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Sectarianism

During the forty years of their control over Iraq, the British deepened ethnic divisions by favoring the Sunnis and other minorities while ruling harshly over the Shia and the Kurds. But Iraqi nationalist politics at that time was secular and, in spite of British “divide and rule” policies, the nationalists successfully united the various ethnic and religious groups, developing a powerful support for national unity. Saddam Hussein's secular regime likewise played on ethnic and religious differences as a strategy of rule. Saddam favored the Sunnis and placed many restrictions on the Shia majority. But the regime directed its worst treatment at the Kurds, who carried on a sporadic armed struggle for autonomy, sometimes with support from Iran, Israel and Washington. Operation Anfal in 1988 killed many Kurds and destroyed 2000 villages, displacing large numbers of Kurds from their mountain areas. Saddam’s regime also harshly suppressed a Shiite uprising in the South after the 1991 Gulf War.

During the 1990s, the US and UK patrolled "[no-fly zones](#)" over Iraq, claiming to protect vulnerable civilians in the (largely Kurdish) north and the (largely Shia) south. These no-fly zones effectively divided the country into three areas and Kurdish militia came to dominate the north militarily. Separate treatment of the north under the UN Oil-for-Food Programme further fostered autonomy from the central government. These moves set the stage for regional/ethnic separatism and a re-conception of Iraq by some hardliners as three nations within one state.

The US occupation of Iraq further deepened sectarian tensions. As the US searched for Iraqi political collaborators to establish a pro-occupation government, it marginalized the secular political forces, seen as too nationalist, in favor of more compliant religious parties and groupings. The growing Iraqi resistance hardened the occupiers' opposition to nationalism in all its forms. The US promoted (and the mass media accepted) an ethnic/religious conception of Iraqi politics that did not acknowledge the long supremacy of secular nationalism and did not reflect the complex ethnic mix and the diversity of many Iraqi cities and regions, such as Mosul, Basrah and especially multi-ethnic Baghdad. US military tactics, such as the use of Kurds and Shia to police Sunni towns, worsened relations between religious communities.

Sectarian differences have now worsened, due to the struggle over Iraq's constitution and a parallel battle over oil resources, largely located in the South and the North. In addition, many Christians and secular Iraqis, who might have been a force of moderation, have fled the country, fearing the growing power of the Islamist parties. The economic distress, high unemployment and general chaos of the occupation have stoked the tensions. The resulting poisonous political mix could degenerate into inter-communal violence and ethnic cleansing similar to the conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Lebanon. But a prolonged occupation, far from mitigating these developments, will only deepen the sectarian divides and stoke the animosities.

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/sectarianindex.htm>

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CIA death squads operating in Iraq

By Henry Michaels

8 April 2003

The longer the Iraq war continues, the more Orwellian the language and the more sinister the methods adopted by the Bush administration and its allies. While President Bush and his officials depict Iraqis resisting the US-led invasion as “terrorists” and “death squads,” CIA and Special Forces assassination squads are at work in Iraq, seeking to eliminate Iraqi leaders and other opponents of the US occupation of the country.

In the language of the White House and Pentagon, the thousands of Iraqi citizens in plainclothes—whether ordinary people, militia members or soldiers—who are resisting the invading forces in any way they can, are “war criminals.” But the undercover US hit squads and other military-intelligence operatives roaming throughout Iraq in civilian clothes, terrorizing the population, are “heroes” in the cause of democracy and liberation.

While the Western media has largely blacked coverage of the US killers, one report in the Canadian *National Post* last week briefly mentioned the presence of special operations troops in civilian clothes as US Marines reached southern Baghdad. “Special forces were also out in large numbers in their distinctive fighting gear, which includes baseball caps, jeans, expensive sunglasses and specially adapted rifles,” it noted.

There is a fundamental difference between the Iraqis who are defending their country and the US, British and Australian special operations units that are operating secretly, often in civilian disguise. Whereas the Iraqis are legitimately targeting Allied military personnel for ambushes, sniper fire and surprise bombings, the US-led squads are illegally hunting down civilians and government figures, sabotaging civilian facilities and arming selected local thugs to execute reprisals, flouting the international laws of war.

In the face of widespread popular resistance, these “unconventional warfare” operations are escalating, but they have been under way for many months. Well before Bush formally declared war on Iraq, US intelligence and military operatives were in Baghdad and throughout Iraq, aiming to locate and kill Saddam Hussein and other leaders. British and Australian Special Air Services (SAS) commandos were also active in the west and north of Iraq.

Citing intelligence sources, United Press International reported last week that the unsuccessful bombing operation to murder Saddam Hussein and his family and cabinet ministers on March 20 was preceded by intensive infiltration of CIA agents into Baghdad, the recruitment of Iraqi spies and the insertion of special operations troops into the capital.

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According to UPI: “The March 20 operation involved more than 300 Special Forces, who moved into the country to join Delta troops and CIA paramilitaries, these sources said. One former long-time CIA operative said it was the Delta men, already in the country, who made the breakthrough for the US attack by infiltrating a key Baghdad telecommunications center and tapping a fiber optic telephone line.

“It was this that enabled the US clandestine team to locate Saddam and top leaders at Dora Farm, an Iraqi command and control complex and a legitimate war target, US officials said. Iraqi assets [spies], recruited by the agency, played a key part in the operation by providing ‘priceless’ information, relating to the phone system and details of Dora Farm, according to one former senior CIA official.”

Having failed to “decapitate” the Iraqi government, such operations nevertheless remain one of Washington’s top objectives. UPI reported: “CIA paramilitary teams, working with Delta Forces, still are inside Iraq, attempting to kill 30 top Iraqi leaders, including Saddam’s other son, Uday, who commands the Iraqi Fedayeen, several US sources said. One administration official confirmed that US intelligence has the names, addresses and cell phone numbers of the 30 targets.”

Last Wednesday, acting on CIA information, a helicopter formation raided the Tharthar Palace, one of many residences allegedly used by Hussein and his sons, about 55 miles outside Baghdad.

Reporting on the “unseen” war in Iraq conducted by teams of CIA paramilitary and Special Forces operatives, the *Christian Science Monitor* quoted retired US Brigadier General John Reppert: “That is certainly the strategy now. And decapitation as a strategy works well beyond Saddam Hussein. It takes in his Revolutionary Council, leaders of his Baath Party, and below that, the four divisions of the Republican Guard plus the one Special Republican Guard unit.”

As these comments suggest, the special forces’ targets extend well beyond the Iraqi leadership. An on-the-spot-report from the city of Najaf published by the London-based *Financial Times* on April 5 provided a glimpse of the methods being employed in urban areas:

“The people of Najaf were introduced to their new government this week—a virtually unknown opposition group that claims to represent all Iraqis, cruises around the streets on US special forces vehicles, and is doing its best to present itself as part of a spontaneous ‘intifada’ against the Iraqi regime.”

Members of the group, called the Iraqi Coalition for National Unity (ICNU), “rarely stray from their US vehicles and special forces minders, grinning broadly for cameras from atop Humvees and raising their weapons in victory.... Co-ordination between ICNU and US ground forces in Najaf is tight, handled by special forces and CIA operatives.”

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Nevertheless, the newspaper reported, the ICNU and its sponsors had failed to subdue the city, which hosts Shia Muslim holy sites. US troops patrolled during the day but withdrew at night, looting by hungry crowds was commonplace, and Shia religious leaders had refused to negotiate directly with US commanders, regarding them as an occupying force.

Elsewhere, including in the northern Kurdish areas, allied operatives are financing and arming tribal leaders, ethnic militias and local thugs, employing similar techniques to Afghanistan, where the CIA paid millions of dollars to regional warlords to fight against the Taliban regime. “I’m sure we’ve got guys with 80-pound rucksacks full of \$100 bills,” a former CIA station chief told the *Los Angeles Times*. “I’m sure we’re buying up some folks.”

Well before the war began, huge payments were channeled through networks of Iraqi agents recruited by the CIA and MI6, the British spy agency, to encourage uprisings against the Iraqi government. Up until now, however, these efforts have not borne fruit.

Revealing cover-up at Pentagon briefing

At an April 4 Pentagon media briefing, Army Major General Stanley McChrystal boasted that the contribution of special forces to the US operation had been “unprecedented.” Another senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said more than 10,000 special operations troops were involved in Iraq—the largest number for any US war since Vietnam.

There was a revealing exchange when a journalist asked the following question:

“Can you help us to understand one of the points—one of the arguments made by the administration on the ‘war criminals’ tag? Obviously, the administration has seen a number of irregular practices on the part of the Iraqis. One of them in particular puzzles me. When they take off their uniforms and fight in civilian clothes, why is that a war crime? Because US Special Forces do it and did it in Afghanistan—they didn’t behave in the same way, but why is the act of fighting without a uniform considered a war crime?”

McChrystal could not answer the question, becoming flummoxed as he tried unsuccessfully to draw a distinction between the tasks being performed by US personnel and Iraqi civilians. Victoria Clarke, spokeswoman for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, quickly stepped in to shut down the line of questioning.

“I’d actually like to take that question, because I don’t think you’re right about that,” she told the journalist. After a pause, Clarke said the Pentagon would respond later.

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Another journalist asked if US forces were under any “special instructions” if they found Saddam Hussein or other senior Iraqi leader. Clarke immediately told McChrystal, “You don’t need to answer his question.”

After the press conference, officials said US special forces in Iraq “are wearing uniforms,” but declined to say if they were full uniforms or modified. Clarke’s abrupt intervention at the briefing suggests acute awareness in the administration that its officials and military commanders are the ones committing war crimes in Iraq.

The methods being used in Iraq will soon become as notorious as the CIA-backed coup in Iran in 1953 to install the cruel regime of the Shah, the “Operation Phoenix” killing program in Vietnam, and the 1973 overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, to name but a few of US imperialism’s crimes.

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/apr2003/cia-a08.shtml>

US decides to back Iraqi militia force

November 6, 2003

The US administrator of Iraq, Paul Bremer, has given conditional support to the creation of an Iraqi-led paramilitary force to track down resistance fighters who have eluded US troops.

Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council wants the force to include a domestic intelligence-gathering unit and to have broad powers to conduct raids and interrogate suspects.

It would be made up of former members of the security services and political party militias. This has fuelled concern among some US officials that it could be used for undemocratic purposes, such as stifling political dissent.

But the council's leaders say Iraq's municipal police departments are too weak, and US soldiers too lacking in local knowledge to combat the seemingly co-ordinated efforts of supporters of former president Saddam Hussein, Islamic militants and foreign guerillas apparently attacking American forces and Iraqis co-operating with the US-led occupation.

"We need a security force that is run by Iraqis, that is more heavily armed than the police and is able to act quickly," a senior Iraqi National Congress official said.

With resistance attacks becoming more aggressive, the council urged the US Government on Tuesday for more authority to deal with security matters. Jalal Talabani, the current council president, said in a letter to President George Bush that Iraqis "are more able than others to handle this matter".

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Although Mr Bremer initially opposed the creation of a paramilitary force, he has softened his position as attacks have increased. But he wants to impose conditions involving the vetting, training and supervising the participants, a US official said.

Council leaders said they want the force to be drawn primarily from former members of the military and police, and members of the security and intelligence wings of five political organisations - the Iraqi National Accord, the Iraqi National Congress, the Shiite Muslim Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and two large Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

"We have very well-established intelligence networks," the Iraqi National Congress official said.

US and British officials involved in security matters in Iraq say they believe the potential gains outweigh the risks of having Iraqis assuming a more active role in hunting down resistance fighters.

Until now, Iraqi police officers, mostly with inadequate training and equipment, have been reluctant to take up that task. □ Two United Nations officials in charge of security at the Baghdad mission when it was bombed in August - Tun Myat and Ramiro Lopes da Silva - have been sent on leave while a team of independent experts determines responsibility for the security flaws at the mission, a UN spokesman said on Tuesday.

The announcement coincided with the appointment of an investigative team, led by a retired career UN official, that will "determine accountability at all managerial levels at headquarters and in the field" before the attack on August 19 which killed 22 people, the spokesman said.

The Washington Post, The New York Times

This story was found at:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/11/05/1068013265653.html>

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Annals of National Security

MOVING TARGETS

Will the counter-insurgency plan in Iraq repeat the mistakes of Vietnam?

by [Seymour M. Hersh](#) December 15, 2003

The Bush Administration has authorized a major escalation of the Special Forces covert war in Iraq. In interviews over the past month, American officials and former officials said that the main target was a hard-core group of Baathists who are believed to be behind much of the underground insurgency against the soldiers of the United States and its allies. A new Special Forces group, designated Task Force 121, has been assembled from Army Delta Force members, Navy seals, and C.I.A. paramilitary operatives, with many additional personnel ordered to report by January. Its highest priority is the neutralization of the Baathist insurgents, by capture or assassination.

The revitalized Special Forces mission is a policy victory for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who has struggled for two years to get the military leadership to accept the strategy of what he calls "Manhunts"—a phrase that he has used both publicly and in internal Pentagon communications. Rumsfeld has had to change much of the Pentagon's leadership to get his way. "Knocking off two regimes allows us to do extraordinary things," a Pentagon adviser told me, referring to Afghanistan and Iraq.

One step the Pentagon took was to seek active and secret help in the war against the Iraqi insurgency from Israel, America's closest ally in the Middle East. According to American and Israeli military and intelligence officials, Israeli commandos and intelligence units have been working closely with their American counterparts at the Special Forces training base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and in Israel to help them prepare for operations in Iraq. Israeli commandos are expected to serve as ad-hoc advisers—again, in secret—when full-field operations begin. (Neither the Pentagon nor Israeli diplomats would comment. "No one wants to talk about this," an Israeli official told me. "It's incendiary. Both governments have decided at the highest level that it is in their interests to keep a low profile on U.S.-Israeli coöperation" on Iraq.) The critical issue, American and Israeli officials agree, is intelligence. There is much debate about whether targeting a large number of individuals is a practical—or politically effective—way to bring about stability in Iraq, especially given the frequent failure of American forces to obtain consistent and reliable information there.

Americans in the field are trying to solve that problem by developing a new source of information: they plan to assemble teams drawn from the upper ranks of the old Iraqi intelligence services and train them to penetrate the insurgency. The idea is for the infiltrators to provide information about individual insurgents for the Americans to act on. A former C.I.A. station chief described the strategy

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in simple terms: “U.S. shooters and Iraqi intelligence.” He added, “There are Iraqis in the intelligence business who have a better idea, and we’re tapping into them. We have to resuscitate Iraqi intelligence, holding our nose, and have Delta and agency shooters break down doors and take them”—the insurgents—“out.”

A former intelligence official said that getting inside the Baathist leadership could be compared to “fighting your way into a coconut—you bang away and bang away until you find a soft spot, and then you can clean it out.” An American who has advised the civilian authority in Baghdad said, “The only way we can win is to go unconventional. We’re going to have to play their game. Guerrilla versus guerrilla. Terrorism versus terrorism. We’ve got to scare the Iraqis into submission.” In Washington, there is now widespread agreement on one point: the need for a new American approach to Iraq. There is also uniform criticism of the military’s current response to the growing American casualty lists. One former Pentagon official who worked extensively with the Special Forces command, and who favors the new military initiative, said, “We’ve got this large conventional force sitting there, and getting their ass shot off, and what we’re doing is counterproductive. We’re sending mixed signals.” The problem with the way the U.S. has been fighting the Baathist leadership, he said, is “(a) we’ve got no intelligence, and (b) we’re too squeamish to operate in this part of the world.” Referring to the American retaliation against a suspected mortar site, the former official said, “Instead of destroying an empty soccer field, why not impress me by sneaking in a sniper team and killing them while they’re setting up a mortar? We do need a more unconventional response, but it’s going to be messy.”

Inside the Pentagon, it is now understood that simply bringing in or killing Saddam Hussein and his immediate circle—those who appeared in the Bush Administration’s famed “deck of cards”—will not stop the insurgency. The new Special Forces operation is aimed instead at the broad middle of the Baathist underground. But many of the officials I spoke to were skeptical of the Administration’s plans. Many of them fear that the proposed operation—called “preëemptive manhunting” by one Pentagon adviser—has the potential to turn into another Phoenix Program. Phoenix was the code name for a counter-insurgency program that the U.S. adopted during the Vietnam War, in which Special Forces teams were sent out to capture or assassinate Vietnamese believed to be working with or sympathetic to the Vietcong. In choosing targets, the Americans relied on information supplied by South Vietnamese Army officers and village chiefs. The operation got out of control. According to official South Vietnamese statistics, Phoenix claimed nearly forty-one thousand victims between 1968 and 1972; the U.S. counted more than twenty thousand in the same time span. Some of those assassinated had nothing to do with the war against America but were targeted because of private grievances. William E. Colby, the C.I.A. officer who took charge of the Phoenix Program in 1968 (he eventually became C.I.A. director), later acknowledged to Congress that “a lot of things were done that should not have been done.”

The former Special Forces official warned that the problem with head-hunting is that you have to be sure “you’re hunting the right heads.” Speaking of the now coöperative former Iraqi intelligence officials, he said, “These guys have their own agenda. Will we be doing hits on grudges? When you set

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up host-nation elements”—units composed of Iraqis, rather than Americans—“it’s hard not to have them going off to do what they want to do. You have to keep them on a short leash.”

The former official says that the Baathist leadership apparently relies on “face-to-face communications” in planning terrorist attacks. This makes the insurgents less vulnerable to one of the Army’s most secret Special Forces units, known as Grey Fox, which has particular expertise in interception and other technical means of intelligence-gathering. “These guys are too smart to touch cell phones or radio,” the former official said. “It’s all going to succeed or fail spectacularly based on human intelligence.”

A former C.I.A. official with extensive Middle East experience identified one of the key players on the new American-Iraqi intelligence team as Farouq Hijazi, a Saddam loyalist who served for many years as the director of external operations for the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi intelligence service. He has been in custody since late April. The C.I.A. man said that over the past few months Hijazi “has cut a deal,” and American officials “are using him to reactivate the old Iraqi intelligence network.” He added, “My Iraqi friends say he will honor the deal—but only to the letter, and not to the spirit.” He said that although the Mukhabarat was a good security service, capable, in particular, of protecting Saddam Hussein from overthrow or assassination, it was “a lousy intelligence service.”

The official went on, “It’s not the way we usually play ball, but if you see a couple of your guys get blown away it changes things. We did the American things—and we’ve been the nice guy. Now we’re going to be the bad guy, and being the bad guy works.”

Told of such comments, the Pentagon adviser, who is an expert on unconventional war, expressed dismay. “There are people saying all sorts of wild things about Manhunts,” he said. “But they aren’t at the policy level. It’s not a no-holds policy, and it shouldn’t be. I’m as tough as anybody, but we’re also a democratic society, and we don’t fight terror with terror. There will be a lot of close controls—do’s and don’ts and rules of engagement.” The adviser added, “The problem is that we’ve not penetrated the bad guys. The Baath Party is run like a cell system. It’s like penetrating the Vietcong—we never could do it.” The rising star in Rumsfeld’s Pentagon is Stephen Cambone, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, who has been deeply involved in developing the new Special Forces approach. Cambone, who earned a doctorate in political science from Claremont Graduate University in 1982, served as staff director for a 1998 committee, headed by Rumsfeld, that warned in its report of an emerging ballistic-missile threat to the United States and argued that intelligence agencies should be willing to go beyond the data at hand in their analyses. Cambone, in his confirmation hearings, in February, told the Senate that consumers of intelligence assessments must ask questions of the analysts—“how they arrived at those conclusions and what the sources of the information were.” This approach was championed by Rumsfeld. It came under attack, however, when the Administration’s predictions about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and the potential for insurgency failed to be realized, and the Pentagon civilians were widely accused of politicizing intelligence. (A month after the fall of Baghdad, Cambone was the first senior Pentagon official to publicly claim, wrongly, as it turned out, that a captured Iraqi military truck might be a mobile biological-weapons laboratory.)

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Cambone also shares Rumsfeld's views on how to fight terrorism. They both believe that the United States needs to become far more proactive in combatting terrorism, searching for terrorist leaders around the world and eliminating them. And Cambone, like Rumsfeld, has been frustrated by the reluctance of the military leadership to embrace the manhunting mission. Since his confirmation, he has been seeking operational authority over Special Forces. "Rumsfeld's been looking for somebody to have all the answers, and Steve is the guy," a former high-level Pentagon official told me. "He has more direct access to Rummy than anyone else."

As Cambone's influence has increased, that of Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, has diminished. In September, 2001, Feith set up a special unit known as the Office of Special Plans. The office, directed by civilians who, like Feith, had neoconservative views, played a major role in the intelligence and planning leading up to the March invasion of Iraq. "There is finger-pointing going on," a prominent Republican lobbyist explained. "And the neocons are in retreat."

One of the key planners of the Special Forces offensive is Lieutenant General William (Jerry) Boykin, Cambone's military assistant. After a meeting with Rumsfeld early last summer—they got along "like two old warriors," the Pentagon consultant said—Boykin postponed his retirement, which had been planned for June, and took the Pentagon job, which brought him a third star. In that post, the Pentagon adviser told me, Boykin has been "an important piece" of the planned escalation. In October, the Los Angeles *Times* reported that Boykin, while giving Sunday-morning talks in uniform to church groups, had repeatedly equated the Muslim world with Satan. Last June, according to the paper, he told a congregation in Oregon that "Satan wants to destroy this nation, he wants to destroy us as a nation, and he wants to destroy us as a Christian army." Boykin praised President Bush as a "man who prays in the Oval Office," and declared that Bush was "not elected" President but "appointed by God." The Muslim world hates America, he said, "because we are a nation of believers."

There were calls in the press and from Congress for Boykin's dismissal, but Rumsfeld made it clear that he wanted to keep his man in the job. Initially, he responded to the *Times* report by praising the General's "outstanding record" and telling journalists that he had neither seen the text of Boykin's statements nor watched the videotape that had been made of one of his presentations. "There are a lot of things that are said by people in the military, or in civilian life, or in the Congress, or in the executive branch that are their views," he said. "We're a free people. And that's the wonderful thing about our country." He added, with regard to the tape, "I just simply can't comment on what he said, because I haven't seen it." Four days later, Rumsfeld said that he had viewed the tape. "It had a lot of very difficult-to-understand words with subtitles which I was not able to verify," he said at a news conference, according to the official transcript. "So I remain inexpert"—the transcript notes that he "chuckles" at that moment—"on precisely what he said." Boykin's comments are now under official review.

Boykin has been involved in other controversies as well. He was the Army combat commander in Mogadishu in 1993, when eighteen Americans were slain during the disastrous mission made famous

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by Mark Bowden's book "Black Hawk Down." Earlier that year, Boykin, a colonel at the time, led an eight-man Delta Force that was assigned to help a Colombian police unit track down the notorious drug dealer Pablo Escobar. Boykin's team was barred by law from providing any lethal assistance without Presidential approval, but there was suspicion in the Pentagon that it was planning to take part in the assassination of Escobar, with the support of American Embassy officials in Colombia. The book "Killing Pablo," an account, also by Mark Bowden, of the hunt for Escobar, describes how senior officials in the Pentagon's chain of command became convinced that Boykin, with the knowledge of his Special Forces superiors, had exceeded his authority and intended to violate the law. They wanted Boykin's unit pulled out. It wasn't. Escobar was shot dead on the roof of a barrio apartment building in Medellín. The Colombian police were credited with getting their man, but, Bowden wrote, "within the special ops community . . . Pablo's death was regarded as a successful mission for Delta, and legend has it that its operators were in on the kill."

"That's what those guys did," a retired general who monitored Boykin's operations in Colombia told me. "I've seen pictures of Escobar's body that you don't get from a long-range telescope lens. They were taken by guys on the assault team." (Bush Administration officials in the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon, including General Boykin, did not respond to requests for comment.)

Morris Busby, who was the American Ambassador to Colombia in 1993 (he is now retired), vigorously defended Boykin. "I think the world of Jerry Boykin, and have the utmost respect for him. I've known him for fifteen years and spent hours and hours with the guy, and never heard him mention religion or God." The retired general also praised Boykin as "one of those guys you'd love to have in a war because he's not afraid to die." But, he added, "when you get to three stars you've got to think through what you're doing." Referring to Boykin and others involved in the Special Forces planning, he added, "These guys are going to get a bunch of guys killed and then give them a bunch of medals."

The American-Israeli liaison on Iraq amounts to a tutorial on how to dismantle an insurgency. One former Israeli military-intelligence officer summarized the core lesson this way: "How to do targeted killing, which is very relevant to the success of the war, and what the United States is going to have to do." He told me that the Americans were being urged to emulate the Israeli Army's small commando units, known as *Mist'aravim*, which operate undercover inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "They can approach a house and pounce," the former officer said. In the Israeli view, he added, the Special Forces units must learn "how to maintain a network of informants." Such a network, he said, has made it possible for Israel to penetrate the West Bank and Gaza Strip organizations controlled by groups such as Hamas, and to assassinate or capture potential suicide bombers along with many of the people who recruit and train them.

On the other hand, the former officer said, "Israel has, in many ways, been too successful, and has killed or captured so many mid-ranking facilitators on the operational level in the West Bank that Hamas now consists largely of isolated cells that carry out terrorist attacks against Israel on their own." He went on, "There is no central control over many of the suicide bombers. We're trying to tell

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the Americans that they don't want to eliminate the center. The key is not to have freelancers out there."

Many regional experts, Americans and others, are convinced that the Baathists are still firmly in charge of the insurgency, although they are thought to have little direct connection with Saddam Hussein. An American military analyst who works with the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad told me he has concluded that "mid-ranking Baathists who were muzzled by the patrimonial nature of Saddam's system have now, with the disappearance of the high-ranking members, risen to control the insurgency." He added that after the American attack and several weeks "of being like deer in headlights," these Baathists had become organized, and were directing and leading operations against Americans. During an interview in Washington, a senior Arab diplomat noted, "We do not believe that the resistance is loyal to Saddam. Yes, the Baathists have reorganized, not for political reasons but because of the terrible decisions made by Jerry Bremer"—the director of the C.P.A. "The Iraqis really want to make you pay the price," the diplomat said. "Killing Saddam will not end it."

Similarly, a Middle Eastern businessman who has advised senior Bush Administration officials told me that the reorganized Baath Party is "extremely active, working underground with permanent internal communications. And without Saddam." Baath party leaders, he added, expect Saddam to issue a public statement of self-criticism, "telling of his mistakes and his excesses," including his reliance on his sons.

There is disagreement, inevitably, on the extent of Baathist control. The former Israeli military-intelligence officer said, "Most of the firepower comes from the Baathists, and they know where the weapons are kept. But many of the shooters are ethnic and tribal. Iraq is very factionalized now, and within the Sunni community factionalism goes deep." He added, "Unless you settle this, any effort at reconstruction in the center is hopeless."

The American military analyst agreed that the current emphasis on Baathist control "overlooks the nationalist and tribal angle." For example, he said, the anti-coalition forces in Falluja, a major center of opposition, are "driven primarily by the sheikhs and mosques, Islam, clerics, and nationalism." The region, he went on, contains "tens of thousands of unemployed former military officers and enlistees who hang around the coffee shops and restaurants of their relatives; they plot, plan, and give and receive instructions; at night they go out on their missions."

This military analyst, like many officials I spoke to, also raised questions about the military's more conventional tactics—the aggressive program, code-named Iron Hammer, of bombings, nighttime raids, and mass arrests aimed at trouble spots in Sunni-dominated central Iraq. The insurgents, he told me, had already developed a response. "Their S.O.P."—standard operating procedure—"now is to go further out, or even to other towns, so that American retribution does not fall on their locale. Instead, the Americans take it out on the city where the incident happened, and in the process they succeed in making more enemies."

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The brazen Iraqi attacks on two separate American convoys in Samarra, on November 30th, provided further evidence of the diversity of the opposition to the occupation. Samarra has been a center of intense anti-Saddam feelings, according to Ahmed S. Hashim, an expert on terrorism who is a professor of strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College. In an essay published in August by the Middle East Institute, Hashim wrote, “Many Samarra natives—who had served with distinction in the Baath Party and the armed forces—were purged or executed during the course of the three decades of rule by Saddam and his cronies from the rival town of Tikrit.” He went on, “The type of U.S. force structure in Iraq—heavy armored and mechanized units—and the psychological disposition of these forces which have been in Iraq for months is simply not conducive to the successful waging of counter-insurgency warfare.”

The majority of the Bush Administration’s manhunting missions remain classified, but one earlier mission, in Afghanistan, had mixed results at best. Last November, an Al Qaeda leader named Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi was killed when an unmanned Predator reconnaissance aircraft fired a Hellfire missile at his automobile in Yemen. Five passengers in the automobile were also killed, and it was subsequently reported that two previous Predator missions in Yemen had been called off at the last moment when it was learned that the occupants of suspect vehicles were local Bedouins, and not Al Qaeda members.

Since then, an adviser to the Special Forces command has told me, infighting among the various senior military commands has made it difficult for Special Forces teams on alert to take immediate advantage of time-sensitive intelligence. Rumsfeld repeatedly criticized Air Force General Charles Holland, a four-star Special Forces commander who has just retired, for his reluctance to authorize commando raids without specific, or “actionable,” intelligence. Rumsfeld has also made a systematic effort to appoint Special Forces advocates to the top military jobs. Another former Special Forces commander, Army General Peter Schoomaker, was brought out of retirement in July and named Army Chief of Staff. The new civilian Assistant Secretary for Special Operations in the Pentagon is Thomas O’Connell, an Army veteran who served in the Phoenix program in Vietnam, and who, in the early eighties, ran Grey Fox, the Army’s secret commando unit.

Early in November, the *Times* reported the existence of Task Force 121, and said that it was authorized to take action throughout the region, if necessary, in pursuit of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, and other terrorists. (The task force is commanded by Air Force Brigadier General Lyle Koenig, an experienced Special Forces helicopter pilot.) At that point, the former Special Forces official told me, the troops were “chasing the deck of cards. Their job was to find Saddam, period.” Other Special Forces, in Afghanistan, were targeting what is known as the A.Q.S.L., the Al Qaeda Senior Leadership List.

The task force’s search for Saddam was, from the beginning, daunting. According to Scott Ritter, a former United Nations weapons inspector, it may have been fatally flawed as well. From 1994 to 1998, Ritter directed a special U.N. unit that eavesdropped on many of Saddam Hussein’s private telephone communications. “The high-profile guys around Saddam were the *murafaqin*, his most loyal

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companions, who could stand next to him carrying a gun,” Ritter told me. “But now he’s gone to a different tier—the tribes. He has released the men from his most sensitive units and let them go back to their tribes, and we don’t know where they are. The manifests of those units are gone; they’ve all been destroyed.” Ritter added, “Guys like Farouq Hijazi can deliver some of the Baath Party cells, and he knows where some of the intelligence people are. But he can’t get us into the tribal hierarchy.” The task force, in any event, has shifted its focus from the hunt for Saddam as it is increasingly distracted by the spreading guerrilla war.

