



Center for Strategic and International Studies

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy

1800 K Street, N.W. • Suite 400 • Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 1 (202) 775-3270 • Fax: 1 (202) 457-8746

Web: www.csis.org/burke

Progress in Iraq

The December Report on Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq

Anthony H. Cordesman

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy

acordesman@gmail.com

Working Draft, Revised: December 20, 2007

Please note that this document is a working draft and will be revised regularly. To comment, or to provide suggestions and corrections, please e-mail the author at acordesman@gmail.com.

Progress in Iraq: The December Report on *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*

Anthony H. Cordesman

One can argue the level of progress over the last year, and the situation in Iraq is certainly free of risk. There are, however, strong indicators that the glass has gone from one that was mostly empty to one that is at least half full. The latest Department of Defense report on *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq* documents much of this progress, although it scarcely describes a stable or secure Iraq and it indicates that the Iraq War still presents a high risk of failure.

The Conditions for Turning Progress into “Victory”

The report is not a strategy or plan for the future, and it continues to present events in a favorable light – although a detailed reading of the text reveals a steady growth in depth and objectivity. The report does, however, provide a definition of victory that seems increasingly achievable: “The strategic goal of the United States in Iraq remains a unified, democratic and federal Iraq that can govern, defend and sustain itself and is an ally in the war on terror.”

In practice, progress in each area of this definition of victory will probably be more limited than had many hoped in going to war. Moreover, while the report does not say so, success almost certainly requires sustained support from the US. Iraq’s role as an “ally in the war on terror” may also consist largely of denying international extremist groups any form of sanctuary on its territory. Nevertheless, creating a relatively stable Iraq is a key strategic goal for the US in a region that dominates the world’s oil reserves and oil exports, and is a goal that seemed far less possible at the beginning of the year.

There also are five areas where further progress will be necessary if the US can achieve its strategic goals, if success is possible at all, and each defines an area requiring years of sustained US effort:

- *US time, patience, and resources*: The US needs to maintain a strategic relationship with Iraq that provides stable support for Iraqi security, accommodation, economic development, and the creation of effective governance over a period of at least three to five more years. This does not mean maintaining current US force and aid levels, or not making US support conditional on a realistic level of Iraqi progress. It does mean understanding that 2008 cannot be a decisive year in building stable accommodation, only a beginning. It means the US must not rush its force levels down to meet deadlines that ignore Iraqi security conditions, and it means sustained aid to Iraq in building its forces, governance, and economy. It also means that the US must forge some new consensus around a mid-term action plan for Iraq to carry it through a divisive election year and which can be sustained by the new Administration that comes to office in 2009.

- *Iraq political accommodation at the national, regional, and federal level:* As the December report notes, progress is still slow in dealing with sectarian and ethnic divisions, and regional divisions within key sectarian and ethnic groups. Consolidating gains against Al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), as well as any lasting form of stability, requires accommodation between Iraqi Sunnis and Iraqi Shi'ites. Stability and security require accommodation between Arab, Kurds, and other minorities. Shi'ite-on-Shi'ite power struggles remain an equally important threat, as does the lack of any coherent power structure among Arab Sunnis and the various tensions between them. Intra-Kurdish tensions, Kurdish nationalism, and links to the PKK remain a threat as does potential regionalism such as creating a limited Shi'ite federal enclave in the south. Major progress is both possible and necessary in 2008. Actually achieving more comprehensive and stable accommodation will probably have to be worked out over the next President's term of office.
- *Creating effective Iraqi governance and services:* Iraq governance remains weak at every level and ineffective at many. There is no agreement on a political structure that can lead to the creation of effective local and provincial governments, define Kurdish autonomy and the form federalism will take, or shape the tangible political structure of accommodation and differences in governance by major sect and ethnic group and in mixed areas. This process will take at least several years to develop and reach some level of stability.
- *Creating effective Iraqi security forces:* The December report reflects real progress, but it is a level of progress in the Iraqi Army that indicates it will take at least through 2009 to achieve some of the goals set for 2008. The report's coverage of the police and other security forces is partial at best. The report does not address the fact that it will take additional years to create Iraqi military forces capable of defending Iraq. The data on progress in creating an effective mix of National police, local police, facilities protection forces, and the security elements of "Concerned Local Citizens" seem to reflect the devolution of the police from a nationally trained and equipped force to a locally and regionally dominated mix of police and local security forces with strong sectarian, tribal, and ethnic elements. Equally important, the report continues to describe progress in creating a rule of law in broad, national terms, without describing the problems in creating effective courts, jails, and the other instruments of law and criminal justice at the local and regional level. It is unclear that real progress can be made in these areas before far more progress is made in accommodation, and it may well be three to five more years before a reasonably stable mix of police, courts, and a heavily "federalized" rule of law can emerge.
- *Broadening the base of economic development:* Most of the economic progress described in the report seems more illusory than real. Gains in oil revenues, massive wartime and aid spending, and recovering from an extremely low base may produce the appearance of macroeconomic progress, but macroeconomics

