).
- Iraq's first ambassador to Syria in 28 years appointed (DIPLOMATIC, page 23).
- Security Preparations for Provincial Elections Underway (SECURITY, page 26).



Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Iraqis Consider Different Political Visions:

• More than 14,400 candidates are competing for just 440 seats in the provincial elections. The elections may be a referendum on existing provincial council representatives and parties perceived to have failed in delivering basic services to Iraqi citizens. For example, only 16% of Iraqis reported being "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the amount of electricity they were receiving. Elections will also be a reflection of the level of support for Prime Minister Maliki. Although not on the ballot, Maliki seeks to build support for his vision for strong central-government authority in Iraq. This vision contrasts sharply with that of the Kurds and ISCI, who favor a decentralized state with more power in the provinces and regions. Maliki's Rule of Law coalition routinely invokes his name, in hopes that this will resonate to earn the support of Iraqi voters.



Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Iraq, UN Work to Prevent Fraud, Violence in Elections:

• Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, along with the UN, is taking extensive precautions to prevent fraud in Saturday's elections. Over 200,000 domestic observers and 400 international monitors, from the U.S., the EU, Turkey, the Arab League, Japan and other international missions, will deploy to 7,000 polling centers throughout Iraq on Saturday. The backs of specially printed ballots, imported from the United Arab Emirates, will be stamped, and voter identities will be double checked. Although country-wide violence is far lower than during the 2005 elections, many Iraqis are concerned about possible fraud and tampering in the electoral process. Tight security measures will be in place from Friday evening until Sunday morning. National and provincial borders will be sealed; the streets of Baghdad and provincial capitals will be closed to vehicular traffic; night-time curfews will be imposed; and civilians, even those with permits, will be banned from carrying weapons.



Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Special Voting Begins Without Incident:

• Special voting began on January 28 for 614,000 Iraqi Security Forces, fire and rescue personnel, prisoners, and hospital patients at 500 polling centers nationwide. These voters represent about 4% of the estimated 15 million-person Iraqi electorate. Thus far, no significant incidents of violence have been reported against voters.

De Mistura Urges Women to Participate in Elections:

• Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Iraq, encouraged Iraqi women to participate in the 2009 provincial elections and stressed the importance of the provision in the Provincial Elections Law to guarantee women seats. The law provides that among every three winning candidates on a list, one of those seats must go to a woman. De Mistura emphasized that this is "consistent with international best practice and...should ensure that women will have a central and important place on the newly elected councils."



Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Iraqi Religious Parties Try to Sustain Representation:

• It remains to be seen whether religious parties such as the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq (ISCI) can maintain their predominance on select provincial councils. A study conducted by the National Media Center indicated that 68% of the Iraqis questioned rejected the use of religious appeals in campaigning while 42% said they favored secular parties. A U.S. official in Baghdad said the decrease in Sunni-Shi'a sectarian violence has helped politics to tentatively move further away from sectarianism. Voters have increasingly voiced dissatisfaction with religious incumbents, who have largely failed to provide them with jobs and essential services such as electricity. Despite these trends, religious parties are often better organized and funded, better positioned to gain local patronage, and may prove difficult to unseat.



Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Sunni Arabs Embrace Upcoming Elections:

• After largely boycotting elections in 2005, Sunni Arab voters are expected to participate broadly and Sunni Arab political parties will compete against each other for popular support in January 31 elections. Provincial elections will provide Sunni Arabs the opportunity to reverse their current under representation on many provincial councils, including Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa. Multiple political parties and coalitions will compete against each other. In predominantly Sunni Arab Anbar, Sunni sheikhs who worked with Coalition Forces against al-Qaida as part of the Anbar Awakening are hoping to unseat the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), which currently controls the province's leadership positions. Posters and campaign slogans can be seen throughout Ramadi and Falluja, and Sunni leaders are strongly encouraging voters to go to the polls. "We are determined to participate to reclaim what we missed out on before," said one Sunni tribal leader in Ramadi.