In addition to the Special Forces initiative, the military is also exploring other approaches to suppressing the insurgency. The *Washington Post* reported last week that the American authorities in Baghdad had agreed, with some reluctance, to the formation of an Iraqi-led counter-terrorism militia composed of troops from the nation’s five largest political parties. The paramilitary unit, totalling some eight hundred troops or so, would “identify and pursue insurgents” who had eluded arrest, the newspaper said. The group’s initial missions would be monitored and approved by American commanders, but eventually it would operate independently.

Task Force 121’s next major problem may prove to be Iran. There is a debate going on inside the Administration about American and Israeli intelligence that suggests that the Shiite-dominated Iranian government may be actively aiding the Sunni-led insurgency in Iraq—“pulling the strings on the puppet,” as one former intelligence official put it. Many in the intelligence community are skeptical of this analysis—the Pentagon adviser compared it to “the Chalabi stuff,” referring to now discredited prewar intelligence on W.M.D. supplied by Iraqi defectors. But I was told by several officials that the intelligence was considered to be highly reliable by civilians in the Defense Department. A former intelligence official said that one possible response under consideration was for the United States to train and equip an Iraqi force capable of staging cross-border raids. The American goal, he said, would be to “make the cost of supporting the Baathists so dear that the Iranians would back off,” adding, “If it begins to look like another Iran-Iraq war, that’s another story.”

The requirement that America’s Special Forces units operate in secrecy, a former senior coalition adviser in Baghdad told me, has provided an additional incentive for increasing their presence in Iraq. The Special Forces in-country numbers are not generally included in troop totals. Bush and Rumsfeld have insisted that more American troops are not needed, but that position was challenged by many senior military officers in private conversations with me. “You need more people,” the former adviser, a retired admiral, said. “But you can’t add them, because Rummy’s taken a position. So you invent a force that won’t be counted.”

At present, there is no legislation that requires the President to notify Congress before authorizing an overseas Special Forces mission. The Special Forces have been expanded enormously in the Bush Administration. The 2004 Pentagon budget provides more than six and a half billion dollars for their activities—a thirty-four-per-cent increase over 2003. A recent congressional study put the number of active and reserve Special Forces troops at forty-seven thousand, and has suggested that the

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appropriate House and Senate committees needed to debate the “proper overall role” of Special Forces in the global war on terrorism.

The former intelligence official depicted the Delta and seal teams as “force multipliers”—small units that can do the work of much larger ones and thereby increase the power of the operation as a whole. He also implicitly recognized that such operations would become more and more common; when Special Forces target the Baathists, he said, “it’s technically not assassination—it’s normal combat operations.” ♦

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/12/15/031215fa_fact?printable=true.

US contractor recruits guards for Iraq in Chile

Forces say experienced soldiers are quitting for private companies which pay more for similar work

Jonathan Franklin in Santiago

Friday March 5, 2004

[The Guardian](#)



The US is hiring mercenaries in Chile to replace its soldiers on security duty in Iraq. A Pentagon contractor has begun recruiting former commandos, other soldiers and seamen, paying them up to \$4,000 (£2,193) a month to guard oil wells against attack by insurgents.

Last month Blackwater USA flew a first group of about 60 former commandos, many of who had trained under the military government of Augusto Pinochet, from Santiago to a 2,400-acre (970-hectare) training camp in North Carolina.

From there they will be taken to Iraq, where they are expected to stay between six months and a year, the president of Blackwater USA, Gary Jackson, told the Guardian by telephone.

"We scour the ends of the earth to find professionals - the Chilean commandos are very, very professional and they fit within the Blackwater system," he said.

Chile was the only Latin American country where his firm had hired commandos for Iraq. He estimated that "about 95%" of his work came from government contracts and said his business was booming.

"We have grown 300% over each of the past three years and we are small compared to the big ones.

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"We have a very small niche market, we work towards putting out the cream of the crop, the best."
The privatisation of security in Iraq is growing as the US seeks to reduce its commitment of troops.
At the end of last year there were 10,000 hired security personnel in Iraq.

Recruitment in Chile began six months ago and brought immediate criticism from MPs and officers, who fear that it will encourage serving personnel to leave.



Michelle Bachelet, the defence minister, ordered an investigation into whether paramilitary training by Blackwater violated Chilean laws on the use of weapons by private citizens.

She asked for its recruiting effort to be investigated after it was alleged that people on active duty were involved.

Many soldiers are said to be leaving the army to join the private companies.

Mr Jackson said that similar issues were bedevilling the US forces.

The private sector paid experienced special forces personnel far more than the armed services.

"The US military has the same problems," he said. "If they are going to outsource tasks that were once held by active-duty military and are now using private contractors, those guys [on active duty] are looking and asking, 'Where is the money?'"

The number of hired soldiers in Iraq is estimated to be in the thousands.

Squads of Bosnians, Filipinos and Americans with special forces experience have been hired for tasks ranging from airport security to protecting Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Their salaries can be as high as \$1,000 a day, the news agency AFP recently reported. Erwin, a 28-year-old former US army sergeant working in Iraq, told AFP: "This place is a goldmine. All you need is five years in the military and you come here and make a good bundle."

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Responding to a fear that any of its recruits who might suffer traumatic battlefield stress might be simply dumped back into Chilean society without mental health schemes, Mr Jackson said Blackwater USA had extensive psychological counselling programmes.

"We have clinical psychologists on staff and we do a battery of tests during the assessment phase. "I personally come from a special operations background and I feel comfortable that we have the procedures in place that will allow them to handle the stress.

"We didn't just come down and say, 'You and you and you, come work for us.' They were all vetted in Chile and all of them have military backgrounds. This is not the Boy Scouts."

In an interview with the Chilean newspaper La Tercera, a former Chilean army officer, Carlos Wamgnet, 30, who was going to Iraq, said: "We are calm. This mission is nothing new for us.

"In the end, this is an extension of our military career."

John Rivas, 27, a former Chilean marine, said the work in Iraq would provide a "very good income" that would allow him to support his family.

"I don't feel like a mercenary," he added.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1162392,00.html>

Ambassador to Death Squads.

Who is John Negroponte?

By GHALI HASSAN June 4, 2004



The White House has appointed Mr. John Dimitris Negroponte to be United States ambassador to Iraq. He will preside over the largest embassy in the world, and housed in the Republic Palace (misleadingly named Saddam's Palace by the U.S. occupation). He will be protected by high concrete walls, barbed wires and more than 150,000 occupation force, including several thousands of foreign mercenaries

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armed to the teeth with the most violent tools. Mr. Negroponte is Greek-American diplomat. He is currently leading the diplomatic war against the people of Iraq as the U.S. envoy at the United Nations (UN) in New York. Negroponte is Jewish. A friend in Spain expressed his deep concern to me recently: "to appoint a Jew as ambassador to the Arab country that has been devastated because of the will of a cabal of Jewish neocons headed by Wolfowitz Bush is just an accessory -, is like trying to put off a fire using buckets of gasoline".

Mr. Negroponte has served as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras from 1981-1985; a period during which the U.S. military aid to Honduras grew from \$5 million to nearly \$100 million, and more than \$200 million in economic aid, making Honduras the largest aid recipient in the region. Honduras was the launching pad from which the Reagan administration runs its violent "war on terror" in Central American. The U.S-backed atrocities and terror were condemned by the International World Court in the Hague (1). Like most of his colleagues in the Bush administration, Mr. Negroponte is a "recycled reaganites".

At the time Mr. Negroponte was in Honduras, Honduras was a military dictatorship. Kidnapping, rape, torture and executions of dissidents was rampant. The military top and middle ranks were U.S-trained at the School of the Americas (SOA), the Harvard version of the CIA, based in Fort Benning, Georgia. According to Human Rights Watch, graduates of the SOA are responsible for the worst human rights abuses and torture of dissidents in Latin America. Some of its 60,000 graduates are notorious Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia and Gustavo Álvarez Martínez, Honduras security police chief and later Honduran top military commander.

In Honduras the army intelligence unit, Battalion 3-16, which was involved in kidnappings, rape, torture and killing of suspected dissidents. In 1995 Gary Cohn and Ginger Thompson of *The Baltimore Sun* unearthed massive and substantiated evidence from various sources pointing the finger at Mr. Negroponte knowledge of the crimes. The reporters also found that hundreds of Hondurans "were kidnapped, tortured and killed in the 1980s by a secret army unit trained and supported by the CIA"(2). Reliable evidence from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Honduras alleged that Negroponte oversaw the expansion of U.S training camp and military base on Honduran territory, where US-trained Contras terrorists, and where the military secretly detained, tortured and executed Honduran suspected dissidents.

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During his years in Honduras, Negroonte acquired a reputation, justified, as an old-fashioned imperialist, and devoted to Realpolitik (3). Mr. Negroonte will bring to Iraq his version of "democracy" à la Latin America, where the people vote for one of two candidates every half decade, in which civilian leaders have to obey U.S-controlled militaries or face dismissal by

military force. Mr. Negroonte will find the Iraqi soil fertile for his version of democracy and human rights. The U.S. administration turn blind eye to violations of human rights by their own troops and mercenaries. Nazi's methods of torture, sexual abuses and murder of Iraqi prisoners by the racist soldiers of the occupying forces are in use immediately after the invasion and occupation of the Iraq.

The occupying powers also ignores the criminal activities of four militia thugs, which according to exile Iraqis have murdered many Iraqi academics and intellectuals. The Iraqi-born novelist and artist Haifa Zangana wrote in the Guardian of London: "the peshmergas of the two Kurdish parties; the Badr brigade of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq; Ahmed Chalabi's troops; and the ex-Ba'athist Mukhabarats under Iyad Alawi's national accord. These militias are run by members of the IGC and no one can touch them"(4). The occupying powers have not put an end to these violent crimes.



Recently, Mr. Negroonte talked about: "real dialogue between our military commanders, the new Iraqi government and, I think, the United States mission as well". He said: "the American military is going to have the freedom to act in their self-defence, and they are going to be free to operate in Iraq as they best see fit". Negroonte stint at the UN was to shield Israel crimes against the

Palestinians, and to coerce smaller nations at the Security Council exercising the threat of U.S. power.

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Negroponete diplomatic responsibilities were appalling. Democracy and human rights are not on Negroponete preferred menu. Negroponete will be serving the interests of U.S. tyranny and U.S. Corporations in Iraq. Negroponete will bring to Iraq the economic disasters inflicted on the people of Latin America by the U.S. and U.S-backed corporations. Negroponete is not suitable to serve in the current political environment of Iraq.

- [1]. Noam Chomsky, Terror and Just Response, www.chomsky.info/articles/20020702.
- [2]. Gary Cohn & Ginger Thompson, Former envoy to Honduras says he did what he could, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 15, 1995.
- [3]. Stephen Kinzer, Our Man in Honduras, *The New York Review of Books*, 48(14), September 2001.
- [4]. Haifa Zangana, The Enemy within, *The Guardian*, 10 April 2004.

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/hassan06042004.html>



Here Come the Death Squad Veterans
By Louis Nevaer, Pacific News Service
Posted on June 16, 2004.
<http://www.alternet.org/story/18967/>

If JosÃ© Miguel Pizarro has his way, he will recruit 30,000 Chileans as mercenaries to protect American companies under Pentagon contract to rebuild Iraq. And undoubtedly, within those ranks

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will be former members of death squads that tortured and murdered civilians when dictatorships ruled in Latin America.

"There is no comparison with what they can earn in the active military or working in civilian jobs, and what we offer," José Miguel Pizarro, Chile's leading recruiter for international security firms, says. "This is an opportunity that few in Chile can afford to pass up."



Pizarro's firm, Servicios Integrales, was contracted by Blackwater USA to recruit the first batch of Chileans in November 2003. By May 2004 he had placed 5,200 men who, after one week of training in Santiago, head to North Carolina for orientation with Blackwater, the private security firm that made headlines when four of its employees were killed in Falluja, their bodies mutilated and hung from a

bridge. After training, Blackwater flies the men to Kuwait City to await their assignments in Iraq.

As democratic governments were voted into office throughout Latin America in the 1990s, Latin militaries were downsized. Thousands of military officers lost their jobs. "This is a way of continuing our military careers," Carlos Wamgnet, 30, explained in a phone interview from Kuwait while awaiting his assignment in Iraq. "In civilian life in Chile I was making \$1,800 a month. Here I can earn a year's pay in six weeks. It's worth the risks."

At 30, Wamgnet is too young to have participated in any crime of the Pinochet regime. But not all the Chileans in Iraq are guiltless. Newspapers in Chile have estimated that approximately 37 Chileans in Iraq are seasoned veterans of the Pinochet era. Government officials in Santiago are alarmed that men who enjoy amnesty in Chile -- provided they remain in "retirement" from their past military activities - are now in Iraq.

In an interview with the Santiago-based daily newspaper La Tercera, Chilean Minister of Defense Dr. Michelle Bachelet stated that Chilean "mercenaries for American firms doing business in Iraq" may be subject to "arrest or detention in third countries," a reference to recent arrests in Spain and Mexico of South Americans with war-crimes pasts. South American media report that Chileans have requested travel from Chile to the United States and then directly to the Middle East, to bypass Mexico and the European Union. The thousands of Chileans in Iraq have been nicknamed "the penguins" by American

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and South African soldiers for hire, a reference both to Chile's proximity to the South Pole and the fact that many Chilean mercenaries are of mixed race.



Not everyone in Chile is opposed to the presence in Iraq of former Chilean army members. "It is true that the majority [of Chilean recruits] see this as an opportunity to earn money," La Tercera columnist Mauricio Aguirre wrote. "But it is also an opportunity for our soldiers to prove themselves on the ground, and to put to use the skills for which they trained in the Armed Forces over the years."

"Blackwater USA has sent recruiters to Chile, Peru, Argentina, Colombia and Guatemala for one specific reason alone," said an intelligence officer in Kuwait who requested anonymity. "All

these countries experienced dirty wars and they have military men well-trained in dealing with internal subversives. They are well-versed in extracting confessions from prisoners."

As the security situation in Iraq deteriorated in the spring of 2004, more "dedicated recruiting" began. Though Chile is in vigorous debate about the role of military servicemen becoming hired guns in Iraq, in Argentina there is virtual silence. Several Argentine mercenaries have made their way to the United States to meet with American security firms before heading to Iraq. "No one wants to discuss what is becoming clear," says Mario PodestÁi, 51, an independent Argentine journalist. "I know of seven military officers responsible for disappearing opponents of the dictatorship" who are now in Iraq. During Argentina's "dirty wars," opponents of the military regime were "disappeared" (abducted), tortured and then killed.

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Podesta spoke to this reporter in early April. He was in Jordan preparing to travel by road to Baghdad, along with Mariana Verónica Cabrera, 28, an Argentine camerawoman. "I want to find these men," he said of the Argentine 'dirty war' criminals he had identified as being mercenaries in Iraq. It was not to be.

Podestái and Cabrera were killed, along with their Iraqi driver, in an automobile accident before reaching Baghdad.

Louis Nevaer is an author and economist whose most recent book, "NAFTA'S Second Decade" (South-Western Educational Publishing, 2004), examines the political economy of international development and trade.

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May 1, 2005

The Way of the Commandos

By PETER MAASS

Getting to Know the General

In a country of tough guys, Adnan Thabit may be the toughest of all. He was both a general and a death-row prisoner under Saddam Hussein. He favors leather jackets no matter the weather, his left index finger extends only to the knuckle (the rest was sliced off in combat) and he responds to requests from supplicants with grunts that mean "yes" or "no." Occasionally, a humble aide approaches to spray perfume on his hands, which he wipes over his rugged face.

General Adnan, as he is known, is the leader of Iraq's most fearsome counterinsurgency force. It is called the Special Police Commandos and consists of about 5,000 troops. They have fought the insurgents in Mosul, Ramadi, Baghdad and Samarra. It was in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad in the heart of the Sunni Triangle, where, in early March, I spent a week with Adnan, himself a Sunni, and two battalions of his commandos. Samarra is Adnan's hometown, and he had come to retake it. As the offensive to drive out the insurgents got under way, the only area securely under Adnan's control was a barricaded enclave around the town hall, where he grimly presided over matters of war and peace, but mostly war, chain-smoking Royal cigarettes at a raised desk in the mayor's office. With a jowly face set in a permanent scowl, Adnan is perfectly suited to the grim realities of Iraq, and he knows it. When an admiring American colonel compared him to Marlon Brando in "The Godfather," Adnan took it as a compliment and smiled.

Early one evening, I was sitting in his office when an officer entered with a click of his heels -- an Iraqi salute of sorts. He reported to Adnan that a rebel weapons cache had been discovered, and Adnan congratulated him -- but issued a warning. "If even one AK-47 is stolen," he said, "I will kill you." After a pause, he smiled and refined the threat. "No," he said, "I will kill your" -- and he used a coarse word that referred to the officer's most private body part. There was nervous laughter. Everyone seemed certain that not a single gun, or single anything, would go missing.

Not long ago, hard men like Adnan, especially Sunnis, were giving orders to no one. Six weeks after the fall of Baghdad, the Coalition Provisional Authority dismissed the Sunni-led Iraqi Army, and the United States military set out to rebuild Iraq's armed forces from the ground up, training new officers and soldiers rather than calling on those who knew how to fight but had done so in the service of Saddam Hussein. By late last year, though, it had become clear that the new American-trained forces were not shaping up as an effective fighting force, and the old guard was called upon. Now people like

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Adnan, a former Baathist, have been given the task of defeating the insurgency. The new strategy is showing signs of success, but it is a success that may carry its own costs.

A couple of hours after Adnan issued his AK-47 threat, I sat with him watching TV. This was business, not pleasure. The program we were watching was Adnan's brainchild, and in just a few months it had proved to be one of the most effective psychological operations of the war. It is reality TV of sorts, a show called "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice." It features detainees confessing to various crimes. The show was first broadcast earlier this year and has quickly become a nationwide hit. It is on every day in prime time on Al Iraqiya, the American-financed national TV station, and when it is on, people across the country can be found gathered around their television sets.

Those being interrogated on the program do not look fearsome; these are not the faces to be found in the propaganda videos that turn up on Web sites or on Al Jazeera. The insurgents, or suspected insurgents, on "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice" come off as cowardly lowlifes who kill for money rather than patriotism or Allah. They tremble on camera, stumble over their words and look at the ground as they confess to everything from contract murders to sodomy. The program's clear message is that there is now a force more powerful than the insurgency: the Iraqi government, and in particular the commandos, whose regimental flag, which shows a lion's head on a camouflage background, is frequently displayed on a banner behind the captives.

Before the show began that evening, Adnan's office was a hive of conversation, phone calls and tea-drinking. Along with a dozen commandos, there were several American advisers in the room, including James Steele, one of the United States military's top experts on counterinsurgency. Steele honed his tactics leading a Special Forces mission in El Salvador during that country's brutal civil war in the 1980's. Steele's presence was a sign not only of the commandos' crucial role in the American counterinsurgency strategy but also of his close relationship with Adnan. Steele admired the general. "He's obviously a natural type of commander," Steele told me. "He commands respect."

Things quieted in the office once the episode of "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice" began. First, a detainee admitted to having homosexual relations in a mosque. Then several other suspected insurgents made their confessions; two of them had been captured by Adnan's commandos in Samarra, and their confessions were taped, just hours before, in this very office. Adnan sat smoking Royals and watching the show like a proud producer.

"It has a good effect on civilians," he had told me, through an interpreter. "Most civilians don't know who conducts the terrorist activities. Now they can see the quality of the insurgents." Earlier he said: "Civilians must know that these people who call themselves resisters are thieves and looters. They are dirty. In every person there is good and bad, but in these people there is only bad."

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The episodes of the program I have seen depict an insurgency composed almost entirely of criminals and religious fanatics. The insurgency as understood by American intelligence officers, is a more complex web of interests and fighters. Most of the insurgency is composed of Sunnis, and it is generally believed that Baathists hold key positions. But the commandos, who are the stars of "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice," are also led by Sunnis and have many former Baathists in their ranks, so the Sunni and Baathist aspect of the insurgency is carefully obscured.

Of course, propaganda need not be wholly accurate to be effective. The real problem with the program, according to its most vocal critics -- representatives of human rights groups -- is that it violates the Geneva Conventions. The detainees shown on "Terrorism in the Grip of Justice" have not been charged before judicial authorities, and they appear to be confessing under duress. Some detainees are cut and bruised. In one show, a former policeman with two black eyes confessed to killing two police officers in Samarra; a few days after the broadcast, the former policeman's family told reporters, his corpse was delivered to them. The government's human rights minister has initiated an investigation.

"Terrorism in the Grip of Justice" is a ratings success because it humiliates the insurgency, satisfying a popular desire for vengeance against the men who spread terror and death. Yet the program plays rough not only with its confessing captives but also with the rules and laws that govern the conduct of war. As I learned in Samarra, this approach was not just for television. It was Adnan's effective yet brutal way of conducting a counterinsurgency.

Building a Home-Grown Counterinsurgency

Most of the Pentagon's official statements in the past two years about the ability of Iraqis to police their own country have been exaggerated. But now reality is beginning to catch up with rhetoric. In the months that followed the January elections in Iraq, attacks on allied forces reportedly fell to 30 to 40 a day in February and March, from 140 just before the vote. It's hard to tell whether this trend will continue; in late April the insurgency showed signs of renewed strength. But the successes that the counterinsurgency has enjoyed are in no small part because of Adnan's commandos. With American forces in an advisory role, the commandos, as well as a few other well-led units, like the Iraqi Army's 36th Commando Battalion and its 40th Brigade in Baghdad, inflicted more violence upon insurgents than insurgents inflicted upon them. That is much of what fighting an insurgency amounts to. But successful counterinsurgencies, if history is a guide, tend not to be pretty, especially in countries where violence has been a way of life and rules governing warfare and human rights have been routinely ignored by those in uniform.

The template for Iraq today is not Vietnam, to which it has often been compared, but El Salvador, where a right-wing government backed by the United States fought a leftist insurgency in a 12-year war beginning in 1980. The cost was high -- more than 70,000 people were killed, most of them civilians,

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in a country with a population of just six million. Most of the killing and torturing was done by the army and the right-wing death squads affiliated with it. According to an Amnesty International report in 2001, violations committed by the army and its associated paramilitaries included "extrajudicial executions, other unlawful killings, 'disappearances' and torture. . . . Whole villages were targeted by the armed forces and their inhabitants massacred." As part of President Reagan's policy of supporting anti-Communist forces, hundreds of millions of dollars in United States aid was funneled to the Salvadoran Army, and a team of 55 Special Forces advisers, led for several years by Jim Steele, trained front-line battalions that were accused of significant human rights abuses.

There are far more Americans in Iraq today -- some 140,000 troops in all -- than there were in El Salvador, but U.S. soldiers and officers are increasingly moving to a Salvador-style advisory role. In the process, they are backing up local forces that, like the military in El Salvador, do not shy away from violence. It is no coincidence that this new strategy is most visible in a paramilitary unit that has Steele as its main adviser; having been a key participant in the Salvador conflict, Steele knows how to organize a counterinsurgency campaign that is led by local forces. He is not the only American in Iraq with such experience: the senior U.S. adviser in the Ministry of Interior, which has operational control over the commandos, is Steve Casteel, a former top official in the Drug Enforcement Administration who spent much of his professional life immersed in the drug wars of Latin America. Casteel worked alongside local forces in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, where he was involved in the hunt for Pablo Escobar, the head of the Medellin cocaine cartel.

Both Steele and Casteel were adamant in discussions with me that they oppose human rights abuses. They stressed that torture and death-squad activity are counterproductive. Yet excesses of that sort were endemic in Latin America and in virtually every modern counterinsurgency. American abuses at Abu Ghraib and other detention centers in Iraq and Afghanistan show that first-world armies are not immune to the seductions of torture.

Until last year, the United States military tried to defeat the insurgency on its own, with Iraqi forces playing only a token role. The effort did not succeed. For every Iraqi detained by G.I.'s, 10 more seemed to join the insurgency, thanks to questionable American tactics: shooting at the whiff of a threat, yelling at civilians, detaining Iraqis indiscriminately, placing hoods over the heads of detainees. With insurgent attacks becoming more frequent and also more gruesome in the spring of 2004, American generals realized that they needed to create, or find, effective Iraqi forces.

Last June, Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, who commanded the 101st Airborne during the invasion, returned to Iraq to take charge of the sputtering training effort. He arrived in the wake of a major embarrassment -- when the first U.S.-trained battalion of Iraqi troops was ordered to Falluja to support an offensive by the Marines, many of them deserted or refused to fight. General Petraeus was given the resources and clout to turn things around, but in the months that followed things did not

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appear to be improving. When insurgents attacked the northern city of Mosul in the fall, the U.S.-trained police force there collapsed, abandoning its stations. Across the country, police officers were being killed by the dozens in mortar and car-bomb attacks; demoralized and outgunned, they retreated to fortified stations or simply stayed home.

A scathing report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, still in draft form but posted on the center's Web site, blames senior American officials for these failures of Iraqi will. "The police and the bulk of the security forces were given grossly inadequate training, equipment, facilities, transport and protection," states the report, written by Anthony Cordesman, a military expert and former Pentagon official. "These problems were then compounded by recruiting U.S. police advisers -- some more for U.S. domestic political reasons than out of any competence for the job -- with no area expertise and little or no real knowledge of the mission that the Iraqi security and police forces actually had to perform." The report seems to be referring to, among others, Bernard Kerik, the former New York City police commissioner, who was the first police adviser to L Paul Bremer III, administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Kerik left after three and a half months. Although the report notes some progress in recent months, it concludes: "Unprepared Iraqis were sent out to die. . . . The fact that some died as a result of U.S. incompetence and neglect was the equivalent of bureaucratic murder."

A key problem early on was that United States officials focused on the number of recruits rather than on their quality. Not only was the wrong metric being used to measure progress; the metric was being manipulated. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, at her confirmation hearing in January, stated that 120,000 Iraqis were trained and equipped. Senator Joseph Biden countered that no more than 14,000 of them were reliable fighters. Biden had a point: many of the Iraqis in Rice's head count barely knew how to fire a weapon. A recent report from the Government Accountability Office said the Pentagon's tallies have included tens of thousands of police officers who did not even report for duty. "If you are reporting AWOL's in your numbers, I think there's some inaccuracy in your reporting," Joseph Christoff, the G.A.O. official who presented the report to Congress, commented to The Los Angeles Times.

Last summer, with the security situation deteriorating, some Iraqi and American officials began to argue that the time had passed for a "clean hands" policy that rejected most of the experienced people who had fought for Saddam Hussein. The first official to take action was Falah al-Naqib, interior minister under the interim government of Ayad Allawi. In September, Naqib formed his own regiment, the Special Police Commandos, drawn from veterans of Hussein's special forces and the Republican Guard. As its leader, he chose General Adnan, not only because Adnan had a useful collection of colleagues from Iraq's military and security networks, but also because Adnan is Naqib's uncle.

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Naqib did not ask for permission or training or even equipment from the United States military; he formed and armed the commandos because the U.S. military would not. "One of the biggest mistakes made by the coalition forces is that they started from zero," he told me in his office in the Green Zone in Baghdad. "Our army and police are 80 years old. They have lots of experience. They know more about the country and the people, and about the way the insurgents are fighting, than any foreign forces."

Initially, Petraeus wasn't even told of the commandos; Iraqis and American civilians at the Ministry of Interior had lost faith in the U.S. military. The American who was most involved in the commandos' creation was Casteel, Naqib's senior American adviser. Casteel, who previously worked for Paul Bremer in the Coalition Provisional Authority, realized that the de-Baathification policy had to be altered and that Naqib was the person to do it. "He was not looking for top Baathists or people with blood on their hands," Casteel said. "But a tremendous amount of people who worked in the government or army weren't either of those. So why start from scratch when we can start in the middle? That's where the commando idea was formed."

After the commandos set up their headquarters at a bombed-out army base at the edge of the Green Zone, Petraeus went for a visit. He was pleasantly surprised, he told me, to see a force that was relatively disciplined and well motivated. He knew the commandos were officers and soldiers who had served Saddam Hussein, he knew many of them were Sunni and he certainly knew they were not under American control. But he also sensed that they could fight. He challenged some of them to a push-up contest. He was not just embracing a new military formation; he was embracing a new strategy. The hard men of the past would help shape the country's future.

Petraeus decided that the commandos would receive whatever arms, ammunition and supplies they required. He also assigned Steele to work with them. In addition to his experience in El Salvador, Steele had been in charge of retraining Panama's security forces following the ousting of President Manuel Noriega. When I asked him to describe Adnan's leadership qualities, Steele drew on the vocabulary he learned in Latin America. Adnan, he said approvingly, was a *caudillo* -- a military strongman.

Doing It the Iraqi Way

Adnan's offensive turned Samarra into a proving ground for this new strategy, the most comprehensive effort to date in which United States-backed Iraqi forces sought to retake an insurgent city. Code-named City Market, the offensive has involved weeks of raids by commandos and their American advisers. After the first wave of raids, a new corps of police officers and Interior Ministry troops known as Public Order Battalions were deployed to take command of the streets.

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Samarra has a population of a quarter million, though many have fled after two years of warfare. The population is divided among seven tribes whose rivalries created fertile soil for the insurgency to take root. Since 2003, the city has often been under the control of the insurgents. In October, the United States launched an offensive to retake the city, but the moment the Bradleys and Humvees departed, the insurgents returned. (Voter turnout in the election in January was less than 5 percent.)

When I arrived in March, the part of Samarra under American and commando control -- the City Hall and a Green Zone around it -- was a small parcel of land ringed with a phalanx of concrete barriers, barbed wire and shoot-to-kill lookouts. The main roads into the city were blocked by checkpoints at which Iraqi soldiers searched every vehicle. American and Iraqi forces rarely left the Green Zone on foot, conducting their patrols in heavily armed convoys, and the Green Zone was hit by mortars almost every day.