are likely to prove irrelevant until there is far more rapid job creation, and economic growth reaches broad levels of income distribution throughout the country, including the areas with serious violence or sectarian and ethnic tensions. Iraq is not an exercise in classic economic development. It is a challenge in terms of using dollars to replace bullets at the local level and in ways that affect unemployed or poor Iraqis, especially young men.

Key Areas of Concern

It seems unfair to criticize the report for presenting a favorable view of many risks and issues. It does so more objectively than in the past, and it is a document issued by a government at war. The detailed content of the report is also considerably more objective in highlighting problems and risks than the executive summary, and focusing on the most political part of the document is no way to judge its overall content.

There are, however, several areas that deserve special attention. Some are positive, but others highlight the need for US time, patience, and resources, and for a US effort that can be sustained in an election year and into the next Presidency.

The Meaning of the Declaration of Principles for Long-Term Relations of Cooperation and Friendship Signed on November 26, 2007

This document implies a sustained US effort to support Iraq, but no plans or details are provided in the report or were announced at the time of the declaration. The US mission is developing a Joint Campaign Plan, and this may set out clear plans, programs, and funding needs. So far, however, there are no public details on a major implied commitment well into the future, and one absolutely critical to success.

Moves Towards Accommodation

The Summary focuses on the positive (p. iv): “While the GoI’s lack of progress on key legislation has been disappointing and has hindered “top-down” reconciliation, “bottom-up” reconciliation initiatives gained momentum as tribal and local outreach efforts expanded during this quarter. The Council of Representatives (CoR) passed an important pensions law, which has been signed by the Presidency Council, and some legislative progress has been made on the de-Ba’athification law (now known as the Accountability and Justice Law), which received two readings in the CoR. In addition, Iraq and the United States signed a Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relations of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America on November 26, 2007, which establishes a framework for continued bilateral cooperation. Following this, the GoI signed the United Nations Security Council Resolution renewal letter, which is consistent with the road map laid out in the Declaration of Principles.”

The main text, however, makes it clear that there are no timelines for tangible action to either legislate major progress towards accommodation *or to actually implement it.* (pp. 1-3) The report also provides a better analysis of both regional tensions and local perceptions

of security than past reports (pp. 21-26). It notes the failure to move forward in Arab Sunni and Arab Shi'ite accommodation, but does not set forth the issues or prospects for detailed success. Deferring a vote on the Arab-Kurdish issue may have help avoid near-term problems but is scarcely a solution. The level of internal Shi'ite tension nationally and in the south is analyzed, but the Hakim-Sadr tensions are understated. The fragile nature of security in the greater Baghdad area, and its dependence on US forces and embeds is not really addressed in any depth, nor are the dynamics in mixed provinces like Salah ad Din, Ninewa, and Diyala (p. 22). There is little analysis of displacements (four million plus out of 27 million Iraqis).

On the positive side, the level of progress at the local and regional level has been significant, although it is not addressed in any detail. The fact remains, however, that the report does not address key problems and risks in sufficient depth, and focuses almost exclusively on legal action by the Central Government rather than the process of actually implementing accommodation once such legislation is passed. There also remains a strikingly unrealistic contrast between the regional tensions described in the report, and the data on provincial security transition assessment. The provinces shown on p. 27 as "transitioned" or "ready for transition" are all either under the de facto control of the Kurdish Pesh Merga or competing Shi'ite factions in the south, and not transitioned to real world ISF responsibility or central government control. This highlights a critical apparent gap between the plans for accommodation and the plans for developing the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