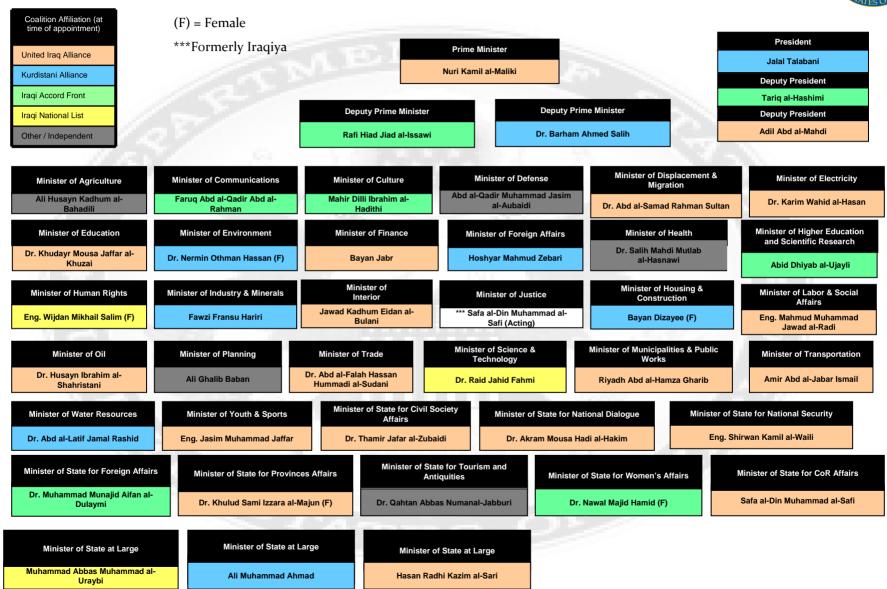
Iraq Prepares for Provincial Elections on January 31

Top Saddam Hussein Officials Face New Trial:

• January 26, the trial began of sixteen officials who served under Saddam Hussein, including his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majeed (Chemical Ali) and former deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz for their suppression of Kurds. This trial will focus on the violence and repression used by the Saddam regime against the Feyli Kurds, who unlike most Iraqi Kurds are not Sunni, but Shi'a. The judge for the case is Raouf Rashid Abdul-Rahman, a Kurd. He is the same judge who sentenced Saddam to death. This trial is the seventh against senior Saddam officials since 2003.

POLITICAL - Government of Iraq

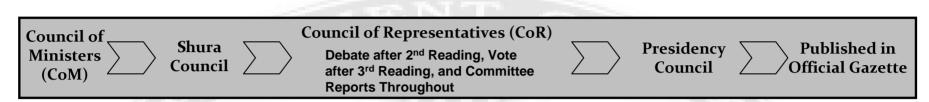




POLITICAL – Key Legislation



Legislative Process



- <u>Hydrocarbons Package</u>: The Framework Law was resubmitted to the Oil and Gas Committee on October 26 and then returned to the Council of Ministers. There has been no progress on the other three laws in the package.
- <u>Budget</u>: First reading held November 24, 2008. The Ministry of Finance then revised the budget to take into account falling oil prices. A second reading and debate are expected in February.

POLITICAL - Refugee Update



- Regional governments report hosting as many as 2 million Iraqi refugees.
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that over 2.8 million Iraqis are displaced inside Iraq.
- In FY08, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration contributed \$287.08 million to international organizations and nongovernmental organizations to assist displaced Iraqis inside the country and in the region.
- The U.S. admitted 13,823 Iraqi refugees in FY08 (which ended September 30).
- Since the program's inception in FY07, 19,608 Iraqi refugees have been admitted for U.S. resettlement; in FY09 alone, the U.S. seeks to admit a minimum of 17,000 Iraqi refugees.
- In FY 2008, a total of 1,142 Special Immigrant Visa (SIVs) were issued for Afghan and Iraqi translators and interpreters (under the Section 1059 program).
- In FY 2008, a total of 705 SIVs were issued (under the Section 1244 program).

ECONOMIC - Oil



Although prices have risen slightly, 2009 oil revenue projections remain pessimistic. Early January export increases are likely short-lived with observed production declines.

Crude Oil Update:

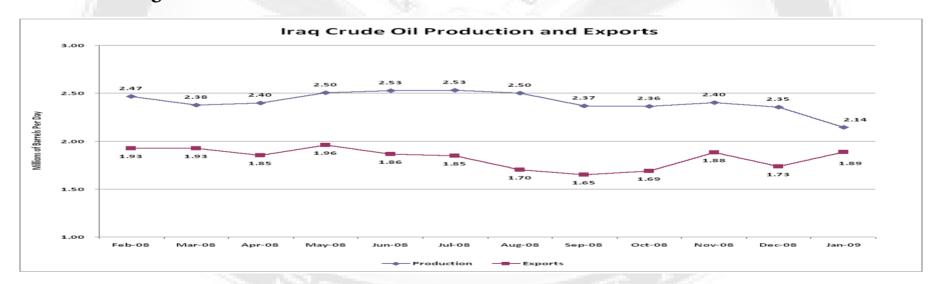
Price averages in world markets closed with the following prices:

Basrah Light at \$37.85/barrel

WTI Cushing at \$42.18/barrel

Dated Brent at \$44.05/barrel

Oman/Dubai at \$42.43/barrel



Revenue estimates:

2007: \$41.0 Billion 2008: \$61.6 Billion 2009 (ytd): \$1.8 Billion

ECONOMIC - Oil



The Oil Ministry promises increasing oil output, but it may take more time if international companies stay on the sidelines.