There were just a few hundred G.I.'s in Samarra, living in the Green Zone on two bases, Razor and Olsen. The conditions were spartan; soldiers were housed in cramped rooms, they used portable toilets as latrines and hot dinners were served just three nights a week. At Olsen, a former casino that is home to troops of the Wisconsin Army National Guard and the Third Infantry Division, the soldiers I met spent most of their off-hours lifting weights, e-mailing loved ones back home or playing Halo on Xboxes, unwinding from real combat by engaging in simulated combat. Three teams of a dozen or so G.I.'s went out on the raids with the Iraqi commandos. (The other soldiers in the city performed logistical, administrative and perimeter-security duties.) One team was composed of Special Forces soldiers, another was drawn from the Wisconsin National Guard and the third, with which I spent most of my time on patrol, was staffed by soldiers of the Third Infantry Division. The squad leader was Capt. Jeff Bennett, a 26-year-old whose father is in the Air Force.

Captain Bennett was on his second tour in Iraq. During the invasion, he was among the Third Infantry Division troops who captured Baghdad airport against stiff resistance from Republican Guard forces. Bennett wears his division patch on the shoulder of his uniform, and soon after he arrived in Samarra, the patch was recognized by a few of the Iraqi commandos, who informed him that they had been in the Republican Guard unit at the airport that fought his unit. Initially, Bennett was leery about going into combat with men he had tried to kill, and who had tried to kill him, but after their first battle together, fighting shoulder to shoulder against insurgents, his doubts disappeared.

"That's the great equalizer," Bennett said. "You get into a firefight with someone, they come to your side, return fire, cover another person. That kind of seals the relationship."

Many of the commando raids occurred at night. One evening, I watched as preparations began on the street outside City Hall. A group of about 50 Iraqis strapped on their body armor, inserted bullet clips into their AK-47's and listened to heavy metal on the stereos of their American-supplied Dodge

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pickups, which now bore coats of camouflage paint and machine guns on their flatbeds. The commandos talked and joked loudly, exuding an alpha-male confidence. Bennett's squad mixed easily with the commandos, exchanging greetings in the Arabic phrases they learned.

The commandos cultivate a vaguely menacing look. They wear camouflage uniforms, but also irregular clothing, like black leather gloves and balaclavas -- not to hide their identities but to inspire fear among the enemy. It is a look I saw among the Serbian paramilitaries who terrorized Croatia and Bosnia during the Balkan wars in the 90's, and it is the look of the paramilitaries that operated in Latin America a decade earlier.

When it was time to go, the commandos moved out in their Dodges, and Bennett's team followed in three armored Humvees. Bennett was not sure of the precise destination that evening; though the Iraqis and Americans had swapped lists of high-value targets, the commandos generally decided which ones would be pursued. The patrol moved out with lights off, slipping through Samarra's barren streets; there was a curfew in effect, and even the city's many stray dogs seemed to have taken shelter. The patrol eventually pulled to a halt at a house a few miles from the Green Zone. A man there, apparently willing to cooperate, said he knew where a number of insurgents could be found, and he led the way to a nearby house. Those inside were brought out, one by one. The man identified one as an insurgent, and he was flex-cuffed, blindfolded and thrown into the back of a truck.

The convoy moved on and made many more stops. House after house was searched. Sometimes the commandos broke down doors or shot off locks. Other times they entered with a polite knock and had friendly discussions, departing with handshakes and smiles. The commandos are far more skilled than American troops I've spent time with at knowing, intuitively, whether someone represents a threat. A few men were detained as the evening unfolded, and when they offered resistance or didn't provide information as quickly as the commandos desired, they were punished with a quick kick, slap or punch.

A little after 2 a.m., the commandos rolled into a neighborhood where the homes were surrounded by walls and had satellite dishes on their roofs. A man who was detained earlier in the night pointed the commandos toward one house. They entered and soon emerged with a confiscated computer, but whomever they hoped to find inside was not there.

The officer in charge of the raid -- a Major Falah -- now made it clear that he believed the detainee had led them on a wild-goose chase. The detainee was sitting at the side of a commando truck; I was 10 feet away, beside Bennett and four G.I.'s. One of Falah's captains began beating the detainee. Instead of a quick hit or slap, we now saw and heard a sustained series of blows. We heard the sound of the captain's fists and boots on the detainee's body, and we heard the detainee's pained grunts as he received his punishment without resistance. It was a dockyard mugging. Bennett turned his back to

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face away from the violence, joining his soldiers in staring uncomfortably at the ground in silence. The blows continued for a minute or so.

Bennett had seen the likes of this before, and he had worked out his own guidelines for dealing with such situations. "If I think they're going to shoot somebody or cut his finger off or do any sort of permanent damage, I will immediately stop them," he explained. "As Americans, we will not let that happen. In terms of kicking a guy, they do that all the time, punches and stuff like that." It was a tactical decision, Bennett explained: "You only get so many interventions, and I've got to save my butting in for when there is a danger it could go over the line." But even when he doesn't say anything, he explained, "they can tell we're not enjoying it. We're just kind of like, 'O.K., here we go again.'"

Though the commandos and their American advisers were working together in Samarra, their approaches were decidedly different. The American way of combat is heavily planned, with satellite maps, G.P.S. coordinates and reconnaissance drones. The Iraqi way is improvisational, relying less on honed skills and high-tech than gut instinct and (literally) bare knuckles. It is the Americans who are learning to adapt. At the bottom of printed briefings that American soldiers receive at the bases in Samarra, a quotation from T.E. Lawrence is appended: "Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them."

Threatening to Kill a Suspect's Son

On March 8, I went on a series of raids with the commandos, traveling in a Humvee with Maj. Robert Rooker, an artillery officer based in Tikrit who was dispatched to Samarra to serve as my escort. The leader of the American squad was Andrew Johansen, a 30-year-old lieutenant in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. The commandos led the way in a half-dozen Dodges, with Johansen's team following in three Humvees. The target was a house outside Samarra where Najim al-Takhi, thought to be the leader of an insurgent cell, was believed to be hiding.

The commandos reached an isolated farmhouse and detained al-Takhi's son, who looked to be in his early 20's. This was an excellent catch. The son of a suspect usually knows where the suspect is hiding; if not, he can be detained and used as a bargaining chip to persuade the father to surrender. With al-Takhi's son flex-cuffed in the back of one of the pickups, the commandos, excited, drove to another farmhouse less than a mile away. They believed that al-Takhi might be there, but a quick search yielded nothing. The leader of this raid was a short, chubby captain who was enthusiastic and, as I noticed on previous raids, effective at leading his men. (When I later asked his name, he refused to give it.) The captain was convinced that al-Takhi was nearby, but the son was telling him he didn't know where his father was. Was he lying?

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The captain's methods were swift and extreme. He yelled at the son, who was wearing a loose tunic; in the tussle of the arrest the young man had lost one of his sandals. The captain pushed him against a mud wall and told everyone else to move away. Standing less than 10 feet from the young man, the captain aimed his AK-47 at him and clicked off the safety latch. He was threatening to kill him. I was close enough to catch some of the dialogue on my digital recorder.

"Where is your father?" the captain shouted. "Say where your father is!"

"He left early in the morning," the son responded, clearly in terror. "I told my father to divorce my mother, to not leave us in such a state."

The son asked for mercy. "I swear, if I knew where he is, I would for sure take you to him." He looked around. "Oh, God, what should I do?"

The captain was not persuaded.

"Just tell us where he is, and we will release you now," he shouted.

"I swear to you, though you did not ask me to make an oath, instead of enduring all these beatings I would tell you where he is if I knew."

Major Rooker was just a few feet from the angry captain. He moved closer and nudged the captain's AK-47 toward the ground.

"You are a professional soldier," Rooker told him. "You know and I know that you need to put the weapon down."

The captain scowled but ended the execution drama.

"O.K., guys," he shouted to his men, "let's ride back."

As the commandos pulled their prisoner away, Lieutenant Johansen conferred with Rooker. "They don't operate the way we do, that's for damn sure," Johansen said. "We have to be nice to people." Especially in the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, they both knew that threatening a prisoner with death, they both knew, was illegal under the Geneva Conventions.

"I think it was all an act to try and get him to talk," Rooker said. "But for a fraction of a second I didn't know that. I thought the guy was going to cap him."

The commandos moved about 100 yards away, where they interrogated the young man again, this time without an AK-47 in his face. With an execution no longer in the offing, Rooker decided to not further

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irritate the captain. "They'll shake him down a little bit more," he said to the driver of his Humvee. "Stay back and let them do their job."

Later, I asked Johansen about what had happened.

"I'm about 99 percent sure it was intimidation to put fear into the guy," he told me. "I know they use different means of interrogation, but I didn't expect them to raise a weapon at a detainee. I don't think they know the value of human life Americans have. If they shoot somebody, I don't think they would have remorse, even if they killed someone who was innocent."

Inside the Detention Center

In Samarra, the commandos established a detention center at the public library, a hundred yards down the road from the City Hall. The library is a one-story rose-hued building surrounded by a five-foot wall. There is a Koranic inscription over its entrance: "In the name of Allah the most gracious and merciful, Oh, Lord, please fill me with knowledge."

These days, the knowledge sought under its roof comes not from hardback books but from blindfolded detainees. In guerrilla wars of recent decades, detention centers have played a notorious role. From Latin America to the Balkans and the Middle East, the worst abuse has taken place away from the eyes of bystanders or journalists. During my first few days in the city, I was told I could not visit the center; I was able only to observe, discreetly, as detainees were led into it at all hours. But one day Jim Steele asked whether I wanted to interview a Saudi youth who had been captured the previous day. I agreed, and he took me to the detention center.

We walked through the entrance gates of the center and stood, briefly, outside the main hall. Looking through the doors, I saw about 100 detainees squatting on the floor, hands bound behind their backs; most were blindfolded. To my right, outside the doors, a leather-jacketed security official was slapping and kicking a detainee who was sitting on the ground. We went to a room adjacent to the main hall, and as we walked in, a detainee was led out with fresh blood around his nose. The room had enough space for a couple of desks and chairs; one desk had bloodstains running down its side. The 20-year-old Saudi was led into the room and sat a few feet from me. He said he had been treated well and that a bandage on his head was a result of an injury he suffered in a car accident as he was being chased by Iraqi soldiers.

A few minutes after the interview started, a man began screaming in the main hall, drowning out the Saudi's voice. "Allah!" he shouted. "Allah! Allah!" It was not an ecstatic cry; it was chilling, like the screams of a madman, or of someone being driven mad. "Allah!" he yelled again and again. The shouts were too loud to ignore. Steele left the room to find out what was happening. When returned, the

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shouts had ceased. But soon, through the window behind me, I could hear the sounds of someone vomiting, coming from an area where other detainees were being held, at the side of the building.

Earlier, I spoke briefly with an American counterintelligence soldier who works at the detention center. The soldier, who goes by the name Ken -- counterintelligence soldiers often use false names for security reasons -- said that he or another American soldier was present at 90 percent of the interrogations by the commandos and that he had seen no abuse. I didn't have an opportunity to ask him detailed questions, and I wondered, in light of the beatings that I had seen soldiers watch without intervening, what might constitute abuse during interrogation. I also wondered what might be happening when American intelligence soldiers weren't present.

The Saudi I interviewed seemed relieved to have been captured, because his service in the insurgency, he said, was a time of unhappy disillusion. He came to Iraq to die with Islamic heroes, he said, but instead was drafted into a cell composed of riffraff who stole cars and kidnapped for money and attacked American targets only occasionally. When I asked, through an interpreter, whether he had planned to be a suicide bomber, he looked aghast and said he would not do that because innocent civilians would be killed; he was willing to enter paradise by being shot but not by blowing himself up. He gladly gave me the names of the members of the cell. One was a Syrian who had been arrested with him.

That evening, as I was eating dinner in the mess hall at Olsen base, I overheard a G.I. saying that he had seen the Syrian at the detention center, hanging from the ceiling by his arms and legs like an animal being hauled back from a hunt. When I struck up a conversation with the soldier, he refused to say anything more. Later, I spoke with an Iraqi interpreter who works for the U.S. military and has access to the detention center; when I asked whether the Syrian, like the Saudi, was cooperating, the interpreter smiled and said, "Not yet, but he will."

One afternoon as I was standing near City Hall, I heard a gunshot from within or behind the detention center. In previous days, I saw or heard, on several occasions, accidental shots by commandos -- their weapons discipline was far from perfect -- so I assumed it was another negligent discharge. But within a minute or so, there was another shot from the same place -- inside or behind the detention center.

It was impossible to determine what was happening at the detention center, but there was certainly cause to worry. A State Department report released last month noted that Iraqi authorities have been accused of "arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, poor prison conditions -- particularly in pretrial detention facilities -- and arbitrary arrest and detention." A report by Human Rights Watch in January went further, claiming that "unlawful arrest, long-term incommunicado detention, torture and other ill treatment of detainees (including children) by Iraqi authorities have become routine and commonplace."

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When I returned to the United States, I asked the American authorities in Samarra for a comment about potential human rights abuses at the detention center. They forwarded my e-mail message to a spokesperson for the Iraqi Interior Ministry, who wrote in reply: "The Ministry of Interior does not allow any human rights abuses of prisoners that are in the hands of Ministry of Interior Security Forces. . . . Reports of human rights violations are deeply investigated by the Ministry of Interior's Human Rights Department."

The Uses of Fear

In El Salvador, a subpar army fought an insurgency to a standoff that eventually led to a political solution. Kalev Sepp, who was a Special Forces adviser in El Salvador and is currently a professor at the Navy's Center on Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, said he believes that the handful of United States-trained Salvadoran strike battalions made the difference. "Those six battalions held back the guerrillas for years," he said in a recent phone interview. "The rest of the army was guarding bridges and power lines."

In Iraq, the insurgency does not fight everywhere; most attacks occur around Baghdad and in the Sunni Triangle. This allows a small and agile counterinsurgency force to play a disproportionately large role, and the commandos are precisely that kind of force. As a paramilitary unit, they are not slowed down by heavy weapons, and they do not engage in the attrition warfare of lumbering army regiments with thousands of troops and tanks and artillery pieces. Instead, they go wherever there is trouble, racing up and down the highways at 90 miles an hour in their Dodge trucks (so quickly, in fact, that Humvees cannot keep up with them). When Mosul erupted in November, with local police officers fleeing their stations as insurgents took control of the streets, several battalions of commandos sped to the city and restored order (or what passes for order in Iraq). When National Guard troops collapsed in Ramadi earlier this year, a battalion of commandos was rushed in. The commandos in Samarra will return to their base in Baghdad once their mission is completed -- or they will head to the next hot spot.

Intriguingly, a reputation for severity can accomplish as much as severity itself. One day a troublesome local leader, Sheik Taha, arrived for a meeting with Adnan at Samarra's Town Hall. Lt. Col. Mark Wald, who commands the Third Infantry Brigade in the city, told me that Taha supported the insurgency but was reconsidering his options now that Adnan had arrived with his commandos. I assumed that Adnan conveyed a message to the sheik that was not dissimilar to his warning to the commando who found an arms cache -- do as I say or you will lose a precious body part.

After the meeting, I asked Adnan whether the sheik had agreed to fall in line.

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"It is not important whether he is with us or against us," he growled in response. "We are the authority. We are the government, and everybody must cooperate with us. He is beginning to cooperate with us."

Adnan's remarks were put into context for me by Wald, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley. He pointed at the door behind which Adnan and Taha met. "This is what I consider an Iraqi solution," he said. "The beauty of an Iraqi solution is that they know how justice has been dealt with in the past years. They know what they are subject to. We are bound by laws. I think they are, too, but that doesn't mean a guy like Sheik Taha doesn't go in there fearing it's an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth."

No End in Sight

Paramilitary forces have a tendency to become politicized. Whereas the mission of army troops is national -- they exist to defend against foreign threats -- paramilitaries are used for internal combat. In the Middle East and elsewhere, they often serve the interests of the regime or of whatever faction in the regime controls them. (It is no accident that the commandos are run out of the Interior Ministry and not the Defense Ministry.) In a country as riven as Iraq -- with Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds and Turkmen vying for power -- a paramilitary force that is controlled by one faction can be a potent weapon against others. That is why the commandos are a conundrum -- in the country's unstable military and political landscape, it is impossible to know where they are heading.

The commandos and their leaders insist that they are loyal to the government rather than to any political or religious group. "There is no Sunni or Shia," Adnan told me, meaning that he does not pay attention to the religious origins of his men or the insurgents they hunt. "Anyone who tries to stop Iraq from moving forward, I will fight them." Adnan's statement is predictable, but is it convincing? The commando chain of command is largely Sunni -- they were set up by a Sunni minister (Naqib) and are led by a Sunni general (Adnan). At this point, the commandos consist mainly of two brigades. The commander of one brigade is Rashid al-Halafi, who is Shiite but is regarded warily by other Shiites because he held senior intelligence posts under Saddam Hussein. The other brigade was founded by Gen. Muhammed Muther, a Sunni who commanded a tank regiment under Hussein.

Of course, the commandos are an effective fighting force precisely because of their Sunni background. Sunnis occupied the top positions in Hussein's security apparatus and are, as a result, the country's most experienced fighters. They are particularly well suited to fight in the Sunni Triangle -- they have deep ties there and can extract more intelligence than outsiders, which is what Shiites and Kurds are considered in Samarra, Baqubah, Falluja, Ramadi and other insurgent strongholds. The Iraqi government improves its ability to fight the insurgents by bringing veteran Sunni military men on board.

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Their presence is useful politically, too: it makes it hard for the insurgency to claim that the government ignores Sunni interests. History has shown that the best way to end an insurgency is to bring insurgents or potential insurgents into the political system. The Salvadoran war ended with a 1991 peace accord between the government and the F.M.L.N., the rebel movement, which then grew into a legitimate political party. Similarly, the conflict in Northern Ireland came to an end with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which provided for power sharing with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army.

The true loyalties of the commandos remain unclear, however. It is difficult to generalize about the reasons ex-Republican Guard generals and soldiers who are Sunni have joined the commandos. Loyalty to the Shiite-dominated government is a possibility. A larger consideration among the rank and file is a good paycheck (by Iraqi standards). Captain Bennett said that their desire to once again earn a living in their old line of work -- fighting in a professional military and being paid to do it -- is more important than warm feelings for the government.

"For some, there's definitely a desire to make Iraq better, but for a lot of them, it's just the life they know," he said. "For most of them, the cause isn't really that important. They're more used to working in this role. This is what they know, this is all they know. I think they feel a lot better that their actions now are against genuine threats, as opposed to threats against the regime," meaning Hussein's government. "But I think for a lot of them, they couldn't fathom doing something different with their lives."

Whatever the motivations, the integration of the commandos into the security forces stanches one flow of experienced fighters into the insurgency. Some commandos, and perhaps many of them, might have gravitated to the other side if their unemployment endured. "It's human nature," said Casteel, the adviser to Naqib, the interior minister. "If you cannot feed your family, you will find a way to feed your family." Naqib, Casteel explained, sees the commandos "as a way to re-employ people who could be on the other side but have skills that can be used."

Yet their presence in the new security forces is not universally welcomed. Shiites and Kurds faced mass murder during Hussein's regime, and they are understandably concerned about giving a share of military power to Sunnis, especially those who served Hussein. They worry that a Sunni-led security force could be a Trojan horse for the return of oppression by Sunnis. Because Naqib chose Hussein-era military figures to lead the commandos, he made few friends among Shiites and Kurds in the interim government, and he is not expected to retain his portfolio in the government being formed by the new prime minister, Ibrahim Jafari, who is Shiite. As Haydar al-Abadi, an influential member of Jafari's Islamic Dawa Party, told The Wall Street Journal: "The Baathists believe they are back, and that they can behave as before. People are afraid again."

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If Jafari purges former Baathists, the commandos may lose their leaders, including Adnan. That would almost certainly test their loyalties. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, on a visit to Iraq in April, evoked those concerns, telling reporters, "It's important that the new government be attentive to the competence of the people in the ministries, and that they avoid unnecessary turbulence." In the worst case, a purge could prompt some commandos to join the insurgency or evolve into a Sunni militia beyond government control. Already, Iraq has a Kurdish militia, the 90,000-strong pesh merga, outside the control of the central government; there is also the Badr Brigade, the Iranian-trained wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is Shiite; and there is the Mahdi Army, loyal to the Shiite militant Moktada al-Sadr. The last thing the country needs is another militia.

It is a fraught situation -- a country at war without a unified and competent national army. And despite the improved security forces and the reduction in attacks on coalition forces, it is hard to see an end to the war any time soon. Just as the right political developments can tame an insurgency, so too can the wrong developments give new life to it. Arriving at the correct calibration of military force and political compromise is an excruciatingly difficult process. Historically, insurgencies have tended to last for at least 5 to 10 years; the endgame tends to begin when one or both sides become exhausted, and that rarely occurs after only a year or two.

In El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Turkey, Algeria and other crucibles of insurgency and counterinsurgency, the battles went on and on. They were, without exception, dirty wars.

Peter Maass, a contributing writer, is the author of "Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War." He has reported extensively for the magazine from Iraq.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/01/magazine/01ARMY.html?ei=5090&en=831a22b7e549a670&ex=1272686400&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss&pa>

[washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Before the War, CIA Reportedly Trained a Team of Iraqis to Aid U.S.

By Dana Priest and Josh White
Washington Post Staff Writers
Wednesday, August 3, 2005; A12

Before the war in Iraq began, the CIA recruited and trained an Iraqi paramilitary group, code-named the Scorpions, to foment rebellion, conduct sabotage, and help CIA paramilitaries who entered Baghdad and other cities target buildings and individuals, according to three current and former intelligence officials with knowledge of the unit.

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The CIA spent millions of dollars on the Scorpions, whose existence has not been previously disclosed, even giving them former Soviet Hind helicopters. But most of the unit's prewar missions -- spray-painting graffiti on walls; cutting electricity; "sowing confusion," as one said -- were delayed or canceled because of poor training or planning, said officials briefed on the unit. The speed of the invasion negated the need for most of their missions, others said.

After Baghdad fell, the CIA used the Scorpions to try to infiltrate the insurgency, to help out in interrogations, and, from time to time, to do "the dirty work," as one intelligence official put it.

In one case, members of the unit, wearing masks and carrying clubs and pipes, beat up an Iraqi general in the presence of CIA and military personnel, according to investigative documents reviewed by The Washington Post and according to several defense and intelligence officials.

Post inquiries about the case prompted the CIA to brief the House and Senate intelligence committees on the unit, said several members of Congress and two defense officials.

Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.), chairman of the House intelligence committee, asked if he was satisfied with the information he received on the unit, said, "Yes -- if it existed." But he added: "We're not spending a lot of time going back and dissecting tactical programs."

CIA spokeswoman Jennifer Millerwise declined to comment on the unit. Defense Department spokesmen referred comments on the unit to the CIA. All former and current government officials interviewed spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the classified nature of the Scorpions.

Authorized by a presidential finding signed by President Bush in February or March 2002, the Scorpions were part of a policy of "regime change" in Iraq. The covert members, many of whom were exiles recruited by the Kurds, were trained in target identification, explosives and small arms at two secret bases in Jordan, according to one U.S. government official.

They were sent surreptitiously into Iraq before the war and were in cities such as Baghdad, Fallujah and Qaim to give the impression that a rebellion was underway and to conduct light sabotage, according to the two defense sources and the three former and current intelligence officials.

"They painted X's [for targeting] on buildings and things like that," said one former intelligence officer.

After the initial combat phase of the war, the CIA used the paramilitary units as translators and to fetch supplies and retrieve informants in an increasingly dangerous Iraq where CIA officers largely stayed within the protected Green Zone, according to the officials.

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CIA control over the unit became weaker as chaos grew in Iraq. "Even though they were set up by us, they weren't well supervised," said an intelligence official.

"At some point, and it's not really clear how this happened, they started being used in interrogations . . . because they spoke the local dialect" and were caught roughing up detainees, Curtis E. Ryan, an Army investigator, told a military court in Colorado where four soldiers are charged in connection with the death of Maj. Gen. Abed Hamed Mowhoush in 2003.

Many of the paramilitaries did not speak English. When they entered Iraq after the invasion, because they wore civilian clothes and traveled in civilian vehicles, the Scorpion teams were often mistaken for insurgents. On a couple of occasions, U.S. soldiers unknowingly tracked the teams as insurgents and focused on their official safe houses as possible targets until they were discovered to be working with U.S. officials.

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British-trained police in Iraq 'killed prisoners with drills'

By Francis Elliott, Raymond Whitaker and Kim Sengupta

Published: 20 November 2005



Britain has been dragged into the growing scandal of officially condoned killings in Iraq

British-trained police operating in Basra have tortured at least two civilians to death with electric drills, *The Independent on Sunday* can reveal.

John Reid, the Secretary of State for Defence, admits that he knows of "alleged deaths in custody" and other "serious prisoner abuse" at al-Jamiyat police station, which was reopened by Britain after the war.

Militia-dominated police, who were recruited by Britain, are believed to have tortured at least two men to death in the station. Their bodies were later found with drill holes to their arms, legs and skulls.

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The victims were suspected of collaborating with coalition forces, according to intelligence reports. Despite being pressed "very hard" by Britain, however, the Iraqi authorities in Basra are failing to even investigate incidents of torture and murder by police, ministers admit.

The disclosure drags Britain firmly into the growing scandal of officially condoned killings, torture and disappearances in Iraq. More than 170 starving and tortured prisoners were discovered last week in an Interior Ministry bunker in Baghdad.

American troops who uncovered the secret torture chamber are also said to have discovered mutilated corpses, several bearing drill marks.

Adam Price, the Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, who uncovered the death at al-Jamiyat police station, called for an immediate UN investigation into police torture. "The Government keeps on saying that respect for human rights is a pre-condition of withdrawal. Well, it should be a pre-condition for UK soldiers to continue risking their lives in Iraq," he said.



22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit / Helmiy al-Azawi

Mr Reid said: "I am aware of serious allegations of prisoner abuse at the Jamiyat, including two deaths in custody. We take this very seriously. We have been pressing the Iraqi authorities very hard to investigate these allegations thoroughly and then to take the appropriate action."

Ministry of Defence sources privately confirm that the two SAS soldiers seized and held in Jamiyat in September were investigating allegations of police torture prompted by the discovery of the bodies.

British forces in armoured vehicles smashed their way into the station to rescue them, but officers have admitted they are powerless to protect civilians in southern Iraq from militias, and military patrols have been withdrawn from central Basra in the wake of the September clashes.

In the US-controlled districts of Iraq, some senior military and intelligence officials have been accused of giving tacit approval to the



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extra-judicial actions of counter-insurgency forces.

Critics claim the situation echoes American collaboration with military regimes in Latin America and south-east Asia during the Cold War, particularly in Vietnam, where US-trained paramilitaries were used to kill opponents of the South Vietnamese government.

http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article328214.ece

Death Mask: The Deliberate Disintegration of Iraq

Written by Chris Floyd Thursday, 01 December 2005

This is an extended version of a column appearing in the Dec. 2 edition of The Moscow Times.

The recent revelations about the [virulent spread of death squads](#) ravaging Iraq have only confirmed for many people the lethal incompetence of the Bush Regime, whose brutal bungling appears to have unleashed [the demon of sectarian strife](#) in the conquered land. The general reaction, even among some war supporters, has been bitter derision: "Jeez, these bozos couldn't boil an egg without causing collateral damage."

But what if the truth is even more sinister? What if [this murderous chaos](#) is not the fruit of rank incompetence but instead the desired product of carefully crafted, efficiently managed White House policy?

Investigative journalist Max Fuller marshals a convincing case for this dread conclusion [in a remarkable work of synthesis](#) drawn from information buried in reams of mainstream news stories and public Pentagon documents. Piling fact on damning fact, he shows that the vast majority of atrocities now attributed to "rogue" Shiite and Sunni militias are in fact the work of government-controlled commandos and "special forces," trained by Americans, "advised" by Americans and run largely by former CIA assets, Global Research reports.

We first [reported here in June 2003](#) that the U.S. was already hiring Saddam's security muscle for "special ops" against the nascent insurgency and re-opening his torture haven, Abu Ghraib. Meanwhile, powerful Shiite militias – including Talibanic religious extremists armed and trained by Iran – were loosed upon the land. As direct "Coalition" rule gave way to various "interim" and "elected" Iraqi governments, these violent gangs were formally incorporated into the Iraqi Interior Ministry, where the supposedly inimical Sunni and Shiite units often share officers and divvy up territories.

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Bush helpfully supplied these savage gangs – who are killing dozens of people each week, Knight-Ridder reports – with American advisers who made their "counter-insurgency" bones forming right-wing death squads in Colombia and El Salvador. Indeed, Bush insiders have openly bragged of "riding with the bad boys" and [exercising the "Salvador option,"](#) lauding the Reagan-backed counter-insurgency program that slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians, Newsweek reports. Bush has also provided a "state-of-the-art command, control and communications center" to coordinate the operation of his Iraqi "commandos," as the Pentagon's own news site, DefendAmerica, reports. The Iraqi people can go without electricity, fuel and medicine, but by God, Bush's "bad boys" will roll in clover as they carry out their murders and mutilations.

For months, stories from the Shiite south and Sunni center have reported the same phenomenon: people being summarily seized by large groups of armed men wearing police commando uniforms, packing high-priced Glockes, using sophisticated radios and driving Toyota Land Cruisers with police markings. The captives are taken off and never seen again – unless they turn up with a load of other corpses days or weeks later, bearing marks of the gruesome tortures they suffered before the ritual shot in the head. Needless to say, these mass murders under police aegis are rarely investigated by the police.

Earlier this year, one enterprising Knight-Ridder reporter, Yasser Salihee, actually found several eyewitnesses willing to testify to [the involvement of the U.S.-backed commandos](#) in 12 such murders. The offer was shrugged off by the Interior Ministry's spokesman – an American "adviser" and veteran bones-maker from the Colombian ops. In the end, it didn't matter; Salihee was shot dead by a U.S. sniper at a checkpoint a few days afterwards.

The Bushists may have been forced to ditch their idiotic fantasies of "cakewalking" into a compliant satrapy, but they have by no means abandoned their chief goals in the war: milking Iraq dry and planting a [permanent military "footprint"](#) on the nation's neck. If direct control through a plausible puppet is no longer possible, then [fomenting bloody chaos and sectarian strife](#) is the best way to weaken the state. The Bushists are happy to make common cause with thugs and zealots in order to prevent the establishment of a strong national government that might balk at the ongoing "privatizations" that have continued apace behind the smokescreen of violence, and the planned [opening of Iraq's oil reserves](#) to select foreign investors – a potential transfer of some \$200 billion of Iraqi people's wealth into the hands of a few Bush cronies, the Independent reports.