Oil Minister Pledges to Increase Iraq's Oil Refining Capacity:

• Minister of Oil Husayn al-Shahristani announced January 26 that Iraq has pledged to increase its oil refining capacity in 2009 and export an average of 2 million barrels per day. "We have pledged in the 2009 budget to raise daily crude production and export an average of 2 million barrels per day (bpd), which means a 150,000 bpd increase compared to 2008," Shahristani said. Iraq's refining capacity has been insufficient, forcing it to purchase processed fuel to meet its energy needs. Shahristani spoke at the Doura refinery in Baghdad where he inaugurated a 700,000 bpd refining unit built by the Czech firm Prokop Engineering as part of a \$40 million contract. Shahristani also said another unit of the same size would be opened at the refinery, bringing its refining capacity to 230,000 bpd.

ECONOMIC - Oil



The Oil Ministry promises increasing oil output, but it may take more time if international companies stay on the sidelines.

Three Oil Companies Will Not Participate in First Oil Bid Round:

• The U.S.'s Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, Germany's Wintershall Holding AG's BASF SE, and the UK's BG International do not plan to submit bids in the first bidding round opened to develop Iraq's oil and gas fields, a Ministry of Oil spokesperson said January 22. According to the spokesperson, the three companies were the only ones out of the 35 pre-qualified firms which did not purchase information packages, the purchase of which was necessary to submit a bid.

ECONOMIC – Fiscal and Monetary Affairs



Sustained low oil prices have forced multiple budget cuts, particularly on capital reconstruction

Oil Revenue Fall Will Effect Iraqi Reconstruction Budget:

• As a result of the drop in oil prices, the Iraqi government will have less money to spend this year on its reconstruction efforts. The GOI has already reduced its budget by one-third overall and funds allocated for reconstruction have been cut by 40%, according to the Associated Press. With falling revenues, the funds previously used to create jobs and projects which catered to various political groups could be harder to sustain, and may jeopardize the security gains made since 2007. Nearly 38% of the Iraq's population is either unemployed or has only part-time work and many Iraqis are employed either by the government or through government-funded projects.

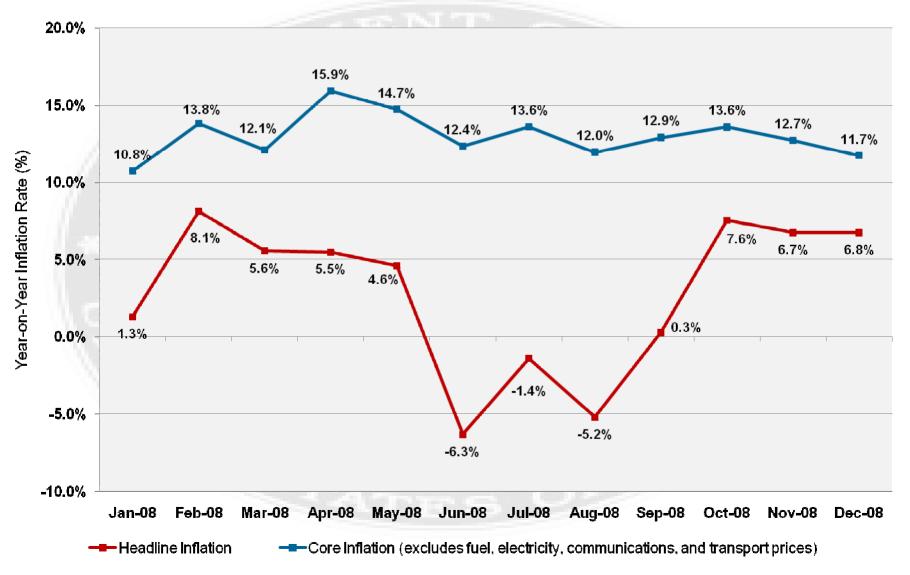
Iraqi Cabinet Approves Revised 2009 Budget:

• GOI Spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh announced that Iraq's cabinet approved a revised version of the 2009 budget January 25, The budget is being cut 7.5% to \$62 billion from the previous figure of \$67 billion as a result of falling oil prices. The cabinet statement which announced the approval did not give the revised budget figures

ECONOMIC - Fiscal and Monetary Affairs



Year-on-Year Inflation



ECONOMIC – Private Sector



Hoping to diversify the economy, Government officials continue to create some space for increased private sector involvement

Contract Signed for Construction and Agricultural Projects in Salah al-Din Province:

• Jordan's Aphrodite Trading signed a \$300 million contract January 22 for construction and agricultural projects in Salah al-Din province. As part of the contract, Aprodite Trading will build 2,500 housing units in Tikrit, construct a truck garage, a hotel, along with other projects to support the oil refineries in Baiji. Officials from the Iraq National Investment Commission also said the company will cultivate palm oil groves on land near Baiji. The purpose of the projects is to spur economic growth in the region and provide employment opportunities for local workers.

ECONOMIC – Private Sector



Hoping to diversify the economy, Government officials continue to create some space for increased private sector involvement

Mining and Minerals Summit to Take Place in April:

The Iraq Development Program has announced that a special summit will take place in Erbil April 5-6 which will offer opportunities to work with the KRG's Ministry of Industry and Minerals as well as assist with the next phase of industrial development. The format of the summit will consist of face-to-face discussions between international companies, commodity traders and investors, and Iraqi ministers, deputies and director generals. The summit was put forth after the success of the April 2008 "Investing in Iraq's Industry" summit. The purpose of the Iraq Development Program-Erbil is to enable companies to engage with top policy makers from the Government of Iraq and the KRG with the purpose of forming joint ventures and signing contracts to advance Iraq's commercialization. It is organized with the approval of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals and serves as a summit for the mineral resources, mining, process engineering, and construction sectors.

ECONOMIC – Private Sector



Hoping to diversify the economy, Government officials continue to create some space for increased private sector involvement

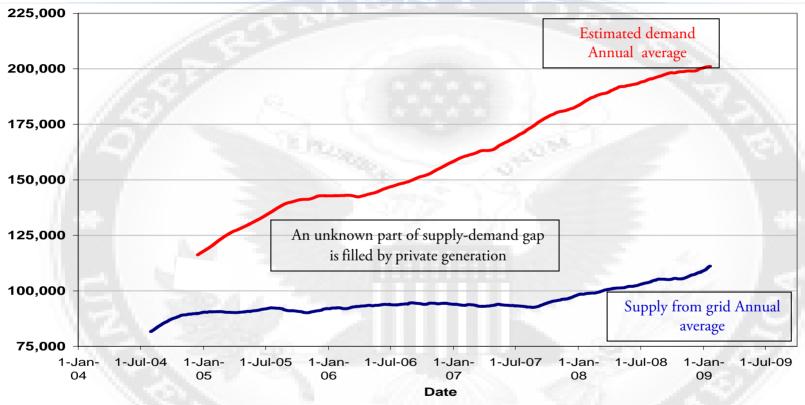
Land Allocated for Construction of "New Diwaniya":

• Officials in Diwaniya have allocated a 20 kilometer plot of land for the construction of a new \$1.5 billion city, which will be adjacent to the existing city of Diwaniya. The project was assigned by the provincial investment committee and officials from the committee have said that discussions have begun with several contractors interested in designing and constructing the city. The project, named "New Diwaniya," will include the construction of several thousand new homes, hospitals, shopping malls, and sports and recreation facilities. No timeline has been released

Public Services – Electricity



GOI needs to strengthen policy actions to manage demand and usage patterns



- Daily electricity supply from the grid January 21-27 was 54% above the year-earlier period and met 5963% of demand, compared with 44% for the year-earlier period.
- Based on estimated demand, hours of power for January 19-25 after meeting demand from essential services were Baghdad 14.1 and Iraq 14.0. Year-ago levels were Baghdad 6.6 and Iraq 8.6

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Beyond Baghdad





The Department of State contributes to 28 PRT's throughout Iraq, working towards strengthening Local and Provincial Governments.

Recent Highlights

Campaign Posters and Banners in Karbala

Al Anbar

Diwaniya

Wasit

Karbala

Two television networks will be working with the Anbar Bar Association to produce and air a half hour talk show explaining the rule of law, the Iraqi constitution, and other legal matters to the citizens of Anbar. This show will help the Iraqi people better understand their changing legal system and their rights under Iraqi law.