The violence is already dividing the county into [more rigid sectarian enclaves](#), the New York Times reports, as Shiites flee Sunni commandos and Sunnis flee Shiite militias in the grim tag-team of their joint endeavor. It's all grist for the Bushist mill: an atomized, terrorized, internally riven society is much easier to manipulate. And of course, [a steady stream of bloodshed](#) provides a justification for

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maintaining a substantial American military presence, even as politic plans for partial "withdrawal" are bandied about.

There's nothing new in this; Bush is simply following a well-thumbed playbook. For example, in 1953 the CIA bankrolled Islamic fundamentalists and secular goon squads to destabilize the democratic government of Iran – which selfishly wanted to control its own oil – and pave the way for the puppet Shah, as [the agency's own histories recount](#). In 1971, CIA officials admitted carrying out [more than 21,000 "extra-judicial killings"](#) in its ["Phoenix" counter-insurgency operation](#) in Vietnam. (The true number of victims is certainly much higher.) In 1979, the CIA began sponsoring the most violent Islamic extremist groups in Afghanistan – supplying money, arms, even jihad primers for schoolchildren – to destabilize the secular, Soviet-allied government and provoke the Kremlin into a costly intervention, [as Robert Dreyfus details](#) in his new book, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. Later, Saudi magnate Osama bin Laden – whose family firm helped kick-start George W. Bush's business career – joined the operation, and his men were sent to America for "anti-Soviet" terrorist training, as [Greg Palast reports](#). And of course, these examples only scratch the scorched-earth surface of America's double-dealings in this deathly shadow world.

This bi-partisan policy has been remarkably consistent for more than half a century: to augment the wealth and power of the elite, American leaders have supported – or [created](#) – vicious [gangs of killers and cranks](#) to foment unrest, eliminate opponents and [terrorize whole nations](#) into submission. The resulting carnage in the target countries – and inevitable blowback against ordinary Americans – means nothing to these Great Gamesters; it's merely the price of doing business. Bush's "incompetence" is just a mask for stone-cold calculation.

CF

http://www.chris-floyd.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=315&Itemid=1

Iraq's Death Squads

Sunday, December 4, 2005; B06

OF ALL THE bloodshed in Iraq, none may be more disturbing than the campaign of torture and murder being conducted by U.S.-trained government police forces. Reports last week in the Los Angeles Times and New York Times chronicled how Iraqi Interior Ministry commando and police units have been infiltrated by two Shiite militias, which have been conducting ethnic cleansing and rounding up Sunnis suspected of supporting the insurgency. Hundreds of bodies have been appearing along roadsides and in garbage dumps, some with acid burns or with holes drilled in them. According to the searing account by Solomon Moore of the Los Angeles Times, "the Baghdad morgue reports that dozens of bodies arrive at the same time on a weekly basis, including scores of corpses with wrists bound by police handcuffs." The reports followed a raid two weeks ago by U.S. troops on a clandestine

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Baghdad prison run by the Interior Ministry, where some 170 men, most of them Sunni and most of them starved or tortured, were found.

The danger this development poses to Iraq, and to the prospects of a successful end to the U.S. mission there, ought to be obvious. A dirty war conducted by the Iraqi government against one ethnic group will make civil war inevitable. It will render impossible a political accord among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, while increasing the likelihood that Iraq will splinter. U.S. commanders will be unable to hand responsibility off to Iraqi forces without inviting a bloodbath, and the training mission that President Bush described at length in his speech on Wednesday will be utterly discredited. If there is to be any chance of achieving Mr. Bush's goals of a united and democratic Iraq that protects the rights of its minorities, the state-sponsored death squads and torture chambers must be dismantled.

Once again, however, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is ignoring a critical threat. Just as he dismissed the insurgency

in its formative months as a few "deadenders" and minimized the systematic breakdown of U.S. discipline in the handling of foreign prisoners as isolated freelancing, Mr. Rumsfeld now pretends not even to know about the government death squads. In a press conference last week, he called the reports "unverified comments." This despite the facts that U.S. troops uncovered the clandestine prison and that officials from the Army, FBI, Justice Department and U.S. Embassy are participating in an investigation.

Worse, Mr. Rumsfeld maintained that "the United States does not have a responsibility" to do anything about the crimes of the police forces it established and trained, other than "report it." Even the man he selected to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine Corps Gen. Peter Pace, could not support such an irresponsible position. Standing alongside Mr. Rumsfeld, he asserted that "it is absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member, if they see inhumane treatment being conducted, to intervene to stop it."

If Mr. Rumsfeld's view prevails, Mr. Bush's latest "strategy for victory" in Iraq will be fatally undermined. Many of the death squads are run by the Badr Organization, which is the military wing of the leading party in Iraq's Shiite-led government, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Its leader, Abdul Aziz Hakim, not only refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing in an interview last month with the Post's Ellen Knickmeyer, but asserted that U.S. forces were tying Iraqi hands and should get out of the way so that even tougher tactics could be adopted. Should that happen, any hope for peace in Iraq will be lost.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/03/AR2005120300881.html>

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Pentagon-Controlled Iraqi National Guard Implicated in Samarra Mosque Bombing

Thursday February 23rd 2006, 1:36 pm



As the “non-partisan” Council on Foreign Relations assures us, Iraqi National Guard troops are trained and fully “vetted” by the Pentagon. “National guard troops receive three weeks of formal training and then on-the-job training by working with U.S. forces,” a [CFR backgrounder](#) explains. “The National Guard has replaced the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps as the largest security force in Iraq,” reports the World Tribune. “The 45,000-member force has been trained and equipped by the United States, with

help from Britain and Jordan.” In short, the Iraqi National Guard is a subsidiary of the Pentagon, organized and trained to do the bidding of the Anglo-American occupation forces and their installed minions. Thus it should come as no surprise the Iraqi National Guard may play an important role in the recent bombing of the Golden Dome mosque in Samarra, according to locals.

Since it is unreasonable to expect Baghdad hotel-bound corporate media hacks to report anything beyond what is read from a Pentagon script inside the Green Zone, most Americans remain unaware of details implicating the Iraqi National Guard in the bombing. According to reports appearing on the humanitarian Iraqi League organization’s Iraqi Rabita website and translated into English by the Iraqi blogger [Baghdad Dweller](#) (see original Arabic [here](#) and [here](#)), at least two witnesses saw “unusual activities by the ING [Iraqi National Guard] in the area around the mosque.” Two mosque guards reported four men in ING uniforms had blindfolded them and planted explosives. A second witness, Muhammad al-Samarrai, the owner of an internet cafe in the area, was told to stay in his store and not leave the area. From 11 pm until 6:30 am, ten minutes before two bombs were detonated, the area surrounding the mosque was patrolled by “joint forces of Iraqi ING and Americans,” according to al-Samarrai.

In addition to apparently facilitating the mosque bombing, Iraqi National Guard troops provided assistance to “more than a dozen masked Shia gunmen” attacking the Sunni al-Quds mosque in western Baghdad in the wake of the Samarra attack, according to the [Times Online](#). In addition, “gunmen arrived [at the Maakel prison in Basra] in a fleet of cars and showed documents which claimed that they were from the Interior Ministry... and lynched at least eleven Sunni inmates, among them at least two Egyptians.”

Last month, according to the [Washington Post](#), the Iraqi Interior Ministry was implicated in the operation of death squads targeting Sunnis. Moreover, according to John Pike, an expert on classified military budgets, as cited by [Robert Dreyfuss](#) in an article for the American Prospect, a 2004 Iraqi appropriation bill contained \$3 billion for paramilitary units. The “bulk of the covert money” went to

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“support U.S. efforts to create a lethal, and revenge-minded, Iraqi security force” and also “an Iraqi secret police staffed mainly by gunmen associated with members of the puppet Iraqi Governing Council,” thus revealing the situation in Iraq is not precisely as the hand-fed corporate media would have us believe.

Of course, two eye witnesses should not be considered conclusive evidence the Pentagon puppet Iraqi National Guard is behind the mosque bombings in Samarra. However, when added to the wealth of evidence from various sources detailing the existence of a Anglo-American “counterinsurgency” program in Iraq (including the now largely forgotten and never referenced by the corporate media story of two [British covert operatives caught red-handed in terrorist behavior](#) last September) the incident should at least stir a modicum of suspicion.

Naturally, any such suspicion will go duly unnoticed by the corporate media, already in the process of blaming the “al-Qaeda movement,” as [James Jeffrey](#) of the State Department characterized the perpetrators, and in the process leading the media down the preferred path, discouraging for now the absurd idea, as suggested by at least one member of the slavish corporate press, that Iran was somehow behind the bombing of the mosque containing the entombed bodies of two revered spiritual leaders of Shia Islam. “I think we should focus on al-Qaeda at this point,” Jeffrey declared. “There are plenty of reasons to focus on Iran on other issues,” for instance Iran’s illusory nuclear weapon program, dispelled some time ago by the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#).

The US Role in Iraq’s Sectarian Violence

By Stephen Zunes*

Foreign Policy in Focus

March 6, 2006

The sectarian violence which has swept across Iraq following last month's terrorist bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samara is yet another example of the tragic consequences of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Until the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation, Iraq had maintained a longstanding history of secularism and a strong national identity among its Arab population despite its sectarian differences.

Not only has the United States failed to bring a functional democracy to Iraq, neither U.S. forces nor the U.S.-backed Iraqi government in Baghdad have been able to provide the Iraqi people with basic security. This has led many ordinary citizens to turn to extremist sectarian groups for protection,

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further undermining the Bush administration's insistence that American forces must remain in Iraq in order to prevent a civil war.

Top analysts in the CIA and State Department, as well as large numbers of Middle East experts, warned that a U.S. invasion of Iraq could result in a violent ethnic and sectarian conflict. Even some of the war's intellectual architects acknowledged as much: In a 1997 paper, prior to becoming major figures in the Bush foreign policy team, David Wurmser, Richard Perle, and Douglas Feith predicted that a post-Saddam Iraq would likely be “ripped apart” by sectarianism and other cleavages but called on the United States to “expedite” such a collapse anyway.

As a result, the tendency in the United States to blame “sectarian conflict” and “long-simmering hatreds” for the Sunni-Shiite violence in Iraq is, in effect, blaming the victim.

Fostering Fragmentation and Conflict

One of the longstanding goals of such neoconservative intellectuals has been to see the Middle East broken up into smaller ethnic or sectarian mini-states, which would include not only large stateless nationalities like the Kurds, but Maronite Christians, Druze, Arab Shiites, and others. Such a policy comes not out of respect for the right of self-determination—indeed, the neocons have been steadfast opponents of the Palestinians' desire for statehood, even alongside a secure Israel—but out of an imperial quest for divide-and-rule. The division of the Middle East has long been seen as a means of countering the threat of pan-Arab nationalism and, more recently, pan-Islamist movements. Given the mosaic of ethnicities and sects in the Middle East, with various groupings having mixed together within both urban and rural settings for many generations, the establishment of such ethnic or sectarian mini-states would almost certainly result in forced population transfers, ethnic cleansing, and other human suffering.

The risk of Iraq breaking up into a Sunni Kurdish state, a Sunni Arab state, and a Shiite Arab state is now very real. And, given the intermixing of these populations in Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and scores of other cities, the potential exists for the most violent breakup of a country since the partition of India sixty years ago. Recent weeks have shown ominous signs of what may be yet to come on a massive scale, as scores of Shiite families were forced to flee what were once mixed neighborhoods in and around Baghdad.

Even barring a formal breakup of the country, the prospects of a stable unified country look bleak. As the Los Angeles Times reported on February 26, “The outlines of a future Iraq are emerging: a nation where power is scattered among clerics turned warlords; control over schools, hospitals, railroads, and roads is divided along sectarian lines; graft and corruption subvert good governance; and foreign powers exert influence only over a weak central government.”

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Much of Iraq's current divisions can be traced to the decision of U.S. occupation authorities immediately following the conquest to abolish the Iraqi army and purge the government bureaucracy—both bastions of secularism—thereby creating a vacuum which was soon filled by sectarian parties and militias. In addition, the U.S. occupation authorities—in an apparent effort of divide-and-rule—encouraged sectarianism by dividing up authority based not on technical skills or ideological affiliation but ethnic and religious identity. As with Lebanon, however, such efforts have actually exacerbated divisions, with virtually every political question debated not on its merits, but on which group it potentially benefits or harms. This has led to great instability, with political parties, parliamentary blocs, and government ministries breaking down along sectarian lines.

Even army divisions are separated, with parts of western Baghdad being patrolled by army units dominated by Sunnis while eastern Baghdad is being patrolled by Shiite-dominated units. Without unifying national institutions, the breakup of the country remains a real possibility.

Sectarian Conflicts

Theologically, there are fewer differences between Sunnis and Shiites than there are between Catholics and Protestants. In small Iraqi towns of mixed populations with only one mosque, Sunnis and Shiites worship together. Intermarriage is not uncommon. This harmony is now threatening to unravel.

Shiite Muslims, unlike the Sunni Muslims, have a clear hierarchy. (Ayatollahs, for example, are essentially the equivalent of Catholic cardinals.) As a result, the already-existing clerical-based social structures in the Shiite community were among the few organizations to survive Saddam's totalitarian regime and were therefore more easily capable of organizing themselves politically when U.S. forces overthrew the government in Baghdad in 2003. Sunni and secular groupings, then, found themselves at a relative disadvantage when they suddenly found themselves free to organize.

As a result, the United States initially insisted on indefinite rule by Iraqis picked directly or indirectly by Washington. However, when hundreds of thousands of Shiites took to the streets in January 2004 demanding the right to choose their country's leaders, the Bush administration reluctantly agreed to hold direct elections. Having been dominated by Sunnis under the Baathists, the Hashemites, and the Ottomans, the Shiite majority was eager to rule. Not surprisingly, elections have brought Shiite religious parties to power which have since marginalized other groups and imposed their repressive and misogynist version of Islamic law in parts of Iraq where they dominate, particularly in the south of the country.

Sunni opposition to Shiite dominance does not just stem from resentment at losing their privileged position in Iraqi political life under the former dictatorship. Indeed, Saddam Hussein suppressed his fellow Sunni Arabs along with Sunni Kurds and Shiite Arabs.

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What U.S. officials have failed to recognize is that Iraq's Sunni Arab minority, regardless of its feelings about Saddam Hussein's regime, has long identified with Arab nationalism. Not surprisingly, the armed resistance which emerged following Saddam's removal from power three years ago by U.S. forces has come largely from the Sunni Arab community. The insurgency has also targeted the U.S.-backed Shiite-dominated Iraqi government, which came to power as a result of the U.S. invasion and which many see as being puppets of the U.S. occupation. They also fear that the Iraqi government may identify more with their fellow Shiites of Iran than with other Arabs. More radical Sunni chauvinists, many of whom are foreign Salafi extremists like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have engaged in widespread terrorist attacks against Shiite civilians and their holy places.

Despite its dependence on the United States and ties to Iran, however, the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government has its own agenda. Culturally and linguistically, Iraq's Shiites are every bit as Arab as the Sunnis. Yet while the vast majority of the country's Shiite Arab majority has no desire to be pawns of either Iran or the United States, the response by the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government and Shiite militias has done little to lessen Sunni fears and hostility. Seeing their government faced with a growing insurgency and their community falling victim to terrorist violence, the Shiites have responded with aggressive counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations against the Sunni community. Human rights abuses by Shiites against the Sunni minority have increased dramatically, polarizing the country still further.

Even before the latest upsurge in sectarian violence, the Baghdad morgue was reporting that dozens of bodies of Sunni men with gunshot wounds to the back of the head would arrive at the same time every week, including scores of corpses with wrists bound by police handcuffs.

Death Squads

John Pace, the outgoing head of the United Nations' human rights monitoring group in Iraq, has reported that hundreds of Sunnis are being subjected to summary execution and death from torture every month by Iraqi government death squads, primarily controlled by the Ministry of the Interior.

High-ranking American officers have reported that radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Al-Mahdi Army maintains a strong presence in the regular police force, including up to 90% of the 35,000 officers currently working in the northeastern part of Baghdad. In addition, the Iranian-trained Badr Brigade dominates police commando units. A police unit known as the Punishment Committee goes after civilians believed to be flouting Islamic laws or the authority of Shiite militia leaders, particularly Sunnis.

The Shiite government of Iran, long cited for its human rights abuses by both the Bush administration and reputable human rights organizations, has actively supported Shiite militias within the Iraqi

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government and security forces. (Despite this, the Bush administration and its supporters—including many prominent Democrats—have been putting forth the ludicrous theory that Iran is actually supporting the anti-Shiite and anti-American Sunni insurgency.) Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr was trained by Iran's infamous Revolutionary Guards and later served as a leader of the Badr Brigade, the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

Americans have also trained Interior Ministry police and commandoes, though—unlike some notorious cases in recent Latin American history—there is little evidence to suggest that U.S. trainers have actively encouraged death squad activity. Still, there is little question that actions by U.S. occupation troops over the past three years—such as the torture of detainees, the hair-trigger response at checkpoints, the liberal use of force in heavily-populated civilian neighborhoods, and the targeted assassinations of suspected insurgent leaders—have contributed to the climate of impunity exhibited by forces of the Iraqi government.

Mr. Pace has also observed how U.S. troops are making things worse by rounding up large numbers of innocent young Sunni men and detaining them for months. Noting how such “Military intervention causes serious human rights and humanitarian problems to large numbers of innocent civilians,” he lamented at the fact that many of these detainees, in reaction to their maltreatment, later joined Sunni terrorist groups following their release.

Despite last month's terrorist bombing of the Shiite shrine and the tragic killings that followed, however, there were also impressive signs of unity. In cities throughout Iraq, Sunnis and Shiites mobilized to protect each other's mosques and neighborhoods.

Even the young firebrand Shiite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr emphasized to his followers, “It was not the Sunnis who attacked the shrine ... but rather the occupation [forces] and Ba'athists.” He called on his followers not to attack Sunni mosques and ordered his Al-Mahdi Army to “protect both Shia and Sunni shrines.” He went on to say, “My message to the Iraqi people is to stand united and bonded, and not to fall into the Western trap. The West is trying to divide the Iraqi people.” In a later interview, Sadr claimed, “We say that the occupiers are responsible for such crisis [Golden Mosque bombing] ... there is only one enemy. The occupier.”

Similarly, Sunnis were quick to express their solidarity with Shias in a series of demonstrations in Samara and elsewhere. Anti-American signs and slogans permeated these marches. Indeed, there is a widespread belief that it was the United States, not fellow Muslims or Iraqis, which bears responsibility for the tragedy. Even Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi claimed the United States was responsible for the bombing of the Golden Mosque, “especially since occupation forces did not comply with curfew orders imposed by the Iraqi government.” He added, “Evidence indicates that the occupation may be trying to undermine and weaken the Iraqi government.”

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Though charges of a U.S. conspiracy are presumably groundless, it does underscore the growing opposition by both communities to the ongoing U.S. military presence in their country and how the United States has little credibility left with either community as a mediator, peacekeeper, overseer, or anything else.

And it underscores the urgency for the United States to withdraw from Iraq as soon as possible.

About the Author: *Stephen Zunes is Middle East editor for Foreign Policy in Focus (www.fpif.org). He is a professor of Politics at the University of San Francisco and the author of **Tinderbox: U.S. Middle East Policy and the Roots of Terrorism (Common Courage Press, 2003).***

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/sectarian/2006/0306usrole.htm>

Neocon Advocates Civil War in Iraq as "Strategic" Policy

Daniel Pipes Finds Comfort in Muslims Killing Muslims

By John Walsh

Counter Punch

March 9, 2006

One of the abiding myths about the War on Iraq is that the neocons were too stupid to realize that they would confront an unrelenting, indigenous resistance to their occupation of Iraq. Unwittingly, the story line goes, they led the U.S. into a conflict which has now produced a civil war. But this simply does not fit the facts. The neocons clearly anticipated such an outcome before they launched their war as Stephen Zunes documents in Antiwar.com:

"Top analysts in the CIA and State Department, as well as large numbers of Middle East experts, warned that a U.S. invasion of Iraq could result in a violent ethnic and sectarian conflict. Even some of the war's intellectual architects acknowledged as much: In a 1997 paper, prior to becoming major figures in the Bush foreign policy team, David Wurmser, Richard Perle, and Douglas Feith predicted that a post-Saddam Iraq would likely be "ripped apart" by sectarianism and other cleavages but called on the United States to "expedite" such a collapse anyway."

Yet the line persists that the neocons had no idea what they were getting into. This cannot be correct as they think a lot about what they do and they plan carefully. Not only is that charge absurd on the face of it, but it is arrogant on the part of those who level it. And it is the worst political mistake possible – underestimating your adversary.

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Now the neocons are beginning to advocate for civil war in Iraq quite openly. The clearest statement of this strategy as yet comes from pre-eminent neocon and ardent Zionist Daniel Pipes. In a recent piece in the Jerusalem Post, Pipes spills the beans. He writes:

"The bombing on February 22 of the Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq, was a tragedy, but it was not an American or a coalition tragedy. Iraq's plight is neither a coalition responsibility nor a particular danger to the West. Fixing Iraq is neither the coalition's responsibility, nor its burden. When Sunni terrorists target Shi'ites and vice versa, non-Muslims are less likely to be hurt. Civil war in Iraq, in short, would be a humanitarian tragedy, but not a strategic one."

As ever Pipes's anti-Arab racism is simply too rabid to be hidden. If Muslims are busy killing other Muslims, then "non-Muslims" are less likely to be hurt!! What does that say about Muslim lives? And of course both Sunnis and Shia must be labeled "terrorists." Pipes is doing nothing more endorsing than the oldest of colonial strategies: Divide et impera.

Pipes envisions other "benefits" to the civil war "strategy," such as inhibiting the spread of democracy in the Middle East. Pipes again: "Civil war will "terminate the dream of Iraq serving as a model for other Middle Eastern countries, thus delaying the push toward elections. This would have the effect of keeping Islamists from being legitimated by the popular vote, as Hamas was just a month ago."

And finally Pipes declares that a civil war "would likely invite Syrian and Iranian participation hastening the possibility of confrontation with these two states, with which tensions are already high." It is no secret that the neocons have been aching for the U.S. to strike at Iran and Syria, so here too the civil war strategy of the neocons makes good sense to them. Of course the added death and destruction is not their problem since the victims will be Muslims and some unwitting American soldiers.

There seems to be only one fly in this neocon ointment. That is, will it be possible to control the flow of oil in the midst of turmoil in Iraq. Here I suspect the neocons who put Israel first might have their differences with the oil barons, presently their allies. But the neocons have certainly given a lot of thought to that, and it probably explains why the location of the large and permanent U.S. bases in Iraq is not known. It would seem, however, that there are great uncertainties in this and it may cause some trouble among the neocons and their allies over the longer term.

The only real question is whether the civil war emerged spontaneously as Wurmser, Perle and Feith predicted or whether the Iraqis had to be goaded into it by the U.S. Given all the intrigues and mysteries in Iraq, including the bombing of the Askariya shrine in Samarra and the shadowy death squads and torture chambers which the U.S. claims to know nothing about, the latter seems more likely as of now. It certainly fits the civil war strategy, and it is quite reminiscent of the Iran-Iraq war in which the U.S. and Israel fanned the flames that consumed over 1 million Muslim lives.

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The fact is that the neocons who control U.S. strategy have no interest in preventing a civil war but only in inciting one. Sectarian tensions were virtually unknown in Iraq before the U.S. invasion. And in fact the Iraqi Shia fought loyally as Iraqis against Iranian Shia in the disastrous Iran-Iraq war. So to avoid an Iraqi civil war, the most important step is to get all the U.S. troops home and thus to terminate U.S. provocations. For it is now crystal clear that the neocon strategy is one of civil war to divide and destroy Iraq; and such a strategy amounts to a crime against humanity.

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/sectarian/2006/0309strategic.htm>

May 22, 2006
LAW AND DISORDER

How Iraq Police Reform Became Casualty of War **By MICHAEL MOSS**

This article was reported by Michael Moss, David Rohde and Kirk Semple and written by Mr. Moss.

BAGHDAD, [Iraq](#) — Jon Villanova had just arrived in Basra last spring to help build a police force in southern Iraq when bodies began piling up. Twenty or more Iraqi civilians were dragged from their homes, shot in the head and dumped in the streets.

The evidence pointed to some of the very people he and his team of foreign police advisers were struggling to train: a cluster of senior officers working out of a station called Jamiat.

But local officials resisted efforts to prosecute the officers. By the time officials in Baghdad intervened nine months later, the corruption in Basra had gotten so bad that the 135-member internal affairs unit, set up to police the police, was operating as a ring of extortionists, kidnappers and killers, American and Iraqi officials said.

"There we are, trying to build a police force that people can believe in, and they are committing murders," Mr. Villanova said. "It was a quagmire."

So was much of the rest of Iraq. An initial effort by American civilians to rebuild the police, slow to get started and undermanned, had become overwhelmed by corruption, political vengeance and lawlessness unleashed by the toppling of [Saddam Hussein](#).

A year later, with the insurgency spreading with an unimagined ferocity, the United States military took charge of a second, broader campaign to reconstitute the police. On the ground, however, the military's plan for police units that could help restore order in Iraq would be no match for the forces

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tearing at the country in places like Basra and Baghdad. And along the way, it would help fuel some of those forces.

The Americans had to reconstitute the police since officers fled in droves after the invasion, ahead of gangs of looters. But the rush to replenish the ranks lacked proper controls, American, British and Iraqi officials said, and in the process political loyalists of the newly powerful were made officers, and there were reports of police jobs sold for kickbacks of \$100.

In recent background checks, police investigators found more than 5,000 police officers with arrest records for crimes that included attacks on American troops, American officials said.

When the rebuilt skeletal force became a target of the rapidly spreading insurgency, Americans turned to heavily armed police commando units that had been assembled by the Iraqis. They added firepower, but at a price.

An Iraqi official who helped create the special units said he warned Defense Secretary [Donald H. Rumsfeld](#) that they could become a weapon in Iraq's sectarian strife, much as Mr. Hussein's police had repressed the Shiite majority. Now, after a year in which a Shiite interior minister controlled the police, some special units stand accused by many Sunnis of operating as Shiite-dominated death squads.

The Iraqis have reined in some units, but others have received less attention. In one notorious incident, a brigade in northern Baghdad is suspected of kidnapping and killing 36 Sunni Arab men last August. Although a judge ordered the unit's commander, Brig. Gen. Bassem al-Gharrawi, arrested for murder, the arrest warrant was never executed, according to court records.

Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, who ran the military's police training program until last September, said he backed the creation of special police units "once we saw the fighting spirit and physical toughness of the units and the competence of their leaders." But he said he also sought to impose controls and vigorously pursue allegations of misconduct.

Like the rogue police units, other government security forces are also accused of having carried out massacres and violence on behalf of political or tribal groups. Turning all of those armed forces into an effective law enforcement mechanism is a prime challenge for the new Iraqi government formed over the weekend, and is central to the American strategy for exiting Iraq.

But reforming the police means overcoming a lot of history.

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Under Mr. Hussein, the police were corrupt and ill disciplined, less an instrument of law than of repression. The police became targets of the mobs of looters that roamed Baghdad after Mr. Hussein's overthrow, and then of the insurgents, who have repeatedly bombed police stations and recruiting lines. A 2006 internal police survey conducted northeast of Baghdad found that 75 percent of Iraqis did not trust the police enough to tip them off to insurgent activity.

Before the invasion, the Bush administration envisioned the police as adequate for keeping the peace and rejected a proposal backed by the Justice Department to deploy thousands of foreign police advisers.

Now the Pentagon is spreading 3,000 police trainers across the country. Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, who is in charge of the Pentagon's current program to remake the force, said his top priority was to improve basic skills while preventing corruption. He said the new effort was making strides toward the goal of having a force of 190,000 officers by early next year with better training and an appreciation of human rights.

"Every day the Iraqis improve their capability to do their job," General Peterson said.

The task ahead is reflected in recent confidential field reports filed by police trainers and obtained by The Times. The reports display a startling mix of heroics and incompetence, dedication and criminality.

In Diyala Province on March 21, where nearly two dozen police officers were killed when militants attacked their station, the police "fought until they ran out of ammunition," a police adviser reported. A week earlier, when the police in western Iraq were attacked, the officers abandoned their post or generally "responded horribly, displaying no firing discipline and failing to take defense positions."

One of the grimmest dispatches came from Mosul, where a police general reported militant "schools" operating inside a nearby prison teaching detainees insurgent tactics and extremist views. When an insurgent was released from prison, another general reported, officers at a station in Al Hawd fired their weapons to celebrate his freedom.

In Nineveh Province in northern Iraq, an alert major crimes unit stopped a car after noticing that it had a jerry-rigged bumper and that hidden inside were all the tools for an insurgent attack — mortar tube and shells, ski masks and AK-47 rounds. But just to the south in Al Tamin, a police officer seriously injured himself trying to disarm a roadside bomb by shooting it.

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The Trouble in Basra

When the United States invaded Iraq, Basra seemed like a place where law and order was possible.

One of the country's largest cities, Basra escaped much of the ensuing insurgent violence in the first year of the war, and the police force there resumed operating after the United States military swept through on the way to Baghdad.

But a thicket of political and criminal groups that emerged after Mr. Hussein's ouster scrambled to gain footholds in the force.

For Stephen White, a retired British police official who said he had been promised hundreds of police trainers but got only 35, the trouble began with a near free-for-all in recruitment.

Local political leaders appointed police chiefs who in turn hired their friends, relatives and tribesmen. "This led to many being admitted initially who would under normal circumstances not be allowed to join," said Mr. White, who was working with the American military.

Bringing back former police officers also proved less than ideal. They were largely inept, sometimes brutal and prone to resist doing any real work, according to an American assessment of the police that was completed in June 2003. Some of the postinvasion looting of police stations, the report says, "could be traced to former police who were attempting to destroy incriminating records."

Initially, the police in Basra merely went easy on tribal members accused of crimes. Gradually, the corruption increased. Much of the city came to be controlled by sectarian groups, including the Iranian-influenced Badr Organization and the more radical Shiite militia controlled by [Moktada al-Sadr](#), the Iraqi cleric who clashed with coalition forces in April 2004.

Evidence arose that the police began acting as the militia of these groups to carry out sectarian violence and enforce a fundamentalist creed. In December 2004, senior officers in the Basra Police Department were implicated in the killings of 10 members of the Baath Party, according to a State Department report.

By last September, two journalists who were reporting on the corruption and militia infiltration of the police were found dead. One was an Iraqi employee of The New York Times.