An official at the Ministry of Higher Education in Diwaniya announced that \$2.5 million has been allocated in the budget for upgrades at the Vocation/Technical Institute. The money will be used to build laboratories and buy the necessary supplies and equipment.

It has been reported that the Bank of the North and the Bank of Basrah intend to open new bank branches in Wasit this year. This will bring the number of recently opened banks in Wasit to seven. The increase in the number of banking institutions is being attributed to the increased economic growth in the province that began in mid-2007.

In a recent nationwide provincial poll of likely voters, Karbala province has the highest number of people intending to vote with 85% of the province projected to go to the polls.

DIPLOMATIC – Political Engagement



GOI Moves Forward with International Partnerships

FM Zebari Visits Turkey:

• Foreign Minister Zebari met Turkish President Abdullah Gül during his visit to Turkey January 23. The two leaders discussed bilateral trade issues and recent agreements signed between the two countries. Both parties agreed to hold a foreign ministry-led Turkish-Iraqi Ministers Council meeting in Istanbul at the end of February or beginning of March.

Iraq Appoints Ambassador to Syria:

• Iraq's first ambassador to Syria in 28 years will arrive in Damascus on January 29. Sources at the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus said the new ambassador will be Alaa al-Jawadi, who currently serves as director of Arab Affairs at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Syrian diplomatic relations with Iraq were cut in 1980, and only restored gradually in 1997-1998 by Syria's late President Hafez al-Assad. Syria opened an embassy in Baghdad in 2008 and appointed as Ambassador Nawaf al-Fares, a former officer and senior member of the ruling Ba'ath Party.

DIPLOMATIC – Political Engagement



GOI Moves Forward with International Partnerships

Greece Pledges to Help Iraq Preserve Antiquities:

• Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari and his Greek counterpart Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis announced at a January 27 press conference in Athens that the Greek government had pledged to provide financial and technical aid to help Iraq restore and conserve its damaged archaeological sites and museums. The two countries also agreed to construct a monument near the city of Mosul, dedicated to Alexander the Great. This, according to FM Zebari, would underline the interaction of civilizations in the region. Iraq and Greece hope to dispatch technical teams to discuss the details soon.

Philippines and Iraq Hold 6th Joint Commission:

• The 6th Meeting of the Philippine-Iraq Joint Commission was held in Manila January 23-25. The commission discussed the dispatch of a Department of Foreign Affairs coordinated assessment team to Iraq and the reopening of the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad. The assessment team will examine whether security conditions are adequate to recommend that the Philippine government lift the travel ban to Iraq initiated in 2003.

DIPLOMATIC – Economic Engagement



GOI Attempts to Settle Longstanding Debt Issue

GOI Agrees to pay Kuwait Airways:

• The Iraqi government announced that will pay \$300 million to settle a lawsuit filed against it by Kuwait Airways, stemming from 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. GOI spokesman Dr. Ali al-Dabbagh stated that the Iraqi cabinet "approved a final and comprehensive settlement" and that the Justice Ministry of Iraq will handle the payment issues. However, Adel Bourisli, a spokesman for Kuwait Airways affirmed that the GOI payment alone would not suffice, since the total Kuwait Airways claim is approximately \$1.3 billion including interest.

SECURITY - Situation Update



Iraqi Security Forces prepared to ensure safe and secure provincial elections

Security Preparations for Provincial Elections Underway:

• In an effort to secure the January 31 provincial elections, the Government of Iraq is planning to seal its borders, shut airports, ban vehicles and deploy thousands of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), officials said January 26. Iraqi officials are determined not to allow violence to disrupt the electoral process, demonstrating the ISF's ability to maintain security.

Basrah SWAT Secures Waterways in Preparation of Provincial Elections:

• Members of the Tactical Response Team (TRT) of Basrah's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) unit conducted reconnaissance operations on the Shatt al-Arab waterway in mid-January in preparation of the Provincial Elections scheduled for January 31. The operations allowed Basrah SWAT to assess security vulnerabilities along the waterways and will allow the unit to mitigate extremist activities during the elections. Established in December, Basrah TRT further enhances the ISF's capability to limit criminal activity along the city's waterways.