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Mr. Villanova, the former police adviser, said he came across a variety of corruption during his eight months in Basra last year. Officers demanded \$100 from men wanting to join the force. His team caught policemen taking bribes from smugglers.

Once, he recalls, his trainers went through a police checkpoint only to realize that Iraqi traffic was being diverted. The trainers quickly backed up, concluding it was an insurgent trap in which the police were complicit.

Then, starting last spring, the accumulating evidence in a string of assassinations pointed to the senior police officers at Jamiat. The officers acted so brazenly that the American advisers dubbed them the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, for the havoc they created, Mr. Villanova said.

The police chief in Basra, Gen. Hassan Sawadi, complained publicly last summer that he could not trust most of his men, and that corruption was rampant, but that he was powerless to fire even the worst offenders.

The killings complicated American operations because the station also housed the Iraqi police intelligence unit. American intelligence officers operating in Basra who passed on tips, like the location of people suspected of being insurgents, had to make their reports vague on the assumption they would get leaked to the militants.

But American and British police advisers said the governor of Basra, Muhammad Musbeh al-Waili, insisted on maintaining control over the police force. Shortly before Mr. Villanova left Basra last fall, his frustrations bubbled up when he saw the governor at a public event.

"This is terrible to say," Mr. Villanova said. "I saw the governor and I thought, 'You know, I've got a loaded weapon here and we could eliminate this nightmare.'"

The governor did not respond to requests for comment. At a news conference early this month, Mr. Waili lashed back at his critics and called for the ouster of the police chief and an Iraqi Army general.

The Jamiat station made headlines in September when British troops, who are handling military operations in southern Iraq, broke into the station to rescue two of their officers who had been arrested and accused of exchanging fire with Iraqi police at a checkpoint.

Then in November, a team from Baghdad arrived to clean things up, starting with the internal affairs unit. "All the members of that office were corrupt," said Brig. Ahmed Hamid, the chief of the Interior Ministry's internal affairs office in Baghdad.

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David Everett, a former assistant district attorney in Queens and Brooklyn who served as Mr. Hamid's adviser until recently, accompanied him to Basra and said, "It was like the 'Gangs of New York' on steroids."

To form a new internal affairs unit in Basra, Mr. Hamid is importing police officers from other parts of Iraq who he hopes will be impartial and whose families will face less risk of reprisal. His first efforts to prosecute police officers there had not gone well.

He said the judicial system in Iraq remained so weak that he was able to bring charges against only six of the internal affairs police officers. Then, all six were acquitted for lack of evidence because witnesses were too fearful to testify.

On Saturday, Majed al-Sari, an Iraqi Defense Ministry adviser, said in an interview that violence in Basra had gotten so bad that murders were now running about one every hour.

Building Special Units

As the political and criminal forces in Basra began to replicate themselves elsewhere in Iraq, the United States military was focusing on what seemed like a far more pressing problem. The insurgency had started to swell by early 2004, and the Pentagon realized that the police were in no shape to help stabilize the increasingly volatile country.

Asked to back up a Marine offensive on the militant stronghold of Falluja, police units tried and fled. Other officers abandoned their posts in southern Iraq rather than face Mr. Sadr's militia. More were killed in assaults on their stations. Some were ambushed returning from a training academy in Jordan.

Up to then, the police training had been handled largely by civilian contractors. In March 2004, the Pentagon handed control of the effort to one of its generals.

Maj. Gen. Paul D. Eaton was already working to build a new Iraqi Army when he got the job. Instead of getting more resources to train the police, his \$2.2 billion budget was cut by a fifth, General Eaton said.

"You just look to the money, look to the people sent over to do it, the numbers to do it, you just have to conclude this wasn't important in their minds," said General Eaton, who is now retired and has become a critic of Mr. Rumsfeld's handling of the war.

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That summer, General Eaton was replaced by General Petraeus, a former commander of the Army's 101st Airborne Division. General Petraeus said a reassessment of the police that Mr. Rumsfeld oversaw through weekly teleconferences called for increasing the force's firepower.

General Petraeus reworked their curriculum to give them two weeks of combat training, and opened the spigot to military supplies. The police had been equipped with pistols and baseball caps, and now started getting AK-47's, body armor and helmets.

Then his team discovered a faster way to toughen the force.

The Iraqi interior minister, Falah al-Nakib, said he was desperate to contain the surging violence in Baghdad but had only 8,000 police officers who were largely untrained, illiterate and unreliable. "The recruiting was done by U.S. officials who didn't know who they were hiring," he said in an interview.

Mr. Nakib began building special units within the police, its men drawn largely from the Republican Guards and Special Forces of Mr. Hussein's army. The commandos, as they were called, were seasoned and skilled military officers, and they were given the tools — heavy machines guns and armored vehicles — to confront the insurgents.

British military officials on General Petraeus's team said they had already been envisioned such special police units, and the Pentagon equipped, trained and inserted a growing number of them into the conflict. In Mosul on Nov. 14, 2004, a commando unit led by an American Army colonel waged a blood-soaked battle against insurgents trying to overrun a police station, the Pentagon reported. The officer, Col. James H. Coffman Jr., was given a Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest military award.

Steps were also taken to train the units like the regular police, with courses in human rights and the rule of law. A civilian complaint process was set up, and last spring teams of military personnel were assigned to oversee them in the field.

But even as the special police units fought successfully, the American and British officials who helped create them remained worried. The special police units were created so quickly that the recruits were not initially subjected to the fingerprint checks that other police recruits and officers underwent for criminal records, American and British officials said. Also, Iraqi officials at first had direct control over the units despite the objections of American military officials who wanted to oversee them, the officials said.

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"We saw them as a good thing, something with which to take on the insurgents," said Andrew Mackay, a British brigadier general who worked for General Petraeus. "But you could see that if we didn't get this right, it would quickly be something that the Minister of Interior, depending on who he was, could turn into his own little army."

Mr. Nakib said that before he left his post in April 2005, he met with Mr. Rumsfeld in Baghdad and told him the Shiite political parties who were coming into power that summer would hijack the commandos for use as their own militia.

"I warned him that there would be problems," said Mr. Nakib, now a member of Parliament.

Steve Casteel, an American security expert who served as Mr. Nakib's adviser, said Mr. Rumsfeld nodded and said, "We understand your concerns." Mr. Casteel said Mr. Nakib raised the same alarm with other officials, including Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the top commander in Iraq.

General Petraeus said his team helped Mr. Nakib screen out recruits who had criminal records or belonged to the Baath Party, and then vigorously pursued allegations of misconduct. He said that during his time in Iraq he never received evidence of the police carrying out clearly sectarian violence, but that at his insistence three commando leaders were fired or moved to lesser positions for detainee abuse or corruption.

At the same time, he said, he concluded that the United States needed to support Mr. Nakib's drive to create the special units, given the growing insurgency. "Nakib was trying to deal with serious security challenges and to show that the new government could develop Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems, as opposed to just relying on coalition forces to solve every problem," General Petraeus said.

When the Iraqi government changed hands in 2005, Mr. Nakib, a Sunni, was replaced by Bayan Jabr, a former officer in the military wing of the Shiite party known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The Supreme Council perceived the police force as dominated by Sunnis and along with Mr. Jabr inserted its Shiite loyalists into the ministry and the special police units.

In late 2005, Mr. Jabr ordered the hiring of 1,300 police commandos from the Shiite stronghold of Najaf, said Gerald Burke, an American police adviser at the time.

"The pace of the hiring grew frantically," Mr. Burke said.

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James Steele, a retired United States Army colonel who also helped develop the special police as a member of General Petraeus's team, said he did not regret their creation, but rather saw their misuse by sectarian groups as one of the biggest threats to the American plans in Iraq.

"That is more dangerous in terms of our strategic success than the insurgency," he said. "If this thing deteriorates into an all-out civil war our position becomes untenable. Who the hell are you fighting?"

As the control over the special police shifted from Sunnis to Shiites, even the new name one unit gave itself evoked an image of escalating violence: the Wolves became the Volcanoes.

Suspects in a Massacre

In the early morning of Aug. 24, 2005, about 50 men wearing police uniforms swept into the Huriya neighborhood in northern Baghdad and dragged 36 Sunni Arab men from their homes, according to a State Department report. Their bodies were found near the Iranian border with bullet holes in their heads, their faces disfigured by acid.

Suspicion fell on the Volcanoes.

Mr. Nakib had created the special unit when he was the interior minister. But now, with him out of power, the unit was led by a police commander he said he had fired, General Gharrawi.

Mr. Nakib said he dismissed General Gharrawi for disobeying an order to assist other police officers in the restive city of Ramadi. "After I left, they brought him back and promoted him to commander," Mr. Nakib said.

Eventually, enough evidence was gathered to implicate General Gharrawi in the Huriya massacre, and on Nov. 28 an Iraqi judge issued a warrant for his arrest on murder charges.

But the warrant was never executed. General Gharrawi continued to lead the brigade until earlier this year and remains employed by the Ministry of Interior.

In April, The Times, which obtained a copy of the arrest warrant, presented it to Maj. Gen. Hussein Kamal, the deputy interior minister for intelligence, and Mr. Hamid, who is in charge of internal affairs. Both men said they had never seen it before.

"If I received this order, I would execute it within five minutes," General Kamal said.

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Ann Bertucci, a spokeswoman for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team in Baghdad, said that a team of American military advisers was attached to the Volcano Brigade last August, but that they were unaware of the allegations concerning the Huriya massacre or the outstanding arrest warrant.

General Gharrawi declined to comment.

Mr. Jabr, who replaced Mr. Nakib last summer, said he was not ignoring the arrest warrant. He said the ministry was obliged to conduct its own internal review before referring a ministry official to the civilian court system.

Once the inquiry is completed, the ministry's legal adviser will submit a recommendation to the minister, and the minister will decide the course of action. Mr. Jabr said he had the legal authority to dismiss the case.

"Be sure of one thing," the minister said in an interview in his office. "I'm interested in the rule of law."

He said he had reassigned General Gharrawi to a relatively low-profile job in the operations room several weeks ago, pending the outcome of an internal investigation.

Mr. Jabr denied that his forces were guilty of sectarian crimes or were influenced by militias tied to the country's powerful Shiite political parties. He and other government officials have blamed private security forces and criminals masquerading as policemen for the crimes.

On Saturday, Mr. Jabr was appointed finance minister. His successor in the Interior Ministry has yet to be appointed.

The power of sectarian rifts in Iraq to influence police operations gained international prominence in November. American soldiers discovered a secret prison run by Interior Ministry officials in Baghdad where 173 malnourished prisoners, mostly Sunni Arabs, complained of being tortured. At the time, several Iraqi officials said the police working there were members of the Shiite Badr Organization.

Senior American military officials said Mr. Hamid's internal affairs group had opened 96 criminal investigations against Iraqi police officers, with 26 cases ending in court convictions and 16 in administrative punishment.

While American military officials acknowledge that the special police are responsible for some abuses, they said they were uncertain how much of the death squad activity attributed to the police was really their doing.

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They said much of the kidnapping and assassination in Iraq that involved men wearing police commando uniforms might be militia members impersonating the police.

Mr. Jabr said numerous other Iraqi ministries had their own security guards and police officers who operated beyond his control. One, the Facilities Protection Service, which guards pipelines and other infrastructure in Iraq, mushroomed from 4,000 men in 2003 to more than 140,000 today, and is now spread among more than a dozen ministries.

Four police brigade leaders have been relieved of their commands for rights abuses or other wrongdoing, and in February, American troops arrested 22 highway patrol officers who confessed that they planned to execute a Sunni Arab prisoner. Four of them are believed to have links to the Badr Organization.

This month, Mr. Jabr said he acted against more of his own police officers, arresting a general and 17 other ministry employees on charges they were kidnapping for ransom.

Policing the Police

General Peterson sat at a table in his Baghdad office in April and fingered a thick, white binder. It contained his plan for remaking the police force, laid out in 950 tasks.

He is the third general to be assigned to the Pentagon's third plan for the Iraqi police. He conceded that he was a peculiar choice for the job since he had never created any organization from scratch, much less a police force of nearly 190,000.

"I'm an armor officer, which doesn't qualify me for anything but combat," General Peterson said.

But after consulting with police experts, General Peterson said it became clear to him that some cornerstones needed to be laid. First among them, he said, was creating a system to go after bad police officers. "I went to the Minister of Interior and said, 'Policing the police is critical and you have no one doing this job,' " General Peterson said.

Together, they created an internal affairs operation, and brought in Mr. Hamid to run it. Mr. Hamid is also wrestling with myriad armed security forces and guards whose operations are spread throughout the Iraqi government.

General Peterson said he often felt as if he were dealing with 3,700 years of Hammurabi, the former ruler of Babylon whose portrait he keeps on his office wall. It was Hammurabi who established the

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legal code of an "eye for an eye," and General Peterson said that translated into police officers who had "difficulty understanding why we want to treat a known criminal like we treat others."

He said his team also needed to focus on improving the basic skills of officers.

"We were into building quantity," he said of the period before his arrival. "I'm not going to be critical of my predecessors. They had their mission, and they executed it about as well as they could have. We are just trying to make it better."

Khalid Ibrahim Ahmed, who had nearly completed a 10-week course when he was interviewed in April at the academy near Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq, said, "We need to get more training about how to fight the terrorists. We need to know how their systems work. We need training on bigger weapons. We are very worried about I.E.D.'s," or improvised explosive devices.

While more than 70,000 regular policemen have undergone such training, an additional 38,000 Iraqis — mostly those who were officers under Mr. Hussein — have been given only a three-week training course, Ms. Bertucci said. Other police units, including the special and border police have also received some academy training. In the field, the number of police trainers is being increased to 3,000, and most of the trainers are military personnel. The new teams will include 750 civilian contractors, up from the 500 who have been struggling to do the job by themselves. One of their missions is to determine just how much the police are retaining from their academy courses, officials said.

But recruits are learning powerful lessons outside the classroom.

Yasir Thamir Muhan, a 20-year-old recruit from Tikrit, said he fell into despair six days after joining the force. On March 2, when he and others were leaving training camp, insurgents drove up to their unprotected ragtag convoy and shoved a machine gun through the sunroof of their sedan.

Five recruits were killed. When he helped rush the wounded to a nearby village, people there panicked and forced them to drive off, too scared to be seen helping the police.

Hardened by the experience, he has drawn up his own rules of rough justice to deal with any insurgents he arrests who are set free by the country's troubled law enforcement system.

"I will take my revenge by my hand," Mr. Muhan said.

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Michael Moss and Kirk Semple reported from Baghdad for this article, and David Rohde from New York. Qais Mizher contributed reporting from Baghdad and Sulaimaniya, and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Basra.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/22/world/middleeast/22security.html?ex=1305950400&en=c13f497261ed46e4&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all>

Police Abuses in Iraq Detailed

By Solomon Moore

Los Angeles Times

July 9, 2006

Confidential documents cover more than 400 investigations. Brutality, bribery and cooperation with militia fighters are common, a report says.

Brutality and corruption are rampant in Iraq's police force, with abuses including the rape of female prisoners, the release of terrorism suspects in exchange for bribes, assassinations of police officers and participation in insurgent bombings, according to confidential Iraqi government documents detailing more than 400 police corruption investigations. A recent assessment by State Department police training contractors echoes the investigative documents, concluding that strong paramilitary and insurgent influences within the force and endemic corruption have undermined public confidence in the government. Officers also have beaten prisoners to death, been involved in kidnapping rings, sold thousands of stolen and forged Iraqi passports and passed along vital information to insurgents, the Iraqi documents allege.

The documents, which cover part of 2005 and 2006, were obtained by The Times and authenticated by current and former police officials. The alleged offenses span dozens of police units and hundreds of officers, including beat cops, generals and police chiefs. Officers were punished in some instances, but the vast majority of cases are either under investigation or were dropped because of lack of evidence or witness testimony.

The investigative documents are the latest in a string of disturbing revelations of abuse and corruption by Iraq's Interior Ministry, a Cabinet-level agency that employs 268,610 police, immigration, facilities security and dignitary protection officers. After the discovery in November of a secret Interior Ministry detention facility in Baghdad operated by police intelligence officials affiliated with a Shiite Muslim militia, U.S. officials declared 2006 "the year of the police." They vowed a renewed effort to expand and professionalize Iraq's civilian officer corps.

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President Bush has said that the training of a competent Iraqi police force is linked to the timing of an eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops and a key element in the war in Iraq. But U.S. officials say the renegade force in the ministry's intelligence service that ran the bunker in Baghdad's Jadiriya neighborhood continues to operate out of the Interior Ministry building's seventh floor. A senior U.S. military official in Iraq, who spoke on condition of anonymity in an interview last month, confirmed that one of the leaders of the renegade group, Mahmoud Waeli, is the "minister of intelligence for the Badr Corps" Shiite militia and a main recruiter of paramilitary elements for Interior Ministry police forces. "We're gradually working the process to take them out of the equation," the military official said. "We developed the information. We also developed a prosecutorial case."

Bayan Jabr, a prominent Shiite, was interior minister at the time of the investigations detailed in the documents and has been accused of allowing Shiite paramilitary fighters to run rampant in the security forces. U.S. officials interviewed for this article said the ability of Jabr's replacement, Jawad Bolani, to deal with the corruption and militia influence in the police force will be a crucial test of his leadership.

The challenges facing Bolani, a Shiite engineer who has no policing experience and entered politics for the first time after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, are highlighted in a recent assessment by police trainers hired by the State Department. According to the report, corruption in the Interior Ministry has hampered its effectiveness and its credibility with Iraqis. "Despite great progress and genuine commitment on the part of many ministry officials, the current climate of corruption, human rights violations and sectarian violence found in Iraq's security forces undermines public confidence," according to the document, titled "Year of the Police In-Stride Assessment, October 2005 to May 2006." Elements of the Ministry of the Interior, or MOI, "have been co-opted by insurgents, terrorists and sectarian militias. Payroll fraud, other kinds of corruption and intimidation campaigns by insurgent and militia organizations undermine police effectiveness in key cities throughout Iraq," the report says.

The report increased tensions between the Pentagon, which runs the police training program, and the State Department, which has been pushing to expand its limited training role in Iraq, said a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The report strikes contradictory tones, saying that the Interior Ministry continues to improve and that its forces are on track to take over civil security from U.S. and Iraqi military elements by the end of the year, while outlining shocking problems with corruption and abuse. "The document basically shows that Interior Ministry management has failed," the U.S. official said. "The document didn't directly address U.S. policy failures, but I guess it does show that too." Interior Ministry officials have taken steps to "improve detainee life," the report says. "However, there are elements within the MOI which continue to abuse detainees." Referring to Sunni Arab insurgent groups and Shiite paramilitary organizations, the report says "these groups exploit MOI forces to further insurgent, party and sectarian goals. As a result, many Iraqis do not trust the police. Divisions falling along militia lines have led to violence among police." "MOI officials and forces

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are widely reported to engage in bribery, extortion and theft," the report says. "For example, there are numerous credible reports of ministry and police officials requiring payment from would-be recruits to join the police."

The report's findings are borne out in hundreds of pages of internal investigative documents. The documents include worksheets with hundreds of short summaries of alleged police crimes, letters referring accused officers to Iraq's anti-corruption agencies and courts, citizen complaints of police abuse and corruption, police inspector general summaries detailing financial crimes and fraudulent contracting practices and reports on alleged sympathizers of Saddam Hussein's former regime. In crisp bureaucratic Arabic, the documents detail a police force in which abuse and death at the hands of policemen is frighteningly common.

Police officers' loyalties appear to be a major problem, with dozens of accounts of insurgent infiltration and terrorist acts committed by ministry officials. In one case, a ring of Baghdad police officers — including a colonel, two lieutenants and a captain — were accused of stealing communications equipment for insurgents, who used the electronics for remote bomb triggers. In another case, a medic with the Interior Ministry's elite commando force in Baghdad was fired after he was accused of planting improvised explosives and conducting assassinations.

In Diyala province, where last month U.S. forces killed Abu Musab Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, investigators were looking into allegations that a police officer detonated a suicide vest in the bombing of a police station. In a separate case, a brigadier general, a colonel and a criminal judge were accused of taking bribes from a suspected terrorist.

Police officers have also organized kidnapping rings that abduct civilians for ransom — in some of the cases, the victims are police officers. Two Baghdad police commanders kidnapped a lieutenant colonel, stole his ministry car and demanded tens of thousands of dollars from the victim's family, the documents allege. In that case, the two accused, Maj. Gen. Naief Abdul Ezaq and Capt. Methaq Sebah Mahmoud, were fired and taken to court. The abbreviated notes on the case do not make clear whether the two officers received further punishment, but the fact that the documents mention the courts being involved in the incident at all makes it stand out from the rest of the cases. In another case, the bodyguards of a police colonel in the Zayona neighborhood of Baghdad kidnapped merchants for ransom, according to the documents. In the capital's Ghazaliya neighborhood, a lieutenant and his brother-in-law kidnapped a man and demanded a huge ransom from his family.

Abuse by police is also a common theme. The victims include citizens who tried to complain about police misbehavior, drivers who disobeyed traffic police commands and, in several cases, other police officers. But detainees appear to be targeted most often. The U.S. military has been working with the Iraqi government to standardize detention facilities and policies, and the U.S. assessment claims that

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several site visits turned up no serious human rights abuses. But the ministry documents reveal a brutal detention system in which officers run hidden jails, and torture and detainee deaths are common. The documents mention four investigations into the deaths of 15 prisoners at the hands of police commando units.

In the Rusafa section of Baghdad, a predominantly Shiite area known for its strong militia presence, police tortured detainees with electricity, beatings and, in at least one case, rape, according to the internal documents. Relief was reserved for those detainees whose relatives could afford to bribe detention officers to release them. The Wolf Brigade, a notorious commando unit, illegally detained more than 650 prisoners, according to the documents. During a mass release of Wolf Brigade prisoners last November, a Times reporter saw dozens of malnourished men among the released detainees; several were so weak that they could not walk without assistance.

Female detainees are often sexually assaulted. According to the documents, the commander of a detention center in the Karkh neighborhood of the capital raped a woman who was an alleged insurgent in August. That same month, two lieutenants tortured and raped two other female detainees.

Among the strongest reprimands — and the most outrageous corruption — detailed in the documents are the cases involving two provincial police chiefs who were removed. Brig. Gen. Adil Molan Ghaidan, the former Diyala province police chief, was accused of drinking on the job, illegally confiscating real estate from citizens, knowingly paying ghost employees and harboring suspected terrorists. He was removed from the force about six months ago, police sources say.

Before his removal several months ago, Maj. Gen. Ahmad Mohammed Aljiboori, the former Nineveh province police chief, allegedly assigned a private army of 1,400 officers to personal security detail. According to an internal inquiry, Aljiboori claimed the force was not under the Interior Ministry's control. The document also accuses Aljiboori of detaining 300 Iraqis for two months without charges, wasting thousands of dollars on extravagant banquets and neglecting antiterrorism efforts to focus on arresting car dealers. The document says Aljiboori confiscated most of the cars for personal gain and gave some of them away to friends as gifts.

U.S. officials say they have known about Interior Ministry abuses for years but have done little to thwart them, choosing instead to push Iraqi leaders to solve their own problems. "The military had been at the bunker prior to the raid in November," said the U.S. official, referring to the Jadiriya facility. "But they said nothing." Some U.S. military leaders want American officials to have a stronger hand with the Interior Ministry, arguing that continuing corruption and militia influence are dashing any hope for a speedy American withdrawal. Another senior military official said U.S. policy in regard to the ministry was confused and disengaged. The official, who asked not to be identified because his comments impugned his superiors, said the Pentagon and State Department had failed to coordinate

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their efforts and were disengaged from the Iraqi police leaders. "They sit up there on the 11th floor of the ministry building and don't talk to the Iraqis," the official said of U.S. police trainers assigned to the Interior Ministry headquarters tower. "They say they do policy and [that] it's up to the Iraqis — well, they're just doing nothing. The MOI is the most broken ministry in Iraq."

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/election/2006/0709policeabuses.htm>

The Iraqi Civil Conflict: Another Reason for Bringing the Troops Home

By Raed Jarrar*

Foreign Policy in Focus

July 12, 2006

The ongoing civil conflict in Iraq is one of the major issues being considered in the debate over future U.S. military and political steps in Iraq. A growing number of analysts argue that U.S. military forces must stay in Iraq to prevent a full-scale sectarian civil war between Sunni and Shia Arabs in Iraq. But evidence exists that the roots of the Iraqi civil conflict is political rather than sectarian, and that the best solution is finding a way to bring the troops home.

A History of Conciliation

The history of Muslim-Muslim conflict in the Middle East is a long and bloody one. The division of Islam into Shia and Sunni sects was the result of two famous battles: the Battle of the Camel (656 AD) and the battle of Seffin (657 AD). Islamic history is full of wars between different regional powers and within Sunni and Shia Muslims. And while Sunni and Shia Iraqis have undergone some periods of sectarian tension, these tensions have never led to a full scale conflict like those seen in Bosnia, Rwanda, or even in Lebanon.

Shia and Sunni Iraqis have lived in harmony for centuries. Historically the two sects have lived in the same areas, intermarried, worked together and have had few conflicts based on religious beliefs. Arab Iraqis, especially in contemporary history, have not prioritized their religious or sectarian belonging over national identity. Iraqi nationalism united Iraqi Shia against Iranian Shia for eight years during the 1980s in the Iran-Iraq war.

Iraqi tribal systems have also integrated Sunni and Shia communities as many Shia tribes have Sunni branches among them and vice versa. In addition, lines between the sects have been blurred in Iraq. One of the core concepts in Shiaism worldwide is glorifying Muhammad's descendents. Anyone who is

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in the prophet's line of descent is called Sayyed (pl. Sadah). Therefore, being a Sayyed implies that one is a Shia Muslim. Iraq is the only case in the world where there are Sunni Sadah.

Despite the fact that Iraqis never had a sectarian civil war, foreign politicians have a history of misguided analyses about the issue. In 1920, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George warned of a civil war in Iraq if the British army withdrew, which is the exact same thing heard today in the U.S. Ironically, the same Iraqis George wanted to protect from each other actually united in a revolution against the British occupation forces.

Roots of the Civil Conflict in Iraq

When the Iraqi regime was brought down by the U.S. in the second week of April 2003, U.S. forces entered most of the Sunni Arab cities without engaging in major combat. Iraq's largest province, al-Anbar, containing the cities of Fallujah, Ramadi, Haditha, and Qaem, surrendered under an agreement with local Sunni tribal leaders. When Baghdad fell, there was a striking increase in criminal activities and full-scale looting of the public sector, but no signs of civil clashes. But the situation quickly changed as the U.S. administration, led by Paul Bremer assumed control over Iraq. Early on Bremer, attempting to put an Iraqi face on the occupation, appointed members to the Iraqi Governing Council. Aimed to reflect Iraq's diverse ethnic, political, and religious mix the Governing Council comprised 13 Shia, five Sunnis, five Kurds, one Christian, and one Turkoman. But instead of bringing unity to the political sphere, this reflection of Iraq's diversity when thrust into the political playing field became the base for sectarian division in Iraq.

The new political order engineered by the U.S. resulted in deep divisions between Iraqis. Entering into a marriage of convenience, Shia and Kurds were eager to join the government but for different reasons. Shia politicians from the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Dawa parties were supported and encouraged by Iran to take a part of the new regime. Kurdish political leaders, who participated in the U.S.-led coalition that brought down Saddam, sought the opportunity to rule the country instead of continuing to be the central government's victim. And while included in the government, Sunni Iraqis were scattered without strong leadership, were victims of de-baathification policies, and were reeling at their sudden loss of political power.

Just as the political order was reflecting chaos, so too was the military order. The vacuum in the military and police forces created by de-Baathification was being filled by tens of thousands of Kurdish and Shia Iraqi militia members. This pushed sectarian tension to a new level as most of the Sunni Arabs who did not join these forces became the primary target. As a result, a new set of targets emerged for the resistance; Iraqis who were against the occupation began attacking and killing other Iraqis who were taking a part of the new government or its military and police forces. The civil crisis was born.

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The Real Face of Fighting

While most Sunnis reject the new government, the violence is not led exclusively by Sunnis. By the fall of 2003, there were two main Shia groups and the beginnings of two main Sunni-dominated groups. On the Shia side, there was interfighting between two groups with strong militias: one which participated in building the new regime, (e.g. al-Hakim's SCIRI, al-Jaafari's Dawa, and other politicians blessed by Ayatollah al-Sistani), and another opposing any political work under the occupation (e.g. al-Sadr's movement and others blessed by Ayatollah al-Baghdadi, Ayatollah al-Hasani, etc.). On the Sunni side, there were clashes between Sunni Arabs who were against the new regime and Sunni Kurds who took a part of the new regime, the largest being open fighting between the two sides in Fallujah in April 2004.

The al-Sadr movement includes more than 5 million Shia Iraqis, which makes it the biggest single social group in Iraqi society. In other words, the number of al-Sadr supporters is equal to or more than the number of all Sunni Arab Iraqis. Sunni Arabs demonstrated the ability of small groupings of people to unleash large amounts of violence, while the al-Sadr movement showed a centralized pattern with potential capacity to organize large-scale attacks. Although the groups adopted different patterns of armed attacks they clearly showed that the use of the term "insurgency" must be expanded to all of the anti-regime military players--not just limited to those groups with Sunni identity.

Although most of the military players often identify on a sectarian basis, there is little evidence that their actions are directly against other sectarian groups. For example, Ansar al-Sunnah Army and the Islamic Army in Iraq are two of the largest insurgent groups who have claimed responsibility for hundreds of attacks against the U.S.-led coalition. Both of these groups frequently distribute videos showing executions and attacks against Iraqi soldiers and policemen. These videos accuse Iraqi soldiers and policemen of being "traitors" and "collaborators" who are getting their "fair judgment" as ordered by the Quran. There are no videos or announcements with statements such as "let's kill the Shias" or "let's get rid of the Sunnis." Instead the focus is on targeting and killing the "collaborators." There is a long list of other insurgent groups that adopt similar logic and terminology where no traces for a Shia-Sunni oriented conflict can be found. They do contain grandiose statements about fighting the occupation and they make speeches about a holy war between Islam and Christianity and Judaism, but nothing is said about a war between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims.[1](#)

Even the now-deceased leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the most extremist and brutal movements in the world, sought to target "the collaborators." In one of Abu-Musab al-Zarqaw's last statements before his death, he asked Iraqis not to participate in the newly elected government, threatening to kill "secular Zionist Kurds," "vengeful Shias," and "collaborator Sunnis" who take part in the "Crusader's Regime." While there is a strong fundamentalist anti-Shia strain in al-Zarqawi's announcements, he never gave a direct order to kill Shia because they were Shia.[2](#)

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Despite the popular public belief that Iraq's insurgents are causing most of the violence, it is clear that all sides involved in the conflict are contributing to the killing and destruction. Analytical sources tracking civilian deaths in Iraq provide a clear analysis of casualties in the conflict.

The Iraqi Civilian Casualties: A Breakdown

One of the most informative reports about Iraqi civilian casualties was produced last year by Iraq Body Count (IBC). IBC systematically calculates Iraq's casualties based on the English-language media's daily reports of casualties, including reports from the Arab media. The IBC report analyzed 24,865 Iraqi civilian deaths reported by the media through the first two years of the occupation, through March 19, 2005.³ These cases do not represent the full number or an estimate of casualties, as IBC clarifies, but represent the so-far documented portion of the total number based on media reports.⁴

According to IBC, "Anti-occupation forces/insurgents" killed 9.5% of civilian victims, "unknown agents" killed 11%, and "post-invasion criminal violence" accounted for 36% of all deaths.⁵ These numbers show that most of Iraq's civilians were not falling because of the sectarian violence during the first two years, and that most Iraqi civilians were killed because of the post-occupation security void. These same statistics indicate that the U.S. military has caused more than one fourth of the total documented cases so far, including those who perished as a result of "major operations."

Despite the deteriorating situation over the last six-months, the most recent updates of IBC's database show that "criminal violence" and "unknown agents" are responsible for most of the killing in the last year as well. IBC's figures challenge mainstream accounts which identify Iraqi insurgents as responsible for the majority of the ongoing death and destruction.

What is troublesome about IBC's statistic is the term "unknown agents" which reflects the growing concern about civil war, leaving hundreds of Iraqi casualties without a known murderer. These faceless killings are carried out in two main forms: "ID card assassinations" and attacks on mosques and churches. But the motivations behind the attacks are unclear. Some Iraqis accuse regional powers like Iran, Syria and Israel of having a hand in the attacks; other Iraqis accuse internal groups like the Badr militias, al-Qaida, and the Baath party (al-Awdah Party and Muhammad Army) of initiating such attacks to further destabilize the country. Further confusing the situation lately, Iraqi leaders from Sunni and Shia communities, like the Council of Muslim Scholars and the al-Sadr movement, are blaming the U.S.-led coalition for all the sectarian based attacks. The rumors and uncertainties surrounding these deaths not only fuel speculation around a Shia-Sunni civil war, but also could fuel a possible Shia and Sunni alliance against the U.S.-led coalition.

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The Askari Shrine

The al-Askari Mosque, a shrine to Imam Ali al-Hadi (died in 868 AD) and his son Imam Hassan al-Askari (died in 874 AD) in Samarra, was bombed and partly destroyed on February 22, 2006 in what seems to be the biggest sectarian based attack to date in Iraq.⁶ Hundreds of news stories and political speeches were written around the world within hours of the bombing predicting a full scale Sunni-Shia war in Iraq. The al-Askari attack was represented as the event that would start the awaited sectarian civil war. In fact, many scholars, politicians, and journalists considered the attack as the milestone marking the official beginning of the ongoing sectarian civil war.

Ironically enough, the very same shrine whose destruction was expected to trigger a sectarian civil war between Sunni and Shia Iraqis is an exceptional case where a Shia shrine is ran and managed by Sunni Sadah. For many centuries, the shrine has symbolized this harmonious integration where Shia Muslims visited al-Askari shrine at least once a year and were welcomed as religious tourists by their fellow Sunni Iraqis. In describing his future shrine al-Askari said, "My shrine in Samarra will be a refuge for both Sunni and Shia Muslims."

Alarmed by the Samarra attack Iraqi political and religious leaders started working quickly to contain the situation. Al-Sistani made a very rare appearance on national TV to ask his followers to calm down. Al-Sadr cut short his visit to Lebanon to return to Iraq, where he deployed his followers and militias around the country to protect Sunni mosques from attacks and started a new trend of Shia-Sunni joint prayers. Main Sunni leaders started a campaign of condemning the attack and working to stop further tension and the Iraqi government announced a temporary curfew and spread armed forces around the country.

Iraqi religious and political leaders, with the help of millions of their supporters around the country, managed to contain the situation in a relatively successful way that prevented any military clashes between Shia and Sunni establishments. Iraqis worked alone, without any help from the U.S.-led coalition, and prevented a full-scale sectarian civil war.

The Role of the U.S. Military

In the aftermath of the bombing it was clear that Iraqis were working hard to stop the spread of violence, but the U.S. military was noticeably absent. Fox News reported that, "U.S. military units in the Baghdad area were told Thursday morning to halt all but essential travel."⁷ Other news sources wrote, "The U.S. military ordered the U.S. soldiers in Baghdad to stay in their barracks and not to circulate if it could be helped."⁸ With these reports, it is clear that the U.S. army was not planning, in the case of al-Askari attack or for any other incident, to interfere and protect Iraqi citizens from killing each other. So even if the U.S. was concerned about sectarian civil war, there were no plans to stop it.

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According to the United Nations Security Council, the U.S. is supposed to be acting as the "Authority" to promote the welfare of the Iraqi people including the restoration of security and stability. In addition, the UNSC calls upon "all concerned to comply fully with their obligations under international law including in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Hague Regulations of 1907." During the bombing of Samara, the U.S. coalition failed on both accounts, raising questions about the role and usefulness of the coalition itself.

The Current Situation

The attack on the al-Askari shrine was one of many attacks carried out by faceless hit men attempting to trigger a sectarian conflict in the last two years. None of the past attacks initiated a full-scale sectarian civil war, nor did the al-Askari incident. Despite the exaggerated predictions and assessments about its effect and consequences, the number of casualties has not dramatically changed since the attack.

Nevertheless, there is a continuing increase in the total number of Iraqi civilian casualties during the last three years. IBC's online counter indicates that the daily average of Iraqi civilian casualties has increased from around 20 in the first year (excluding the initial invasion in March 2003), to more than 30 in the second, reaching to 40 in the third year. The numbers continue to increase this year as well.

According to another monthly breakup by Iraq Coalition Casualties Count (ICCC), another credible online counter based on media archives, the deaths from the date of al-Askari Mosque bombing until the last week of May 2006 indicate a noticeable raise in the monthly toll from around 550 Iraqis in the last four months prior to the attack to around 850 Iraqis in the four months after the attack.⁹ The increase in civilian deaths, while trending higher, has not reached the record set in August 2005 when more than 1,500 civilians were killed during the month. The al-Askari incident was a very tragic and catastrophic attack but it did not start a sectarian civil war.

Seeking a Resolution

The situation in Iraq has proved that as bad as it gets, things can always get worse. Indeed, 2006 is the worst year of violence since the initial invasion. But while continuing sectarian-based propaganda and attacks are increasing the civil tension around the country, it has not yet reached a point where a full-scale sectarian civil war is erupting. But as noted earlier, even if a civil war is around the corner (or is already occurring), the U.S. military has proved that it will not intervene in such a scenario. With general security in shambles, the U.S. military directly responsible for thousands, if not tens of thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths, reconstruction stalled, and with the growing tension seen as politically motivated, there is little evidence that the U.S. can resolve the Iraqi crisis.

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Based on this scenario, the ongoing Iraqi-Iraqi conflict can only be resolved when the U.S.-led occupation begins the process of leaving Iraq completely. As suggested by Iraqis and a growing number of U.S. politicians, setting a timetable for withdrawal should be one of the first steps to stop the current cycle of death and violence in Iraq. The conflict in Iraq is happening between Iraqis who are against getting involved in any political action under the occupation, and Iraqis who are building their new regime despite the occupation. But ironically, both of these groups want the occupation to end. A recent poll from World Public Opinion shows that 87% of Iraqis want a timetable for U.S.-led coalition withdrawal.¹⁰ A majority of Iraq's leaders have asked for setting a timetable as well. When President Bush visited Iraq last month, Iraq's Vice President asked him to set a timetable for withdrawal. This request is supported by Iraq's president. In addition, Iraq's National Security Advisor, Dr. Mowaffak Al-Rubaie requested a similar "roadmap" for complete withdrawal of the U.S.-led coalition in a recent op-ed in The Washington Post.¹¹ The vast majority of Iraq's MPs, religious leaders and political leaders want to see Iraq free of foreign troops.

But the U.S. has thwarted calls for a withdrawal by Iraqis. Last month, the Iraqi Prime Minister proposed a comprehensive 28 point package for Iraqi reconciliation and an end to violence after months of Iraqi-Iraqi discussions and meetings. The plan was warmly received by different Iraqi political, religious, and even insurgent leaders after it was published. But the U.S. embassy turned the 28 point package into a weaker 24 point plan which was rejected by all major Iraqi stakeholders. The four dropped demands included putting a timetable for pulling out the occupation troops, amnesty for anyone who has not killed civilians, compensation for civilian victims, and an immediate halt of all raids on homes and cities without Iraqi court orders.

While the U.S. embassy has rejected the wishes of Iraqis, U.S. citizens have a different opinion. For example, World Public Opinion's latest poll shows that if the new Iraqi government asks the U.S. to establish a timeline for withdrawing forces within the next two years, 71% of Americans said that the U.S. should do so. Just 28% said the U.S. should only reduce U.S. forces as the security situation improves in Iraq.¹²

Putting a timetable for withdrawing the U.S. troops, as have most of the other countries in the U.S.-led coalition, would be the first step in the right direction to follow the demands of both the Iraqi and U.S. people to stop the war and begin grappling with the much bigger issue of dealing with its consequences. With over \$320 billion spent, more than 2,500 U.S. soldiers dead, and countless Iraqis killed, the time for such an alternative is now.

End Notes

1. See, International Crisis Group, "In their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency," February 15, 2006. Available at:

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http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east___north_africa/iraq_iran_gulf/50_in_their_own_words_reading_the_iraqi_insurgency.pdf

2. Media reports have been selective in translating al-Zarqawi's speeches. For example, The Washington Post translated a part of his last audio statement where he called for the killing of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the highest ranking Shia cleric. But The Washington Post neglected to mention that al-Zarqawi threatened in the same very statement to kill all the leaders of the Association of Muslim Scholars, the highest ranking group of Sunni clerics in Iraq. The full translation of al-Zarqawi's statement shows his anti-collaborator politics, while The Washington Post version makes it seem like an anti-Shia policy.

3. Iraq Body Count, "A Dossier of Civilian Casualties: 2003-2005," July 2005. Available at: http://reports.iraqbodycount.org/a_dossier_of_civilian_casualties_2003-2005.pdf

4. Other studies, like the well known paper "Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey," published in the British medical journal, The Lancet, estimated on the basis of a random national sample that 100,000 Iraqis, in excess of pre-war rates, had died from a variety of causes (including accidents and illness, as well as violence) in the first 75% of the period that IBC's dossier covers.

The violent deaths in The Lancet estimate were extrapolated from 21 documented deaths, which is too small a sample for deriving a reliable breakdown on which actors have been doing what proportion of the killing throughout Iraq. However, on careful examination, the breakdown of violent deaths in The Lancet's 2004 sample is quite similar to that found in IBC over the same period, suggesting that although non-randomized, IBC's recorded deaths may not be biased in any particular direction. IBC's tally in the tens of thousands of deaths can therefore provide a highly-detailed and useful breakdown.

5. IBC defines insurgents as, "Those who target U.S.-led forces, ordinary police and other security forces, military installations and support workers for U.S.-led forces." 6. The Shrine, built in 945 AD, is considered to be one of the four most important Shia shrines in Iraq. One of the reasons why this shrine is highly valued by Shia Muslims is that al-Askari and his wife are the parents of al-Mahdi, the 12th Imam and a messianic figure whose return is expected by Shia. In addition, al-Mahdi was last seen around his parents' graves in 878 AD before he disappeared, which was another reason why the shrine was first built.

7. "More Than 100 Killed in Iraq Following Mosque Attack," Fox News, February 24, 2006. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,185782,00.html>.

8. Cited in "Three Years and Counting," The Nation, editorial, March 27, 2006. Available at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060327/editors>.

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9. Author's calculations. Iraq Coalition Casualties Count, "OIF Iraqi Deaths," ND. Available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.
10. "New WPO Poll: Iraqi Public Wants Timetable for US Withdrawal, But Thinks US Plans Permanent Bases in Iraq," World Public Opinion, January 31, 2006. Available at: http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/165.php?nid=&id=&pnt=165&lb=hmpg2.
11. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, "The Way Out of Iraq: A Road Map," The Washington Post, June 20, 2006.
12. "Comparing Americans and Iraqis," World Public Opinion, March 24, 2006. Available at: <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brunitedstatescanadara/182.php?nid=&id=&pnt=182&lb=brusc>.

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<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/sectarian/2006/0712civil.htm>

Death squads in Iraq : who leads them ? what are their objectives ?

by Salah Al Mukhtar (09 Dec 2006)



The murderous terrorist operations that struck Iraqi citizens in the Revolution District (now Sadr District), known to have caused the death of 200 persons (Nov. 23, 2006, translator's note) made the situation in Iraq even worse inasmuch as Iran sponsored Safavid death squads took advantage of those crimes to commit equally horrible atrocities : thirty Sunnite muslims were publicly executed, mosques were ransacked and burnt down together with the children, women and old age persons who had sought refuge inside, regardless of the fact that mosques are muslim worship places that should be respected by anyone. Today, all the Iraqi victims of this bloodthirsty terrorism know who the terrorists are. They know that the death squads are USAmericans and Iranians. The Safavids in Irak contend that USAmericans, Takfiris and Saddamites are those who murdered these Shi'ite people for being Shi'ites. It is time to shed some light on who the death squads are, it is time to bring out the truth as to Iran's position towards Iraq and the whole Arab Nation.

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The outset.

Years before Iraq's occupation, the Safavid political parties (1) dependent on Iran's Secret Services published on a website the names of hundreds of Iraqi personalities, of scientists and servicemen in the army, threatening them with elimination as soon as the national regime would have fallen. These lists still appear on the Web and can be found through Google.

The targeted personalities



They are the scientific elites, the best officers in the army, the patriotic political men, they are scholars, writers and distinguished artists. The motive put forward to justify their elimination is their loyalty to the national regime. Long before the occupation, some death squads had crept in from abroad and started liquidating dozens of Iraqi personalities whose names were on these lists. The perpetrators were members of the Badr Brigade stationed in Iran, where they used to repair once their heinous crimes had been carried out. When the occupation happened, things got even worse as the Badr and their death squads openly entered the country in the wake of the US invasion troops and under their protection, fulfilling an agreement concluded between US-UK and Safavid High Commands, stating that the latter pledged to support the occupation. The manhunt started at once. The Badr Brigade killers took the lead in physically liquidating thousands of scientists, experts, specialists of all kinds and Arab nationalist political personalities. Later on the Sadr Army followed suit and outmatched the Badr in savagery, especially when dealing with the Iraqi Arab Shi'ites, whom they accused of being Saddam's Shi'ites and sometimes Muawiya's Shi'ites(2) . In addition to these two main flows of providers in death squads, there are two smaller groups, the Hizballah (Iraqi) and the Hizb Addawa, which have both been constituted, trained and armed by Iran for many years. These particular death squads have specialized in liquidating those pilots and officers who had defeated the Iranian army during the 8-year war between the two countries, but also such political personalities of Arab nationalistic trend, who championed Iraq's arabity, thus not mere Baathists. This category of victims also included writers, artists and journalists. That is how the death squads have managed to eliminate thousands of the nation's elites.

The Safavid Iranian death squads had yet another aim, which was to loot Iraq's military and industrial equipment. It is why there is not one standing factory left in Iraq and why hundreds of modern motors, military planes and armoured cars have been carried away to Iran.

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In the first puppet government to be constituted after the invasion, Iran's auxiliary political groups had manoeuvred to obtain the two important Home and War Offices and the US Americans had been happy to oblige. The Home Office was granted to Bayan Jabr, an Iranian national *ante* occupation, afterwards renamed Soulagh, a word which is now used as a substitute for electric drilling machine in Iraq and elsewhere, for the general use he made of this implement to torture the unfortunate Iraqi to death, Sunnites and Shi'ites alike. Inside the Home Office building, where the Iranian Secret Services were present *en masse* to supervise the massacre of Iraqi patriots, Soulagh's agents did such a good job at disfiguring their victims that thousands of them could never be identified by their families and had to be buried in anonymous graves. Never, in all the history of Iraq had such savagery and barbary been at work, before the Iranian Safavid death squads came to display their knowhow.

After Soulagh... Negroponte.

When the Iraqi resistance managed to thwart the US plans and those of their Iranian ally, the US Administration sent over ambassador Negroponte, its best expert in the art of mass murder, whose name is linked to the "Salvador option", which he put in practice when he was sent to Salvador as an "ambassador" by his government. The Salvadorian option is the well-known plan devised by the United States' Secret Services, in order to eliminate thousands of people deemed "favourable to armed guerilla in Latin America". The real unmentioned aim was to terrorize the Salvadorian people, so that they stop or refrain from supporting the resistance to US imperialism. Negroponte is responsible for the assassination of tens of thousands in Salvador, where he is known as the worst butcher and the most sadistic tormentor in the country's history, in the same way as Soulagh the Iranian has won himself the title over the eight thousand years of Iraqi history.

Negroponte was appointed US ambassador for a short period but it was an extremely decisive one. After which he left Iraq, rewarded for his services by being made Head of the US National Security Department. During his short period in office, he delineated with great precision the aims and strategies of all the death squads, in order to extend their scope and efficiency. He also coordinated the actions of the US death squads proper and those of their Israeli colleagues, who had also entered Iraq just after the invasion. He ascribed the same objectives to both.

The US death squads, some of which were led by Ahmed Chalabi, Mouwaffat Rebei and also by Kurdish Peshmergas, comprising thousands of mercenaries, both from Iraq and abroad, had one sole and common objective : to propagate terror among the Iraqis. This was the message conveyed by the severed heads shown on TVs and blamed on some groups of the national resistance. The rape of women, the sodomization of men and the mass murder of innocents were also meant to convince Iraqi that the invaders' massacre capacities were boundless. And of course the assassination of political

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personalities, academics and scientists was meant not only to destroy the country's cultural and scientific wealth, but also to provoke a religious war and so break Iraq's unity.

Jalal Talabani Massoud Barzani

In fact, organizing the death squads is not being done by one sole authority. One might say they are divided in four groups. The first one is headed by the Israeli Mossad, the second by Iran, the third by **Barzani** and **Talabani**, and the fourth one by the US Secret Services. All cooperate in the physical elimination of academics, scientists, officers and patriots, as part of a common strategy which consists in bringing about the partition of the country in three separate regions : a Kurdish state up north, a Sunnite state in the center and a Shi'ite state in the South.

The unity in action of Iranian and USAmerican death squads was faced by some problems when the USAmericans became aware of the fact that their occupation of Iraq had not succeeded in achieving their own objective which was to colonize Iraq, but had achieved Israel's and Iran's instead. True enough the occupation has succeeded in destroying the Iraqi state and in bringing the country back, economically and industrially, to the Stone Age, as James Baker had promised Tarek Aziz it would, before having it attacked by 30 coalized countries in 1991. But the success is profitable above all to Israel, who considered Iraq, with Saddam Hussein as its leader, as the most serious threat to its security. The dismantling of Iraq is also highly beneficial to Iran, whom Iraq's victory in 1988 prevented from exporting its Safavid revolution in the rest of the moslem world. Now indeed the way is free for Iran to carry out this project. The USAmericans who succeeded in destroying Iraq with the help of Iran failed to straighten up its ruins and failed to reconstruct by way of their potent contractors, who were to do so subject to extravagant profits. Nor did they succeed in turning Iraq into that instrument they wanted it to become to help them build up their " Great Middle East " or " New Middle East. True enough, they do occupy Iraq, but they have lamentably failed in controlling and exploiting it, and that is why they are the great losers in that war.

What can they chose to do next ? The worst.

When the Iranians realized that their USAmerican allies were about to clip their claws and expel their Secret Services from Iraq, they removed their Iraqi column so as to occupy the South of the country, thus bringing about a religious partition *de facto*, with all the Shi'ites gathered in one region. The fulfilment of this obvious Safavid objective certainly meets with Israeli and US interests, as far as Iraq's dismantling is concerned. However, it also debars them from the opportunity of looting such an oil-rich region henceforth under total Iranian domination.

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The USAmericans' reaction came twofold. On the one hand, they encouraged Iran to cut the country in two by creating a southern Iran-controlled federal emirate, on the other they started clipping Iran's claws elsewhere in the country.

At that point, the explosion at Imam Ali Hedi shrine happened in Samarra. This event constituted a dangerous breakpoint inasmuch as it was soon all too clear that the Iranian Secret Services had done the deed, in complete agreement with their USAmerican associates, in order to unleash a wave of interreligious massacres.

In this connection, the following facts were observed :

1. From the explosion on, the Sadr Army has taken the lead as far as religious cleansing is concerned, whereas the Badr Brigade and the other Safavid groups have limited their action to plain murders.
2. The Sadr Army proceedings are more barbarous by far than those of the other factions. One notices that if Soulagh manages to eliminate thousands of persons in the secret gools of the Home Office building, the Sadr Army commit their murders in public, they hold public trials, hookhang and burn their victims' corpses for all to see, and issue statements in which they claim to be killing Sunnites " to avenge Shi'ite deads ".
3. The Sadr Army operations usually take place under the protection of US troops and Home Office. In the rare occasions on which they operate on their own without US help, US troopers merely stand by and let them finish their job of killing Iraqi citizens without interfering.
4. In a few occasions the US troops have tried to make themselves less unpopular with some agonizing victims of the Sadrists by building up a punctual operation against some isolated handful of Sadr killers, but never against the whole. Indeed they aim at enlisting the unfortunate survivors in the " new " Iraqi Army, in order to use them in large-scale operations against the Shi'ites, with the keyword : " smash all Iran's agents ! ".

So the USAmericans are engaged in making Iraq sit on a mountain of Iraqi skulls piled up by other Iraqi who kill under US and Iranian command, with the foreseeable natural consequence of breeding impregnable hates and unquenchable vengeance, in a destroyed and tormented country that is inexorably led to its partition to suit Israeli-Iranian-US interests.

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A glimmer of hope



From the above it appears clearly that the escalating operations of the death squads are revelatory of two things :

1. the sheer violence of the competition between US-Americans and Iranians, which has led them to bring the country to the verge of total destruction, in order to embezzle a large slice of it (Iran) and to dismember it after having expelled Iran from it (US).
2. the unexpected reality created by an Iraqi resistance including all the Iraqi nationals - Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens, Christians and Moslems, Sunnites and Shi'ites - a resistance indeed that is overcoming its dissensions and hastening to victory over the two circumstantial allies, irresistibly leading them towards a complex confrontation, the first victim of which will be the Iraqi people again.

N.B. This paper was first published in *26 September*, the daily newssheet of the Yemenites Armed Forces, on December 7, 2006.

*For diplomatic reasons the author did not then mention Iran by name. He does it now as it is published outside Yemen.

Notes

1 – The Safaviyeh or Safavid dynasty (in Persian نایوفاص, Safaviān) ruled Iran from 1501 to 1732. They were the first independent dynasty to do so in almost 1000 years. Originally the Safavids were members of a militant Sufi order, the Kizilbashs. It was their first Safavid ruler Ismail I, who prompted the Iranians to become converted to the Shi'ite doctrine, in order to assert his dynasty's authority against the dominating Sunni Ottomans. This enabled him to ground a powerful state on a specific identity. The Safavids have used their wealth to convert a great number of Iranians to Shi'a. It is under the first Safavids that Iran became a theocracy : Ismail's followers acknowledged him as *murshid kamil* "the perfect leader", but also as emanating from God.

2 – Muawiya I or Mu'awiya ibn Abî Sufyân (نایوفاص یبأ نب ؤیواعم) was born in 603, the son of one of Prophet Muhammad's fiercest adversaries : Abu Sufyân ibn Harb. He was the first to assert the Umayyads' right to rule on a dynastic principle and to take the title of caliph in 661. Indeed he took it from Ali ibn Abi Talib, the son-in-law of Muhammad, after the battle of Siffin, as the result of an arbitration. He died in Damascus in 680. Before his death, he had his son Yazid ibn Muawiyah proclaimed caliph as Yazid I, thereby transforming an elective caliphate into an hereditary one.

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Salah Al Mukhtar had worked at the Iraqi mission to the United Nations, then, in the years 1990-1991, at the Arab League as assistant to the Secretary General holding responsibility for Information. In the years 1993-1998 he headed the main Iraqi daily, al Jumhuriya. From 1999 he was Iraqi Ambassador to India and in 2003 to Vietnam. Salah al Mukhtar lives currently in Yemen.

<http://www.brusselstribunal.org/ArticlesIraq3.htm#Salah>



January 9, 2007

Managing Escalation: Negroponte and Bush's New Iraq Team

by Dahr Jamail

As part of a massive staff shakeup of Bush's Iraq team last week, it was announced that John Negroponte, the current U.S. National Intelligence Director who has also conveniently served as the U.S. ambassador to Iraq from June 2004 to April 2005 is being tapped as the new Deputy Secretary of State.

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It is a move taking place at roughly the same time when Mr. Bush is to announce his new strategy for Iraq, which most expect entails an escalation of as many as 20,000 troops, if not more. Bush has already begun preparations to replace ranking military commanders with those who will be more supportive of his escalation.

The top U.S. commander in the Middle East, Gen. John Abizaid, will likely be replaced by Adm. William Fallon, currently the top U.S. commander in the Pacific. Gen. George Casey, currently the chief general in Iraq, would be replaced by Army Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, who headed the failed effort to train Iraqi security forces. Thus, those not in favor of adding more fuel to the raging fire are to be replaced with those who are happy to oblige.

Former NSA director and veteran of over 25 years in intelligence, retired Vice Adm. Mike McConnell who happens to be an old friend of Dick Cheney (who personally intervened on his old buddy's behalf) will succeed Negroponte as national intelligence director. McConnell, willing to oblige his neocon pal Cheney, may prove more hawkish regarding Iran than Negroponte was.

The timing of this move is what should raise eyebrows, and for two main reasons. First, Negroponte is relieved of his job of intelligence director as the drums of war continue to be pounded by the die-hard neocons, and Negroponte wasn't playing quite loud enough to the Tehran tune. McConnell may well be able to carry a louder tune for his pal Cheney, which may come in the form of a sonata of manufactured intel to justify an attack on Iran, which is important since time is growing short for Cheney and Co.

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Second and more immediate, the transfer of Negroponte into the State Department comes conveniently just as the announcement of the escalation of troops in Iraq is planned. Bush needs someone with experience in managing escalations and he needs look no further than this man. It is Negroponte who oversaw the implementation of the "Salvador Option" in Iraq, as it was referred to in *Newsweek* in January 2005.

Under the "Salvador Option," Negroponte had assistance from his colleague from his days in Central America during the 1980's, Ret. Col James Steele. Steele, whose title in Baghdad was Counselor for Iraqi Security Forces supervised the selection and training of members of the Badr Organization and Mehdi Army, the two largest Shi'ite militias in Iraq, in order to target the leadership and support networks of a primarily Sunni resistance.



Planned or not, these death squads promptly spiraled out of control to become the leading cause of death in Iraq. Intentional or not, the scores of tortured, mutilated bodies which turn up on the streets of Baghdad each day are generated by the death squads whose impetus was John Negroponte. And it is this U.S.-backed sectarian violence which largely led to the hell-disaster that Iraq is today.

Under Reagan, Negroponte was the U.S. ambassador to Honduras in the early 1980's where he played a major role in U.S. efforts to topple the Nicaraguan government. The political history of John Negroponte shows a man who has had a career bent toward generating civilian death and widespread human rights abuses, and promoting sectarian and ethnic violence.

In Honduras he earned the distinction of being accused of widespread human rights violations by the Honduras Commission on Human Rights while he worked as "a tough cold warrior who enthusiastically carried out President Ronald Reagan's strategy," according to cables sent between Negroponte and Washington during his tenure there. The human rights violations carried out by Negroponte were described as "systematic."



The violations Negroponte oversaw in Honduras were carried out by operatives trained by the CIA. Records document his "special intelligence units," better known as "death squads," comprised of CIA-trained Honduran armed units which kidnapped, tortured and killed hundreds of people. Negroponte had full knowledge of these activities while making sure U.S. military aid to Honduras increased from \$4

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million to \$77.4 million a year during his tenure. Under his watch civilian deaths sky-rocketed into the tens of thousands. Negroonte has been described as an "old fashioned imperialist" and got his start during the Vietnam War in the CIA's Phoenix program, which was responsible for the assassination of some 40,000 Vietnamese.

At roughly that time, Col. James Steele was commander of the U.S. Military Advisor Group in El Salvador. He also smuggled weapons to the Contras in Nicaragua and lied about it to the Senate Intelligence Committee, as documented in the Final Report of the Iran/Contra Special Prosecutor.

As a result of the work done by Negroonte, assisted by Steele, during the winter of 2004 and early spring 2005, daily life in Iraq, as described by the *Washington Post*, looks like what the death squads generated in Central America under their watchful eyes: "Hundreds of unclaimed dead lay at the morgue at midday Monday – blood-caked men who had been shot, knifed, garroted or apparently suffocated by the plastic bags still over their heads. Many of the bodies were sprawled with their hands still bound."

Obviously it is better for Iraqi militias and resistance groups to be fighting each other instead of uniting to battle occupation forces. The age-old strategy of divide and conquer applied yet again.

Negroonte's strategy and oversight of the dirty war in Honduras assisted in producing a "victory" there, but it has failed dismally in Iraq. Nevertheless, when we have an Administration which refuses to accept reality, bringing him back into the fold of the State Department may be a clear signal that it is willing to see much more blood seep into the sands of Iraq in the hope that it might produce something akin to stability.



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Negroponte's appointment signals that Bush hopes to tap into his experiences from the medium-intensity war in Central America to do the same once again in Iraq. Coupled with the changes in the military and diplomatic team in Iraq it is a clear signal that the Administration is ready, willing and able, to head down the course of massive and indiscriminant escalation. It must be stopped.

(Foreign Policy in Focus)

Find this article at:

<http://www.antiwar.com/jamail/?articleid=10289>

Who Are The Real Terrorists In Iraq?