SECURITY – Security Transition



Iraqi Security Forces assume more responsibilities from Coalition partners

El Salvador Ends Iraq Mission during Ceremony:

• Salvadoran soldiers held an end-of-mission ceremony January 22 commemorating the end of their support to Multi-National Force - Iraq. Since September 2003, Salvadoran soldiers completed 319 reconstruction and humanitarian missions in Najaf, Babil, and Wasit provinces. Additionally, Salvadoran soldiers also participated in 600 convoy escorts, 21,000 patrols and more than 200 quick reaction force missions.

ISF Assumes Responsibility for All Checkpoints along Airport Road:

• Coalition Forces officially handed over responsibility for the last checkpoint along the Airport Road to units of the Iraqi National Police in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad January 24. The new Iraqi-constructed checkpoints replace old earthen and concrete barriers and are part of a larger GOI-initiated renovation project to improve the overall function and appearance of the highway south of Baghdad and to meet international standards. Coalition Forces will continue to mentor and advise the Iraqi Security Forces providing force protection along the road.

SECURITY – Rule of Law Update



GOI prepares for increased rule of law responsibilities as the result of the bilateral security agreement with the U.S. and improving security conditions

Detainee Transfers Scheduled for February:

• The U.S. military is set to transfer up to 1,500 detainees per month to the Government of Iraq starting February 1 as part of the Security Agreement (SA) that went into effect January 1. The SA calls for the U.S. to transfer all wanted criminals pending trial to Iraqi custody and all other detainees are to be released "in a safe and orderly manner." In 2008, the U.S. released 18,500 detainees, although there have not been any releases since January 1 and 15,100 remain in U.S. custody.

Iraqi Government to Reopen Abu Ghraib Prison:

• Iraqi justice officials said January 24 that Abu Ghraib prison is set to reopen and will start housing prisoners once again in February. Deputy Justice Minister Busho Ibrahim said the renovated prison will be renamed the Baghdad Central Prison and will eventually house approximately 14,000 prisoners. Coalition Forces closed Abu Ghraib prison in 2006.

490 Policewomen Graduate Baghdad Police College:

• 490 new Iraqi Policewomen graduated from the Baghdad Police College during a ceremony January 26. The new graduates will serve front-line roles, providing security for the January 31 provincial elections. Iraqi Minister of Interior Jawad Bulani congratulated the graduates for "taking another step towards rebuilding Iraqi security." The women received training in checkpoint security, police operations, and Iraqi law and will serve throughout the nation with Iraqi Police, Border Police and other directorates.

SECURITY - Iraqi Security Forces

Iraq Security Forces as of Nov. 30, 2008 a			
Component	Current Authorized Personnel b	Assigned Personnel c	Total Trained Personnel to date
Ministry of Interior (Mol) Forces ^e			
Iraqi Police Service f	334,739	309,965	219,342
National Police g	46,580	40,712	52,707
Border Enforcement	45,550	40,888	38,389
Total Mol	426,869	385,565	310,438
Ministry of Defense (MoD) Forces h			
Army	174,055	196,698	238,191
Army Training and Support Forces i	22,345	22,724	22,930
Air Force	3,690	2,071	2,941
Navy	3,596	1,898	1,494
Total MoD	203,686	223,391	265,556
Counter Terrorism Bureau			
Special Operations j	6,190	4,150	4,564
Total Iraqi Security Forces	636,745	613,106	580,558

- a. Numbers do not include ministry staffs.
- b. Numbers reflect Government of Iraq (GOI) authorizations.
- c. Numbers are based upon GOI payroll data and do not reflect present for duty totals.
- d. Numbers reflect total Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) personnel trained to date, some of which are no longer assigned due to casualties, AWOL, and normal separation.
- e. MoI strength excludes other services within Ministry Of Interior (MOI), including the MOI HQ, MOI Forensics, Facility Protection Services, and contracted guards.
- f. The Iraqi Police Service consists of all provincial police forces (station, patrol, traffic, and special units) assigned to all 18 Iraqi provinces.
- g. Includes the national Emergency Response Unit.
- h. The Ministry Of Defense (MOD) authorized numbers are derived from Modified Tables of Organization and Equipment (MTOEs).
- i. The MoD Army Training and Support Forces include logistics units and training center cadre.
- j. Does not include personnel assigned to Counterterrorism Bureau (CTB) or Counterterrorism Command (CTC) headquarters.
- k. 6792 increased authorized Training and Support Forces based on pay data due to consolidation of approved MTOEs signed by the MinDef updating current data. Percent assigned now represents a more realistic figure (101%) vs. previous reported (150%) assigned.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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Please forward all questions and/or comments to:

NEA-I-IPOG-DL@state.gov

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