- Clear Evidence British special forces are recruiting, training terrorists to heighten ethnic tensions
- Elite SAS wing with bloody past operates with immunity, provides advanced explosives
- Some attacks being blamed on Iranians

Steve Watson

Infowars.net

Monday, February 5, 2007

An article in the [Sunday Telegraph](http://www.sundaytelegraph.com) this weekend pointed towards evidence that an secretive and elite unit of the British army is actively engaged in recruiting and training Iraqi insurgents and terrorists as double agents.

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This confirms what many have speculated for a long time, that Britain and the US are deeply involved in bombings and attacks inside Iraq which are subsequently attributed either to Sunni insurgents or shadowy terrorist cells such as "Al Qaeda in Iraq".

The Telegraph article states:

Deep inside the heart of the "Green Zone", the heavily fortified administrative compound in Baghdad, lies one of the most carefully guarded secrets of the war in Iraq. It is a cell from a small and anonymous British Army unit that goes by the deliberately meaningless name of the Joint Support Group (JSG), and it has proved to be one of the Coalition's most effective and deadly weapons in the fight against terror.

Its members - servicemen and women of all ranks recruited from all three of the Armed Forces - are trained to turn hardened terrorists into coalition spies using methods developed on the mean streets of Ulster during the Troubles, when the Army managed to infiltrate the IRA at almost every level. Since war broke out in Iraq in 2003, they have been responsible for running dozens of Iraqi double agents.



A look into the history of the secretive JSG or Force Research Unit (FRU), the cover name it operated under in Northern Ireland, reveals the extent to which the British government supports and engages in acts of terrorism in order to further its agenda in occupied territories. Iraq, as it turns out, is unsurprisingly no exception.

The FRU is the same ultra secret cell of the SAS whose criminal activities in Northern Ireland were under investigation by former Scotland Yard commissioner Sir John Stevens for more than a decade, during which time it emerged that the unit was involved in the murder of civilians in Northern Ireland.

According to Detectives, 'Military intelligence was colluding with terrorists to help them kill so-called "legitimate targets" such as active republicans...many of the victims of these government backed hit squads were innocent civilians.'

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“Beginning in the 1980s the highly secretive FRU was sent into Northern Ireland to recruit and train double agents to work inside the paramilitary groups,” writes [Michael S. Rose](#).

“The FRU combated IRA terrorism by the use of paid informers, blackmail, ambushes, and other methods not approved by the Geneva Convention. In the worst case, British officers decided that in cases when it would be difficult to bring suspected IRA terrorists to justice by legitimate means, the FRU would enlist outlawed guerilla groups that possessed both the desire and the means to murder the IRA men. According to Stevens Three, the FRU assisted Protestant terrorists in carrying out what were, in effect, proxy assassinations of Catholics. In order to forge such alliances, the British officers had to overlook the fact that the interests of the Protestant death squads were not those of the United Kingdom and its government.”



The FRU was further exposed by former member turned whistleblower [Kevin Fulton](#).

Fulton worked for the FRU for much of his career as he was infiltrating the IRA. In his role as a British FRU agent inside the IRA, he was told to 'do anything' to win the confidence of the terrorist group. Fulton Told the [Sunday Herald](#):

“I mixed explosive and I helped develop new types of bombs. I moved weapons. If you ask me, 'Did I kill anyone?' then I will say 'no'. But if you ask me if the materials I handled killed anyone, then I will have to say that some of the things I helped develop did kill.

I reiterate, my handlers knew everything I did. I was never told not to do something that was discussed. How can you pretend to be a terrorist and not act like one? You

can't. You've got to do what they do. The people I was with were hard-hitters. They did a lot of murders. If I couldn't be any good to them, then I was no use to the army either. I had to do what the man standing next to me did.

I broke the law seven days a week and my handlers knew that. They knew that I was making bombs and giving them to other members of the IRA and they did nothing about it. If everything I touched turned to shit then I would have been dead. The idea was that the only way to beat the enemy was to penetrate the enemy and be the enemy. At the time I'd no problem with this way of thinking.”

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Fulton revealed that his handlers told him that his operations were 'sanctioned right at the top... this goes the whole way to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister knows what you are doing.' Every major IRA bombing in England and Northern Ireland has had the fingerprints of the British government and the FRU all over it.



The August 1998 Omagh bombing, which killed 29 people, was known ahead of time by the security services and yet the bomb team wasn't intercepted. The reason? One of the members of the bomb squad [was working for army intelligence and MI5](#). The bombing was allowed to go ahead.

Kevin Fulton claims that he phoned a warning to his RUC handlers 48 hours before the Omagh bombing that the Real IRA was planning an attack and gave details of one of the bombing team and the man's car registration.

[Documents](#), lodged as part of a court action being taken against the British government by a disgruntled military intelligence agent, also revealed that an FRU major was the officer who was the handler of the British army's most infamous agent inside the IRA -- a man codenamed Stakeknife.

Stakeknife is one of Belfast's leading Provisionals. His military handlers allowed him to carry out large numbers of terrorist murders in order to protect his cover within the IRA.

The [London Observer](#) further revealed some of the methods employed by the FRU in Northern Ireland, including the "human bomb" technique, which involved "forcing civilians to drive vehicles laden with explosives into army checkpoints".

This throws a great deal of light on at least [one reported incident](#) in Iraq just over a year ago where British SAS agents, dressed in Arab garb and head dress, were caught attempting to stage a terror attack.

The soldiers drove a car towards a group of Iraq police and began firing. According to the Basra governor Mohammed al-Waili, one policeman was shot dead and another was injured. Early reports cited as originating from BBC World Service radio stated that the car used contained explosives.

In light of this it is pertinent to ask the question, are civilians in Iraq being killed as "legitimate targets"?

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We have previously covered the Iraq "[order out of chaos](#)" or "[strategy of tension](#)" theories in great detail, citing Pentagon documents, esteemed researchers and the testimony of Congressmen and Ambassadors.



All agree that it is entirely plausible to suggest that the US and British governments are operating an underlying strategy which serves to keep the country mired in turmoil to justify the continued presence of occupational forces.

In many cases the evidence suggests that the armed forces role is to prod terrorist cells into action, thus exposing them to "quick-response" attacks. The FRU revelations of recruiting, training and equipping terrorists in Iraq is thus telling.

An even more startling question comes to mind, are everyday ground troops being killed in attacks that their higher ups either have extensive knowledge of or have actually coordinated themselves?

Recently there have been reports of US soldiers being [killed by insurgents wearing American military uniforms](#). Iraqi officials said the gunmen disguised their intent with uniforms, American flak jackets, guns and a convoy of at least seven GMC sport utility vehicles, which are usually used by American officials in Iraq.

It is possible that insurgents may have been able to lay their hands on a couple of uniforms, but where did they get a whole convey of vehicles from?

Further interesting light is thrown on this topic when one considers that the explosives being used in many roadside bombs and car bomb attacks in Iraq have been [proven to be developed using advance technology](#) from photographic flash units, which were employed by the IRA some 15 years ago after Irish terrorists were given advice by British agents.

Kevin Fulton has again provided vital information on this, revealing how [MI5 helped to buy bomb parts](#) and technology in the US which were subsequently used by the FRU in Northern Ireland and have now found their way into the hands of Iraqi resistance fighters.

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“In late 1993 and early 1994, I went to America with officers from MI5, the FRU and RUC special branch. They had already sourced the transmitters and receivers in New York following liaison with their counterparts in the FBI,” Fulton told the Sunday Tribune in June, 2002. Fulton’s trip was confirmed by the FBI, according to Matthew Teague, writing for the Atlantic. The Independent on Sunday “has also spoken to a republican who was a senior IRA member in the early 1990s. He confirmed that Mr. Fulton had introduced the IRA to the new technology and that the IRA shared this with ‘like-minded organizations abroad.’”

There can be no more clearer evidence that our special forces are recruiting, training and arming the Iraqi insurgents.

What's more, in an attempt to shift the blame away from British and US special forces, the US government has [attempted to pin the blame](#) for the use of this advanced infra-red bomb technology on Iran:

“According to U.S. military figures, 198 American and British soldiers have been killed, and more than 600 wounded by advanced explosive devices manufactured in Iran and smuggled in through the southern marshes and along the Tigris River. Attempts to disrupt these networks, combined with the decision to send a second aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf as a warning to Iran, significantly raises the stakes, according to former Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk.”

So all in all here we have clear evidence of Britain and the US recruiting terrorists in Iraq, training them, providing explosives and advanced detonating technology and then blaming the attacks on Iran, thus raising the possibilities of widening the war across the Iranian border.

The FRU is, as previously stated, a wing of the SAS. A cursory look into some of the covert activities of the SAS, along with the equivalent Delta forces in the US, involving terrorist groups again reveals the fact that the British and US establishments are not engaged in fighting a war on terror, they are perpetuating the terror as part of their overall agenda.

- British and American special forces notoriously paved the way for an influx of radical Islamic mujahideen fighters and arms into the Balkans in the early nineties and trained them in order to counter Serbian forces during the Bosnian conflict.
- The SAS, under a joint strategic directive of MI6 and the US Defence Intelligence Agency, also later notoriously trained Kosovo Liberation Army terrorists in the Balkans in the mid to late nineties. Several investigations corroborated this.
- The KLA was known to be heavily infiltrated at this time by "Al Qaeda" or mujahideen fighters associated with Osama Bin Laden who had declared a "global war on the US". It was even alleged that Bin Laden had directly financed the group, yet the US and Britain still went ahead and [covertly trained the KLA](#).

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- The KLA was then used to increase ethnic tensions and further destabilize the region, just as is happening now in Iraq. Attacks by the KLA were used to justify Western intervention in the Balkans.
- There is also extensive evidence to suggest that British and US special forces have helped create, support and train Albanian terror cells from which a great deal of the KLA finances are derived.

The activities of the FRU in Iraq need to be investigated immediately. We have a branch of the military that is operating above the law and outside of the Geneva convention within a theatre of war. Moreover this unit has an extremely dirty past that involves carrying out terrorist atrocities and blaming them on persons or groups it wishes to see removed.

The driving agenda in Iraq is to set down permanent bases and dominate the middle east from there. Thus the war is allowed to rage on to keep our forces there.

The FRU's past activities also clearly reveal that the British government is not engaged in a real war on terror, they use the vehicle of terrorism to steer the greater agenda of conquer and control where ever they see fit. The Delta forces of the US work in direct collusion with this wing of the SAS towards the same goal.

<http://infowars.net/articles/february2007/050207FRU.htm>

Ulster on the Euphrates

The Anglo-American Dirty War in Iraq

By Chris Floyd

02/13/07 "ICH" -- -- Imagine a city torn by sectarian strife. Competing death squads roam the streets; terrorists stage horrific attacks. Local authority is distrusted and weak; local populations protect the extremists in their midst, out of loyalty or fear. A bristling military occupation exacerbates tensions at every turn, while offering prime targets for bombs and snipers. And behind the scenes, in a shadow world of double-cross and double-bluff, covert units of the occupying power run agents on both sides of the civil war, countenancing -- and sometimes directing -- assassinations, terrorist strikes, torture sessions, and ethnic cleansing.

Is this a portrait of Belfast during "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland? Or a picture of Baghdad today? It is both; and in both cases, one of Britain's most secret – and most criminally compromised – military units has plied its trade in the darkness, "turning" and controlling terrorist killers in a dangerous bid to wring actionable intelligence from blood and betrayal. And America's covert soldiers are right there with them, working side-by-side with their British comrades in the aptly named "Task

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Force Black," the [UK's Sunday Telegraph reports](#).

Last week, the right-wing, pro-war paper published an early valentine to the "Joint Support Group," the covert unit whose bland name belies its dramatic role at the center of the Anglo-American "dirty war" in Iraq. In gushing, lavish, uncritical prose that could have been (and perhaps was) scripted by the unit itself, the Telegraph lauded the team of secret warriors as "one of the Coalition's most effective and deadly weapons in the fight against terror," running "dozens of Iraqi double-agents," including "members of terrorist groups."

What the story fails to mention is the fact that in its Ulster incarnation, the JSG – then known as the Force Research Unit (FRU) – [actively colluded in the murder](#) of at least [15 civilians by Loyalist death squads](#), and an untold number of victims killed, maimed and tortured by the many Irish Republican Army double-agents controlled by the unit. What's more, [the man who commanded the FRU](#) during the height of its depredations – Lt. Col. Gordon Kerr – is in Baghdad now, heading the hugger-mugger Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR), a large counter-terrorism force made up of unnamed "existing assets" [from the glory days in Northern Ireland and elsewhere](#).

This despite the fact that a [10-year, \\$100 million investigation by Britain's top police officer](#), Lord Stevens, confirmed in 2003 that the Kerr-led FRU "sanctioned killings" through "institutionalized collusion" with both Protestant and Catholic militias during the 1980s and 1990s. Stevens sent dossiers of evidence against Kerr and 20 other security apparatchiks to the Blair government's Director of Public Prosecutions, in the expectation that the fiery Scotsman and the others would be put on trial.

But instead prosecuting Kerr, Blair promoted him: first to a plum assignment as British military attaché in Beijing – effectively the number two man in all of UK military intelligence, as [Scotland's Sunday Herald notes](#) – then with the SRR posting to Baghdad, where Kerr and his former FRU mates now apply the "methods developed on the mean streets of Ulster during the Troubles," as the Telegraph breathlessly relates.

The Telegraph puff piece is naturally coy about revealing these methods, beyond the fact that, as in Ireland, the JSG uses "a variety of inducements ranging from blackmail to bribes" to turn Iraqi terrorists into Coalition agents. So to get a better idea of the techniques employed by the group in Baghdad, we must return to those "mean streets of Ulster" and the unit's reign of terror and collusion there, which has been thoroughly documented not only by the exhaustive Stevens inquiries, but also in a remarkable series of investigative reports by the Sunday Herald's Neil Mackay, and in extensive stories by the BBC, the Guardian, the Independent, the Times and others.

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We will also see how the operations of the JSG and "Task Force Black" dovetail with U.S. efforts to apply the lessons of its own dirty wars – such as the "Salvador Option" – to Iraq, as well as long-running Bush Administration initiatives to arm and fund "friendly" militias while infiltrating terrorist groups in order to "provoke them into action." It is indeed a picture painted in black, a glimpse at the dark muck that lies beneath the high-flown rhetoric about freedom and civilization forever issuing from the lips of the war leaders.

II. Whacking for the Peelers

Gregory Burns had a problem. He was one of Gordon Kerr's FRU informers planted deep inside the IRA, along with two of his friends, Johnny Dignam and Aidan Starrs. [But as Mackay noted in a February 2003 story](#), the already-partnered Burns had acquired a girlfriend on the side, Margaret Perry, 26, a "civilian" Catholic with no paramilitary ties. Forbidden fruit is sweet, of course – but pillow talk is dangerous for an inside man. "Burns didn't keep his mouth shut and [Perry] found out he was working for British intelligence," an FRU officer told Mackay. "He tried to convince her he was a double-agent the IRA had planted in the [British] army – but she didn't buy it."

Burns called his FRU handlers and asked to come in from the cold. He'd been compromised, he said, and now he and his friends needed to get out, with new identities, relocation, good jobs – the usual payoff for trusted agents when the jig was up. But Kerr refused: "He said [Burns] should silence Perry," the FRU man told Mackay. Burns, panicking at thought of the IRA's horrific retributions against informers, insisted: he would have to kill the woman if they didn't bring him in, he told Kerr. Again Kerr refused.

And so Burns arranged a meeting with his lover, to "talk over" the situation. His friends, Aidan and Johnny, volunteered to drive her there: "On the way, they pulled into a forest, beat her to death and buried her in a shallow grave," Mackay notes. Two years later, when her body was found, the IRA put two and two together – and slowly tortured Burns and his two friends to death, after first extracting copious amounts of information about British intelligence operations in Ireland.

'In Kerr's eyes, Burns just wasn't important enough to resettle," the FRU source told the Sunday Herald. "So we ended up with four unnecessary deaths and the compromising of British army intelligence officers, which ultimately put soldiers' lives at risk. To Kerr, it was always a matter of the ends justifying the means."

Then again, Kerr could well afford to sacrifice a few informers here and there to the wrath of the IRA's dreaded "security unit" – because his own prize double agent was the head of that security unit. [Codenamed "Stakeknife"](#), Kerr's man presided over, and sometimes administered, the grisly torture-

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murders of up to 50 men during his tenure in the IRA's upper ranks. The victims included other British double agents who were sacrificed in order to protect Stakeknife's cover, as the Guardian and many other UK papers reported when the agent's work was revealed in 2003. ("Stakeknife" was later identified in the press as Alfredo Scappaticci – an Irishman despite the Italian name, although he continues to deny the charge.)

The FRU also "knowingly allowed soldiers, [police] officers and civilians to die at the hands of IRA bombers in order to protect republican double agents," [the Sunday Herald's investigations found](#). As Mackay reports: "FRU sources said around seven police and army personnel died as a result of military intelligence allowing IRA bombs to be placed during Kerr's time in command of the FRU. They estimate that three civilians also died this way, with casualties in the hundreds."

But some of the worst excesses came from the FRU's handling of operatives on the other side, in the fiercely pro-British Protestant militia the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). Here, among the Loyalists, Kerr's top double agent was Brian Nelson, who became head of intelligence for the UDA. [As John Ware put it in the Guardian](#): "Kerr regarded Nelson as his jewel in the crown... For the next three years [from 1987], Nelson colluded with murder gangs to shoot IRA suspects. Month after month, armed and masked men crashed into homes. Sometimes they got the wrong address or shot the wrong person."

Such as Gerald Slane, a 27-year-old Belfast man shot down in front of his three children. A gun had been found dumped on his property; this, and his Catholicism, was enough to get him assassinated at the order of Kerr's man Nelson. Afterwards, it was found that Slane had no IRA connections.

Another "wrong person" killed by the FRU's agents was the Belfast attorney Pat Finucane, who was shot 14 times in front of his wife and children. Finucane was a civil rights activist who had defended both Catholics and Protestants, but was considered an IRA sympathizer by Loyalists – and a thorn in the side by British authorities. He was killed at Nelson's order by a fellow FRU informer in the UDA, Ken Barrett, who was convicted of the murder but freed last year after as part of an amnesty program in the Northern Ireland peace process. Barrett was unapologetic about his FRU "wetwork" on Finucane. "The peelers [authorities] wanted him whacked," [he told a BBC documentary team after his release](#). "We whacked him and that is the end of the story."

Kerr gave Nelson packages of intelligence files to help facilitate the assassination of UDA targets, including at least four "civilians" with no IRA ties, the Stevens inquiry found. The FRU also obtained "restriction orders" from other British security and military units in Northern Ireland, whereby they would pull their forces from an area when Kerr's UDA agents were going to make a hit there, allowing the killers to get in and get out without hindrance, investigator Nick Davies reports.

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Yet the FRU was wary of sharing its own intelligence with other security services – which was the ostensible reason for running the double-agents in the first place. Instead, Kerr engaged in fierce turf wars with other agencies, while "stovepiping" much of his intelligence to the top circles of the UK government, including the cabinet-level Intelligence Committee chaired by then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, when Nelson was finally exposed and brought to trial on five counts of conspiracy to commit murder, Kerr testified in his behalf, noting for the court that Nelson's intelligence "product and his reporting was passed through the intelligence community and at a high level, and from that point of view he has to be considered a very important agent."

As one FRU man told Mackay: "Under Kerr's command...the mindset was one of 'the right people would be allowed to live and wrong people should die.'"

This is the "mindset" now operating in the heart of the Green Zone in Baghdad, where the JSG is carrying out – we are told in glowing terms – precisely the same mission it had in Ulster. a unit which has allowed its agents to torture, murder and commit acts of terrorism, including actions that killed local civilians and the soldiers and intelligence operatives of their own country.

III. The White House Green Light

Of course, Kerr and his Baghdad black-op crew are not alone in the double-dealing world of Iraqi counterinsurgency. The Pentagon's ever-expanding secret armies are deeply enmeshed in such efforts as well. As Sy Hersh has reported ("[The Coming Wars](#)," New Yorker, Jan. 24, 2005), after his re-election in 2004, George W. Bush signed a series of secret presidential directives that authorized the Pentagon to run virtually unrestricted covert operations, including a reprise of the American-backed, American-trained death squads employed by authoritarian regimes in Central and South America during the Reagan Administration, where so many of the Bush faction cut their teeth – and made their bones.

"Do you remember the right-wing execution squads in El Salvador?" a former high-level intelligence official said to Hersh. "We founded them and we financed them. The objective now is to recruit locals in any area we want. And we aren't going to tell Congress about it." A Pentagon insider added: "We're going to be riding with the bad boys." Another role model for the expanded dirty war cited by Pentagon sources, said Hersh, was Britain's brutal repression of the Mau Mau in Kenya during the 1950s, when British forces set up concentration camps, created their own terrorist groups to confuse and discredit the insurgency, and killed thousands of innocent civilians in quashing the uprising.

Bush's formal greenlighting of the death-squad option built upon an already securely-established base,

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part of a larger effort to turn the world into a "global free-fire zone" for covert operatives, as one top Pentagon official told Hersh. For example, in November 2002 [a Pentagon plan to infiltrate terrorist groups](#) and "stimulate" them into action was uncovered by William Arkin, then writing for the Los Angeles Times. The new unit, the "Proactive, Pre-emptive Operations Group," was described in the Pentagon documents as "a super-Intelligence Support Activity" that brings "together CIA and military covert action, information warfare, intelligence and cover and deception."

Later, in August 2004, then deputy Pentagon chief Paul Wolfowitz appeared before Congress to [ask for \\$500 million to arm and train non-governmental "local militias"](#) to serve as U.S. proxies for "counter-insurgency and "counterterrorist" operations in "ungoverned areas" and hot spots around the world, Agence France Presse (and virtually no one else) reported at the time. These hired paramilitaries were to be employed in what Wolfowitz called an "arc of crisis" that just happened to stretch across the oil-bearing lands and strategic pipeline routes of Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and South America.

By then, the Bush Administration had already begun laying the groundwork for an expanded covert war in the hot spot of Iraq. In November 2003, it created a "commando squad" drawn from the sectarian militias of five major Iraqi factions, [as the Washington Post reported that year](#). Armed, funded and trained by the American occupation forces, and supplied with a "state-of-the-art command, control and communications center" from the Pentagon, the [new Iraqi commandos were loosed on the then-nascent Iraqi insurgency](#) – despite the very prescient fears of some U.S. officials "that various Sunni or Shiite factions could eventually use the service to secretly undermine their political competitors," as the Post noted.

And indeed, in early 2005 – not long after Bush's directives loosed the "Salvador Option" on Iraq – the tide of death-squad activity began its [long and bloody rise](#) to the tsunami-like levels we see today.



Ironically, the first big spike of mass torture-murders, chiefly in Sunni areas at the time, [coincided with "Operation Lightning,"](#) a much ballyhooed effort by American and Iraqi forces to "secure" Baghdad. The operation featured a mass influx of extra troops into the capital; dividing the city into manageable sectors, then working through them one by one; imposing hundreds of checkpoints to lock down all insurgent movements; and establishing a 24-hour presence of security and military forces in troubled neighborhoods, the Associated Press

reported in May 2005. In other words, it was almost exactly the same plan now being offered as Bush's "New Way Forward," the controversial "surge."

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But the "Lightning" fizzled in a matter of weeks, and the death squads grew even bolder. Brazen daylight raids by "men dressed in uniforms" of Iraqi police or Iraqi commandos or other Iraqi security agencies swept up dozens of victims at a time. For months, U.S. "advisers" to Iraqi security agencies – including veterans of the original "Salvador Option" – insisted that these were Sunni insurgents in stolen threads, although many of the victims were Sunni civilians. Later, the line was changed: the chief culprits were now "rogue elements" of the various sectarian militias that had "infiltrated" Iraq's institutions.

But as investigative reporter [Max Fuller has pointed out in his detailed examination](#) of information buried in reams of mainstream news stories and public Pentagon documents, the vast majority of atrocities then attributed to "rogue" Shiite and Sunni militias were in fact the work of government-controlled commandos and "special forces," trained by Americans, "advised" by Americans and run largely by former CIA assets. As Fuller puts it: "If there are militias in the Ministry of Interior, you can be sure that they are militias that stand to attention whenever a U.S. colonel enters the room." And perhaps a British lieutenant colonel as well

With the Anglo-American coalition so deeply embedded in dirty war – infiltrating terrorist groups, "stimulating" them into action," protecting "crown jewel" double-agents no matter what the cost, "riding with the bad boys," greenlighting the "Salvador Option" – it is simply impossible to determine the genuine origin of almost any particular terrorist outrage or death squad atrocity in Iraq. All of these operations take place in the shadow world, where terrorists are sometimes government operatives and vice versa, and where security agencies and terrorist groups interpenetrate in murky thickets of collusion and duplicity. This moral chaos leaves "a kind of blot/To mark the full-fraught man and best indued/With some suspicion," as Shakespeare's Henry V says.

What's more, the "intelligence" churned out by this system is inevitably tainted by the self-interest, mixed motives, fear and criminality of those who provide it. The ineffectiveness of this approach can be seen in the ever-increasing, many-sided civil war that is tearing Iraq apart. If these covert operations really are intended to quell the violence, they clearly have had the opposite effect. If they have some other intention, the pious defenders of civilization – who approve these activities with promotions, green lights and unlimited budgets – aren't telling.

This article was first published at Truthout.org

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17048.htm>

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Pentagon "Cracking Down" on "Salvador Option" Death Squads It Created

Kurt Nimmo, Wednesday February 14th 2007, 9:14 pm

How soon we forget, that is if we noticed in the first place.

It was January 14, 2005, when [Michael Hirsh and John Barry](#), writing for Newsweek, told us about the possibility of the Pentagon implementing the so-called "Salvador Option" in Iraq. Following the "model" of the "Salvador Option," dispatching death squads "to hunt down and kill rebel leaders and sympathizers," as was prosecuted under Reagan in El Salvador, "one Pentagon proposal would send Special Forces teams to advise, support and possibly train Iraqi squads, most likely hand-picked Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shiite militiamen, to target Sunni insurgents and their sympathizers, even across the border into Syria, according to military insiders familiar with the discussions."

Hirsh and Barry characterize the neocon version of the "Salvador Option"—more accurately described as the Phoenix program refashioned—as little more than idle chatter bouncing around in the deep recesses of the Pentagon, when in fact this murderous "option" was signed off on back in October, 2004, "in a single paragraph in an 800-page defense authorization bill," according to [Stephen R. Shalom](#), citing Douglas Jehl and Eric Schmitt of the New York Times.

If you read USA Today this morning, you would come away with the impression Iraq's Shi'ites—most notably the politically expedient and oft-demonized Muqtada al-Sadr and his al-Mahdi Army—came up with the idea to hunt down and slaughter Sunni insurgents, supporters, and obviously no small number of innocent bystanders all on their lonesome.

In addition, we are told, al-Sadr's Shi'a followers are attacking U.S. forces in Iraq with IEDs manufactured from Iranian parts. "The new Iraqi-U.S. security plan launched this month focuses on disarming the radical Shiite cleric's Mahdi Army, which the U.S. military accuses of setting roadside bombs, infiltrating government ministries and conducting mass kidnappings and murders. Several Mahdi Army leaders have been arrested in recent weeks," reports USA Today, a rather daffy declaration, as Iraqi Shi'ites "infiltrating" a puppet government consisting primarily of fellow Shi'ites is sort of like Texan farmers infiltrating the Texas Farm Bureau.

Of course, according to the neocons, there are good Shi'ites and bad Shi'ites—the good Shi'ites are part of the Iraqi National Assembly, "elected" by "referendum" held at gunpoint—and now that "civil war" (engineered social and ethnic chaos) has broken out, it is time to send out the cavalry—consisting largely of kids from Nebraska and Appalachia, who thought signing up would get them out of a life of flipping burgers at McDonalds—and take care of the bad guys, most of whom live in teeming Baghdad ghettos.

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Never mind the vast majority of Americans in Iraq are killed by the Sunni resistance, organized by elements of the former Ba'ath party—not al-Sadr, consistently characterized as a miscreant and Iranian puppet dancing on a short string.

Searching Google, one is hard pressed to locate news stories of Shi'ites killing U.S. troops, although there is an appreciable number of articles detailing the slaughter of Shi'ites, most recently when a supposed Shi'a sect was wiped out in Najaf, apparently with an ease akin to shooting fish in a barrel.

As for the “ancient animosities” between Sunni and Shi'a—said to be at the root of the carnage in Iraq, never mind the neocons have methodically reduced the place to an intolerable radioactive ruin—we are told, by none other than the demented columnist and resident Islamophobe over at the CIA's favorite newspaper, [Charles Krauthammer](#), that “Iraqis were given their freedom, and yet many have chosen civil war.”

For the Muslim- and Arab-hating neocons, it is “religious prejudices, ancient wounds, social resentments and tribal antagonisms” at the base of the violence, not the social chaos unleashed on them by the United States. And “who gets the blame for the rivers of blood?” sniffs Krauthammer. “You can always count on some to find the blame in America.”

Damn straight, Charlie—and rightfully so.

Meanwhile, as U.S. troops kick in the doors of Shi'ite homes, “virtually unopposed,” as [Forbes](#) informs us, “in the opening phase of the long-awaited Baghdad security crackdown,” it is said the “anti-U.S. cleric al-Sadr” has “fled to Iran,” according to the [Associated Press](#).

Last month, unable to arrest al-Sadr, “Iraqi forces” settled instead for Sheik Abdul-Hadi al-Darraji, al-Sadr's media director in Baghdad, accusing him “of having ties with the commanders of so-called death squads” (see above), reports the [Associated Press](#). A few weeks later, “Iraqi and U.S. security forces” arrested Deputy Minister Hakim al-Zamili, described as an “al-Sadr loyalist” and the “first, visible big fish,” according to the [Los Angeles Times](#).

It should be noted this “high-level Iraqi official” was connected to the Health Ministry. According to [Ken Silverstein](#), writing for Harper's Magazine, Health Minister Abdul Mutalib Mohammed Ali is associated with Baqir Jabr al-Zubeidi, the former Interior Minister now serving as the Finance Minister, the latter accused of “institutional responsibility for violence committed by the death squads,” and described as “merely the most ruthless of a class of Shiite leaders who have sought to engineer Shiite dominance behind the scenes, at times with direct U.S. sponsorship.” As it turns out, Baqir Jabr al-Zubeidi “ran SCIRI's local office in Syria, where he coordinated relations with other anti-Saddam exile groups” before the invasion. It is common knowledge SCIRI “has a long and stormy relationship with the Pentagon and the CIA,” writes [Maria Tomchick](#).

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Counting on our persistent amnesia, or lack of attention altogether, the Pentagon expects us to believe, as the miscreant Krauthammer expects us to believe, that Iraq's death squads are a homegrown phenomenon, when in fact there is plenty of evidence they are trained and coordinated by the Pentagon. It is not merely happenstance or "ancient animosities" driving the current wave of sectarian slaughter in Iraq. As [Max Fuller](#) reported last November, al-Sadr's al-Mahdi Army has worked closely with Interior Ministry commandos, mostly notably in Balad in October.

Silverstein would have us believe the rise of Shi'a death squads reveals "American blindness, incompetence, and cynicism," when in fact it reveals a concerted effort to destroy the country, with the help of Shi'a militias, apparently including on occasion al-Sadr's faithful, myopically following their own anti-Sunni (or rather anti-Ba'athists) agenda.

The Silence of the Lambs? A Cry to Raise Our Voices!

Proof of US orchestration of Death Squads Killings in Iraq

Testimony of Iraqi torture victim confirms the presence of US personnel at the infamous Jadiriyah bunker

(Max Fuller 09 March 2007)

- **Website:** www.cryingwolf.deconstructingiraq.org.uk

[Note 1: On Sectarianism](#)

[Note 2: On Genocide](#)

Probably everyone remembers the [discovery](#) of the Jadiriyah detention facility in November 2005. US troops were reported to have uncovered the prison in their hunt for a missing person, only to discover some 170 detainees in horrific conditions, many of them clearly the victims of obscene tortures. Although it was admitted that the facility belonged to the interior ministry and that the detainees were held by a secretive interior ministry force known as the Special Investigations Unit, the story was quickly shuffled away as yet another example of the work of Shiite militiamen, in this instance, as was the vogue at that time, the Badr Brigade^[1]. Myriad promises were forthcoming both from the US and Iraqi governments that investigations would be rapidly carried out and better supervision would in future be applied to Iraqi-run detention facilities (for instance the Iraqi government assured the world that a ministerial level investigation would rapidly be carried out, while US officials promised a legal team to go through the detainees' files and a [US embassy spokesman](#) stated that Justice Department and FBI officers would provide technical assistance).



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Of course, given the scale of the abuse (flayings, burnings, drillings etc) and the proximity of the perpetrators to the Iraqi government (by dint of working for the Interior Ministry as well as by any possible Badr-SCIRI links) and to the US occupation which had, after all, established them (as numerous reports have amply documented, eg [Knight Ridder](#), 9 May 2005), such investigations were grossly less than what was urgently required – a full and public criminal investigation by independent international agencies. In the event, even these limited promises came to nothing, as the UN Human Rights Office in Iraq recently [highlighted](#). What we have actually seen is neither investigation nor prosecutions, despite the fact that Jadiriyah lies at the heart of the state of fear that Iraq undeniably now is.

In October last year I had the privilege to interview one of the victims of that terrible abuse, the distinguished former Professor of Pedagogy at Baghdad University Tareq Samarree, who had been seized from his home in March 2005 by plain-clothed interior ministry personnel without charge. Professor Samarree, who provided a horrific first-hand account of the torture that he had suffered as well as details of others who had died and of the disappearance of his son within the Iraqi detention system, never had sight of any hint of judicial process nor any access to the outside world. What made Professor Samarree's story most striking were the details of his release. Professor Samarree's physical condition was so bad when the American soldiers discovered the facility that he, along with around a dozen other detainees, was instantly taken to a local hospital. Here, he and his companions remained without access to lawyers, journalists, officials or even a telephone. In fact, it quickly became clear that these victims of torture were to be returned to Iraqi detention. Professor Samarree, another of whose sons lives in the United States, was fortunate to be able to persuade an American soldier to take pity on him and assist him and two of his companions to escape. The last words the soldier said to Professor Samarree were 'Run, run. Don't look back!'

Within days Professor Samarree had arranged for himself and his family to flee the country. He is now in Europe, where he is claiming political asylum.

The full details of Professor Samarree's story and a detailed account of the US-built Iraqi intelligence apparatus are contained in the article [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#), published by the [BRussells Tribunal](#). It should be noted that the story was offered on the one-year anniversary of discovery of the Jadiriyah facility to a range of mainstream media publications, including New Yorker, New Statesman, the Independent, The Big Issue, as well as to the radical left publication Z Mag. Of them all, only the New Statesmen and Z Mag were courteous enough even to reply to affirm their rejection. It seemed that Professor Samarree's remarkable story and any further interest in Jadiriyah were simply off the agenda.

But Jadiriyah, with its ghosts and its horror, will not go away.

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On 7 February 2007 another former inmate from Jadiriyah, Abbas Z Abid, presented his sworn [testimony](#) at the international peace conference in Kuala Lumpur. Like Professor Samarree's, his description of the torture that he and others underwent is almost too harrowing to bear. What sets his testimony apart and completes our understanding of the grim world of Iraq's secret prisons are the dates of his incarceration. Mr Abid, an electrical engineer from Fallujah who was the Chief Engineer in Baghdad's Science and Technology Ministry, was arrested in August 2005, **but was not released until October 2006**. That means that Mr Abid, like Dr Samarree, was held when the American soldiers raided the facility, but his ordeal did not end there. In fact, not only does Mr Abid describe the ongoing tortures that he was repeatedly subjected **to after the US intervention**, as well as describing the tortures that continued to be inflicted on fellow inmates, including the use of Black and Decker drills and other power tools (Mr Abid names eight fellow detainees who died from their injuries), but Mr Abid states that **'American troops have visited the prison many times** and therefore cannot deny the existence of such a prison'.

The implications of these two testimonies as well as the absence of independent and public scrutiny are obvious. The Occupation has done nothing at all to halt abuse at the Interior Ministry's [network of secret prisons](#) or curtail in any way the culture of impunity in which they exist. And let's be absolutely clear what we are talking about here. **This is as close as we can get to the tide of sectarian violence sweeping Iraq**, whose victims are almost invariably arrested by Interior Ministry personnel, who are then horribly tortured within Interior Ministry prisons and whose bodies finally surface in abandoned lots, are dredged from rivers, are buried in shallow graves in the desert or left as human detritus around sewage works (Former human rights chief in Iraq John Pace stated that the majority of killings were being carried out by groups under the control of the Interior Ministry, [Independent](#), 26 February 2006, while the [Iraqi Organisation for Follow-up and Monitoring](#) in Iraq found that in 92% of some 3498 cases of extrajudicial killing, the victims had been arrested by Interior Ministry forces). Such would undoubtedly have been the final fate of Professor Samarree and Mr Abid's hapless fellow detainees.

Of course the Americans have always been aware of the existence of this and other horrific dungeons within Interior Ministry facilities. How could they not be? They set them up and continue to operate from the same facilities! And for any who would question the validity of Mr Abid's testimony that American forces were regular visitors, his story is confirmed by Solomon Moore writing in the [Los Angeles Times](#) (9 July 2006), who stated that the US military had been at the facility before the November raid! And the same happened in Basra. After it was revealed by the Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price that British trained policemen had [tortured prisoners to death](#) with drills, we discovered, through the [New York Times](#) (!!), that American intelligence officers had been working alongside them at the Jamiyat police station, where they passed on names of suspects knowing that those suspects would end up as the victims of death squads. That is their modus operandi and it is duplicated by British military intelligence units, like the Joint Support Group, who brought their nefarious experience from

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Northern Ireland (where, as Chris Floyd has recently documented, they [orchestrated sectarian murder](#) through the Ulster Defence Association) straight to Iraq. Thus in Basra we find a paramilitary death squad outfit called the Revenge of God (Thar Allah) nurtured and protected by the British, linked to police intelligence and given control of nightly curfews, despite its boasts of killing members of the former state (see [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#) for a more complete account)!

Since the mainstream western media will not hear such voices as Professor Samarree and Mr Abid, it is absolutely beholden on every decently minded individual as well as every organisation that opposes the illegal occupation of Iraq to demand the truth and bring an end to this monstrous culture of impunity. Jean Paul Sartre noted that the American assault on Vietnam was not only an attack against that nation, but an act of violence directed against the whole of humanity. If we are to have any hope of rescuing our own collective humanity, we must raise our voices to bring an end to the screaming from Iraq.

Two important notes

Note 1: On Sectarianism

The cherished western mainstream media notion, undoubtedly nurtured by false flag covert warfare and so-called psyops, that Iraq has fragmented into a state of intercommunal sectarian civil war is the biggest single impediment to understanding the role of the Anglo-US Occupation in the thousands upon thousands of extrajudicial killings taking place in Iraq.

The testimonies of Professor Samarree and Mr Abid shed some further light on just how far we can see sectarianism as a factor in Iraq's violence. Both accounts describe hearing a language that they believe to be Farsi, as well as, variously, images of Shiite saints and mobile ring tones with Iranian songs. Dr Samarree even states with a high degree of confidence that the head of the Badr Organisation, Hadi al-Amery, attended one of his interrogation sessions.^[iii]

There is no reason to doubt their testimonies. In fact, as newspapers have [revealed](#), and I have documented on multiple occasions, the Badr Brigade/Organisation was among the major political parties in exile from whom the CIA recruited the core of the new intelligence apparatus, an organisation which started out with the innocuous title of the Collection Management and Analysis Directorate (CMAD), a title which masked the fact that in reality it was producing what amounted to death lists to be targeted by its paramilitary wing in conjunction with US (and UK) special forces (See [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#) for a detailed discussion).

That such parties are running at least some of the worst detention facilities (others are undoubtedly run by Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq) is therefore not surprising and of course their members at every level of responsibility should face justice. But more instructive are their demonstrable links with

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the Occupation, which I have sought to document. It is this intellectual authorship of extrajudicial killing that the Western anti-occupation movement needs to focus on. If the torturers and killers in Jadiriyah were indeed taking their instruction from Iran, as some would hold, then they not only need to prove that, but in the face of concrete evidence that such forces work in close conjunction with the US (see also [Diyala: a Laboratory of Civil War?](#)), they also need to prove that the US state is working hand in hand with the Iranian state.

In fact, as Kurt Nimmo has highlighted, we know that the Iranian state is being stitched up in Iraq [over fabricated charges](#) of supplying weapons to Shiite groups. As anyone who remembers anything about similar US charges in other theatres of war (such as the [Nicaraguan Migs](#), the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#) etc etc) will remember, they were all made up! As modern military theorists hold, the major part of contemporary warfare is informational - or better stated, disinformational.

Note 2: On Genocide

The distinguished dissident academic Edward Herman, recently wrote a paper entitled [Iraq: the Genocide Option](#) in which he argued that the US war in Iraq threatened to become genocidal. He was quite right to point to genocide. With credible figures of [over one million Iraqi casualties](#), another three to four million displaced internally and externally, the total collapse of civic infrastructure and the imminent threat of political disintegration, there must already be a very real question as to whether Iraq continues to exist as a viable nation. To fully substantiate the charge, the only question technically remains establishing intent, although I believe that too is perfectly possible when we consider the statements on partition made by the likes of Leslie Gelb (New York Times [25 November 2003](#), [1 May 2006](#)).

To make his argument, Herman drew upon two analogies: El Salvador and Vietnam. Whilst explicitly acknowledging the existence of the so-called Salvador Option in Iraq, Herman's argument was that genocide had occurred in Vietnam though the direct application of US force with its implementation of weapons of massive destruction, whereas, in El Salvador, where the US had had to resort to more lightly equipped proxy armies, only mass murder had occurred, which he compared with the Phoenix Programme in Vietnam. With the greatest respect, however, I believe that Herman is understating the terrible impact of the Phoenix Programme, the brutal US-sponsored war in El Salvador and the ongoing Salvador Option in Iraq.

First of all, Herman compares El Salvador's estimated death toll of some 100,000 (which Noam Chomsky describes as the crucifixion of the country) with the several (commonly around three) million estimated victims in Vietnam. Whilst one should not doubt the scale of the horror brought to Vietnam and its tragic ongoing legacy, it should be pointed out that to compare these figures is somewhat misleading. El Salvador has a population of some five million, compared to around 10 times as many

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in Vietnam. Thus it would not be unreasonable to suggest that had El Salvador's Salvador Option been carried out in a country as populous as Vietnam, the direct casualties would have totalled around one million, bringing it instantly into the same order of magnitude as Vietnam. In fact, something very much like this under US auspices did take place in Indonesia. Thus, we can see that with an arsenal of much lighter weapons, including a plentiful array of improvised torture devices, a multitude of human lives can be extinguished. In El Salvador this slaughter was [meticulously organised](#) by the US through the training and provision of its armed forces, through control of its intelligence departments and through strategically placed advisors at every level of the Salvadoran Armed Forces.

And the results of the US war in El Salvador were the economic subjugation of the country, including dollarisation, with an uncounted human toll in terms of blocked social reform and the entrenchment of poverty. In the sense that the hopes and dreams of emancipation from economic slavery of the poor majority were drowned in rivers of blood, this too was a genocide.

It also seems unduly dismissive to describe the Phoenix Program as only accounting for the deaths of around 40,000 Vietnamese. The point of the Phoenix Programme was that it was a systematic campaign of targeted killing in South Vietnam designed to destroy the leadership of the resistance movements (including the leaders of the unarmed social resistance) and terrorise the population into obedience (as in El Salvador). As such it formed an important tactical contribution to what amounted to a genocidal attack against the Vietnamese, whose aim was to extinguish that people's hope of national development. Nor should the value of the eventual exposure of the Phoenix Program be regarded as insignificant. The effect of this exposure was to give the necessary impetus to closing down the Office of Public Safety (*Supplying Repression*, Institute for Policy Studies, 1981), whose various programmes contributed to the implementation of repressive security apparatuses around the world and certainly added to growing pressure for US withdrawal from Vietnam. We will never know what effect its earlier exposure might have had if more people had been prepared to break the silence.

In his address to the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Vietnam, Jean Paul Sartre specifically addressed the question of genocide. Sartre argued that the US could conduct genocide in Vietnam not because it had the means, but because its lack of significant economic interests meant that there was nothing to lose and the salutary effect of this lesson in apocalypse would not be lost on other nations bidding for independence.

In Iraq (with its much smaller population) the US has already matched in scale the violence perpetrated on Vietnam and the war goes on, although there is little indication that it has given up its economic interests. Undoubtedly a very great part of this violence is conducted directly by US forces (the extremely credible [Lancet study](#) suggests from 30-40%), but, despite surges, that proportion appears to be falling. That leaves perhaps as many as 500,000 violent deaths unattributed to Coalition military action. Herman states that some of these would belong to the Salvador Option, while the bulk

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of the others would fall into the pattern that he explicitly describes as large-scale communal civil war manipulated by the US. I think it is vital that we all remember that this inter-communal sectarian warfare [still consists](#) of anonymous bombs that target the Shia and which most Iraqis for good reason believe are the work of the occupation and sectarian killings of Sunnis by members of the security forces – along with academics, engineers, lawyers, trade unionists, imams, doctors, teachers and other state functionaries by paramilitary forces operating from the Ministry of the Interior^[ii]. This is indeed the application of the Salvador Option and it contributes an essential part of the ongoing genocide in Iraq.

^[ii] The charge that the Badr Brigade was responsible for most of acts of sectarian violence through its alleged infiltration of the Interior Ministry Police Commandos was [revised almost overnight](#) following the bombing of the Samarra Mosque in February 2006. From that moment on the majority of complaints against Shiite militiamen were levelled against the so-called Mehdi Army associated with Muqtada al Sadr. No explanation has ever been provided as to how such a switch could have come about, especially perplexing given that it was [explicitly clear](#) that police units were the primary culprits prior to Samarra.

^[iii] The very fact that Mr Abid is able to describe the special attention given to Sunni detainees demonstrates that there were Shiites among the detainees, a fact commonly glossed over. In addition, Mr Abid was neither detained by the Badr Brigade nor the Mehdi Army but by US and Iraqi forces (the Muthana Brigade, which, despite reported reverence for Muqtada al Sadr, continues to host US advisors), before being handed over to the Special Investigation Unit.

^[iiii] In each of the high profile accounts of supposed sectarian attacks and massacres that have taken place within the last year a detailed examination of the evidence demonstrates that the violence specifically occurred within the context of security operations and/or directly under the noses of Occupation forces. Examples include Operation Knockout in [Baquba](#), the assault on the [Adhamiya](#) district of Baghdad, the massacre in the [Jihad](#) district of Baghdad, the massacre in [Balad](#) and the mass abduction from the [Ministry of Education](#).

<http://www.brusselstribunal.org/FullerKillings.htm>

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Former collaborator discloses details of US-ordered assassinations, sectarian bomb attacks targeting Iraqi civilians

Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI)

May 11, 2006

An Iraqi who asked not to be identified had disclosed some of the US activities such as assassinations and bombings in markets that aim at sparking sectarian fighting among Iraqis so as to facilitate the partition of the country.

He pointed out that he that he worked with the US occupation troops for about two and a half years and then was able to flee from them to an area outside Baghdad where, he hopes, the Americans will not be able to get to him.

The former Iraqi collaborator recalled: "I was a soldier in the Iraqi army in the war of 1991 and during the withdrawal from Kuwait I decided to seek asylum in Saudi Arabia along with dozens of others like me. That was how began the process whereby I was recruited into the American forces, for there were US military committees that chose a number of Iraqis who were willing to volunteer to join them and be transported to America. I was one of those," he said.

The former collaborator went on: "In 1992 I was taken to America, specifically to an island where most of the establishments were military. I was with a number of other Iraqis, one of them the former governor of an-Najaf, 'Adnan adh-Dharfi. We received military training and intense courses in English and in how to carry out tasks like assassination," he recounted.

The former collaborator said that during the 2003 invasion and subsequent war, he was transported back to the interior of Iraq to carry out specific tasks assigned him by the US agencies.

"During the last war that led to the occupation of Iraq," he recalled, "I was with a group of my comrades who had received training in America in how to spread chaos in the ranks of the Iraqi army. We were brought into Iraq across the border from Saudi Arabia. We put on Iraqi army uniforms and our mission was basically to spread rumors among the Iraqis, such as that the American army had already got into such-and-such a city, or that it is on the outskirts of Baghdad and other such things, which were part of the reason for the rapid collapse of the Iraqi forces," he said.

The former collaborator went on: "the unit that I was with settled in the presidential palace in the al-A'zamiyah district. We were allowed to visit our relatives and relations in Baghdad once a month, and so I would go visit my family in 'Madinat as-Sadr' in eastern Baghdad. But after things began to get

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worse and the armed men began to shot at everyone leaving the palace, I asked my family to come to the palace every now and then so I could see them. My job was being a guard, but after a time that situation changed and the American occupation forces put me in charge of a group of a unit that carried out assassinations in the streets of Baghdad," he said.

"Our task was to carry out assassinations of individuals. The US occupation army would supply us with their names, pictures, and maps of their daily movements to and from their place of residence and we were supposed to kill the Shi'i, for example, in the al-A'zamiyah, and kill the Sunni in the of 'Madinat as-Sadr', and so on."

"Anyone in the unit who made a mistake was killed. Three members of my team were killed by US occupation forces after they failed to assassinate Sunni political figures in Baghdad. A US force that had been so-ordered eliminated them. That took place two years ago," the former collaborator recalled.

The former collaborator said that the Americans have a unit for "dirty jobs." That unit is a mix of Iraqis, Americans, and foreigners and of the security detachments that are deployed in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. This unit doesn't only carry out assassinations, but some of them specialize in planting bombs and car bombs in neighborhoods and markets. This unit carries out operations in which wanted people whom the American army does not want killed are arrested.

The former collaborator said that "operations of planting car bombs and blowing up explosives in markets are carried out in various ways, the best-known and most famous among the US troops is placing a bomb inside cars as they are being searched at checkpoints. Another way is to put bombs in the cars during interrogations. After the desired person is summoned to one of the US bases, a bomb is place in his car and he is asked to drive to a police station or a marked for some purpose and there his car blows up."

The testimony of the former collaborator is consistent with some western reports that have disclosed the involvement of US military personnel in bombings that target Iraqi civilians. The British reporter Robert Fisk, AMSI noted, had recently met with Iraqis in Syria concerning such "black operations" carried out by the Americans.

The Egyptian writer and former editor of al-Ahram, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, also noted in an interview with al-Jazeera satellite TV that there are mercenaries who practically make up an army second only to the regular US army in Iraq in terms of their numbers and equipment. This force is now called the "Knights of Malta" Haykal said, and they are the cause of many of the attacks that target Iraqi civilians. Haykal noted that there are Iraqis and Lebanese working in the ranks of that force.

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Saving Al Qaeda: Collective Punishment and Curious Policy in the "Surge"

Written by Chris Floyd Wednesday, 11 July 2007

The Bush Administration's hideously named military offensive in Iraq's Diyala province ("Arrowhead Ripper" -- there's a real hearts-and-minds moniker for you) is having the same effect we've seen in all the other many pushes and surges and crackdowns during the botched conquest: killing innocent people, alienating the locals, strengthening the insurgency -- and allowing the ostensible targets of the operation to escape long before the action begins.

Arrowhead Ripper has been tearing through Diyala's capital city, Baquba, since June 18, [Inter Press Service reports](#). The announced goal of the operation is to cleanse the area of "al Qaeda terrorists" -- the term of art now given to anyone who's not down with the Bushist program. Or who just *looks* like they might not be down with the program. Or who just happens to be lying in their bed when Apache helicopters come calling on the village. But just as in [the destruction of Fallujah](#) in late November 2004 -- a vast human sacrifice offered to the gods in gratitude for the Leader's re-election -- the long, noisy PR build-up to the Diyala operation gave the leaders of the "al Qaeda associated groups" plenty of time to melt away into the night, safe and sound to fight another day. Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of U.S ground forces, admitted cheerfully that 80 percent of what he called upper-level al Qaeda leaders fled before the attacks began, [the Air Force Times reported](#) on June 22.

From Fallujah, the curiously untouched "al Qaeda" leaders -- including the one-time Bushist bogeyman, [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#) -- spread mayhem elsewhere while American forces were attacking hospitals, raining chemical weapons on residential areas, and driving 300,000 people from their homes in the city. In similar fashion, the curiously untouched terrorist leaders from Diyala are obviously [raising murderous hell elsewhere](#) -- perhaps in previously peaceful Amerli, [where more than 150 people were killed last week](#) in one of the worst terror bombings of the war. (Terror bombings by the asymmetricals, that is; the state terror bombings that began with the first shock-and-awe "decapitation raids" and continue to this day have of course killed far more Iraqis.)

Arrowhead Ripper is being presented in the American press as an unalloyed success. Taking their lead from the New York Times and other bastions of the corporate media, newspapers and TV stations across the United States are carrying reports of the number of "al Qaeda" fighters killed in the province. The operation has been extensively extolled by Republicans in Congress, warbloggers and other abettors of aggressive war as proof that the "surge" is finally starting to work.

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But the people of Baquba have a different view, as IPS reports. Reporter Ali al-Fadhily (the Baghdad-based partner of correspondent Dahr Jamail) has taken a novel approach to covering the offensive; instead of sitting in the Green Zone with Michael Gordon taking dictation from White House aides turned Pentagon flacks, al-Fadhily actually went to Baquba and talked to the people there. What he found was vast destruction, numerous civilian fatalities (up to 350, say members of the American-backed Iraqi government) -- and, as in Fallujah, the war crime of collective punishment being carried out against Sunni civilians, with an inevitable rise in support for armed resistance to the occupation. Some excerpts:

Ongoing U.S. military operations in Diyala province have brought normal life to an end and fueled support for the national resistance. Baquba, 30 mi. northeast of Baghdad, and capital city of the volatile Diyala province, has born the brunt of violence during the U.S. military Operation Arrowhead Ripper. Conflicting reports are on offer on the number of houses destroyed and numbers of civilians killed, but everyone agrees that the destruction is vast and the casualties numerous...

The operation was launched June 18 "to destroy the al-Qaeda influences in this province and eliminate their threat against the people," according to Brig. Gen. Mick Bednarek, deputy commanding officer of the 25th Infantry Division. But most Iraqis IPS interviewed in the area say the operation seeks more to break the national Iraqi resistance and those who support it. Adding credibility to this belief is the fact that the U.S. operational commander of troops involved in the operation told reporters June 22 that 80 percent of the top al-Qaeda leaders in Baquba fled before the offensive began.

"Americans want Sunni people to leave Diyala or else they face death," Salman Shakir from the Gatoon district in Baquba told IPS outside the U.S. military cordon around the besieged city. "They warned al-Qaeda days or maybe weeks before they attacked the province and so only us, the citizens, stayed to face the massacre." Shakir said many of his relatives and neighbors were killed by the military while attempting to leave the area. "I cannot tell you how many people were killed, but bodies of civilians were left in the streets."

"We all know now that the U.S. military is using the name of al-Qaeda to cover attacks against our national resistance fighters and civilians who wish immediate or scheduled withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq," Hilmi Saed, an Iraqi journalist from Baghdad, told IPS on the outskirts of Baquba.

The Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni political group in the Iraqi cabinet, issued a statement July 1 alleging that more than 350 people had been killed in the U.S. military operation in Baquba. The group called the operation "collective punishment" and said "neighborhoods in western Baquba have witnessed, since last week, fierce attacks by occupation forces within Operation Arrowhead Ripper." The statement added, "The forces shelled these neighborhoods with helicopters, destroying more than 150 houses and killing more than 350 citizens. Their bodies are still under the wreckage. And they have

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arrested scores of citizens."

...Animosity towards the United States appears to be rising throughout the area as a result of the military action. "Americans are pushing us to the corner of extremity by these massive crimes," Abbas al-Zaydi, a teacher from Baquba told IPS. "They simply want us to sell cheap our religion, history, tradition, and faith, or else they would call us terrorists."

Al-Zaydi added, "My son was not a fighter, but he was killed by a militia leader who is at the same time an Iraqi army division commander. Our great fault is only that we are Sunnis, and Americans do not like that."

"It is clear now that any Iraqi who refuses to serve the American plan is considered an enemy of the United States," a community leader in the city who did not want to give his name told IPS.

There is nothing unusual about this story. As already noted, it could have been written after Fallujah or any of the other "offensives" and "new strategies" and "security pushes" we have seen during the war: Blunderbuss attacks. Innocent victims. Iraqi anger. Bitterness and radicalization. The knowingly mendacious conflation of all insurgents with "al Qaeda." And the loud, cumbersome preparations that give the honchos of violence plenty of time to get away, leaving behind only the scrubs -- and the civilians -- to take the blow.

A cynic might be forgiven for believing that at this point, the Bush Administration is happy to have an amorphous mass of violent groups out there, just beyond reach, able to keep the country in constant turmoil -- a turmoil which requires the continued presence of American forces to keep it from worsening, as Bush and his Iraqi capos have been stressing this week. It is certainly an open fact that the United States has begun giving weapons to an alarming array of groups in recent months, some of which have been involved in the insurgency, and all of them beyond direct U.S. control. ([This is an extension of earlier, more secret American moves](#) to arm and train various sectarian and freebooting militias to operate on "sort of the dark side, if you will," [to quote Dick Cheney](#).)

No one pursuing a rational strategy of containing violence in Iraq would adopt such a policy. That leaves us with two basic choices. Either the Bush Administration is pursuing a rational strategy whose true aims are not the ones given publicly for the surge; or else the Bushists have come to believe their own lies about al Qaeda's "central" role in the insurgency.

The latter could well be true. The shallow intellects who have driven the entire project of aggressive war in Iraq are certainly stupid enough to fall for their own bullshit (if we may resort to the vernacular) -- just as Adolf Hitler and his most fanatical followers adamantly refused to recognize the ultimate ruin

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of their aggression in the streets of Stalingrad and on the beaches of Normandy. People in power are especially prone to self-delusion -- especially when they are slavishly fawned upon by their toadies and kept well away from any of the hideous consequences of their actions, as people in power usually are. If you add to this the almost pathologically willful ignorance of George W. Bush, and the pathetically derivative, historically uninformed, inch-deep "philosophies" of the neo-cons and their outriders, you have near-perfect conditions for self-delusion on a Neronian scale.

But we must remember that the most consistent war aim of the aggressors has been the establishment of a permanent military presence in Iraq. The aim was to secure control of a major oil source in the Middle East -- a "prize" that Dick Cheney, then head of Halliburton, limned in a talk [at the Institute of Petroleum in 1999](#):

"While many regions offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East, with two-thirds of the world's oil and the lowest costs, is still where the prize ultimately lies."

The implantation of a military garrison to secure this ultimate prize has been the aggressors' openly stated goal for many years, long before they took power, [as we have often noted here before](#). A succinct description of their thinking can be found in [John Gray's important new book](#), *Black Mass*:

"Among the geopolitical objectives advanced by the neo-conservatives was the argument that the US must decouple from Saudi Arabia, which they viewed as complicit in terrorism. If it was to disengage in this way, the US needed another secure source of oil in the Gulf, and another platform for military bases. Iraq seemed to fit these requirements. By controlling a crucial part of the Gulf's oil reserves, the US could detach itself from an ally it no longer trusted. At the same time, it could ensure that it remained the dominant power in the region, with the capacity to limit the incursions of China, India and other energy-hungry states."

Gray goes on to note, correctly, that this was "always an incredible scenario," a utopian fantasy:

"The notion that post-Saddam Iraq would accept the transfer of its oil reserves into American hands was anyhow delusional. Why should a democratic Iraq -- if that had been possible -- accept the expropriation of its resource base?"



Why indeed? No self-respecting, sovereign Iraqi government would do such a thing. In fact, only a

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gang of cowed collaborators kept in power solely through the presence of American troops would ever accept such an expropriation.

Which brings us around to a "rational" basis for a strategy of fomenting violence in Iraq. The Bushists may well have been sincerely self-deluded in their belief that they could grab Iraq's oil on the cheap, plant bases all over the country, stick a strongman on the throne, and be thanked by the Iraqis for it. But they have learned their lesson now. They know the only chance they have left of accomplishing their war aims -- the bases, the "Oil Law" -- lies in keeping those cowed, weak, deeply unpopular collaborators in office. Unbridled violence aids this objective, for it "justifies" the continuing presence of the American military -- which is the sole prop for the only kind of regime that would give away the nation's oil and accept foreign bases on its soil.

If this is indeed the "reasoning" behind the otherwise inexplicable policy of embittering the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people while arming violent groups and letting terrorist chieftains roam free, then this too is ultimately a delusion. In the end, sooner or later, the Iraqis will kick the Americans out of their country. There will be no bases, no "Oil Law" written by Washington lobbyists. The Bushists' war of aggression has come to ruin just as Hitler's did. The only question is how much more blood and treasure these rabid dead-enders will waste before their inevitable defeat. ***