Sustaining the Tribal Awakening

The report notes that (p. iv), "The "tribal awakening" movement has grown as an increasing number of sheikhs—Sunni and Shi'a—have chosen to stop resisting the Coalition. They are instead working together with the GoI and the Coalition, including with Provincial Reconstruction Teams, to improve security and economic conditions at the local level. "Concerned Local Citizen" (CLC) programs have been established through which members of communities work with Coalition and Iraqi forces to protect their neighborhoods and critical infrastructure, with greater than 75% under U.S.-funded contracts. This program enhances the ability of Coalition and Iraqi forces to interact with local residents and obtain information on insurgents and illegal militia activity. The CLC movement is proving crucial to the counterinsurgency effort and will require continued support. Efforts to transition these CLC personnel to regular positions in the army or police or to provide other employment opportunities are underway but these efforts are moving slowly. The pace of integrating the CLC members into GoI institutions, lack of alternative employment and fears by the Maliki government that these forces may return to violence or form new militias are of concern."

This is a critical risk area for 2008. The planned cuts in US forces make any sustained success even more dependent on the unplanned Sunni uprising against Al Qa'ida that has been the real key to the successes of the last several months.

Iraq's Neighbors

The report talks about the Iraq Expanded Neighbors Conference in positive terms (p. iv, 5-7), but the detailed sections on Iran, Syria, and Turkey -- and the lack of major aid

and support efforts from Gulf states -- highlight the fact Iraq faces sustained risks from its neighbors and the need for security and aid efforts that will eventually give Iraq a self-defense capability. International dialogue certainly may help, and can do no harm. It is clear, however, that until such dialogue produces far more positive results, a sustained US effort will be needed to limit outside pressure and threats.

The Economy

As noted earlier, one of the weakest aspects of the report is the use of macroeconomic data. It is meaningless to talk about a 6.3% level of GNP growth, and a \$60.9 billion GNP, without an analysis of the factors driving it and its impact on stability and security, particularly income distribution. (pp. 9-15)

Talk about reducing inflation from year-on-year levels of 52.8% in October 2006 to 20.4% in October 2007 is a much more real accomplishment – but even low levels of inflation can have a major impact where local incomes, credit, and employment are low and be another factor limiting marriage and youth stability.

Once again, the economic summary talks about increases in exports, electricity generation, etc. with no analysis of the ability to distribute wealth and services in stabilizing ways. Quoting the Iraqi Government's Central Statistics Organization as estimating that unemployment is 17.6%, and underemployment is another 38.1%, is warning enough, particularly given the tendency of the GoI to report bad news, and the fact that, "the rate could be much higher for some provinces." (p. 9) and US aid for unemployment is dropping.

The lack of effective progress in rehabilitating and expanding petroleum production is largely ignored (pp. 10-11), despite this being the source of some 95% of the Iraqi government's funds, and Iraq's major source of income. The DOE/EIA country report on Iraqi petroleum development issued in August 2007 summarizes the challenge as follows:

Experts agree that Iraq may be one of the few places left where vast reserves, known and unknown, have barely been exploited.

After more than a decade of sanctions and two Gulf Wars, Iraq's oil infrastructure needs modernization and investment. Despite a large reconstruction effort (including Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) support of \$1.72 billion), the industry has not been able to meet hydrocarbon production and export targets since 2004. According to the January 2007, Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) report, Iraq's petroleum sector faces technical challenges in procuring, transporting and storing crude and refined products, as well as managing pricing controls and imports, fighting smuggling and corruption, improving budget execution, and managing sustainability of operations. Oil production has not recovered to pre-war levels, and parliament and cabinet officials are working to map out investment and ownership rights that will help move the industry forward.

Another challenge to Iraq's development of the oil sector is that resources are not evenly divided across sectarian-demographic lines. Most known hydrocarbon resources are concentrated in the Shiite areas of the south and the ethnically Kurdish north, with few resources in control of the Sunni minority...For this reason a legal framework for investment in the hydrocarbon sector remains a main policy objective. According to reports by various U.S. government agencies, multilateral

institutions and other international organizations, long-term Iraq reconstruction costs could reach \$100-billion or higher, of which it is estimated that more than a third will go to the oil, gas and electricity sectors. In addition, the World Bank estimates that at least \$1 billion in additional revenues needs to be committed annually to the oil industry just to sustain current production.

...According to the Oil and Gas Journal, Iraq's proven oil reserves are 115 billion barrels, although these statistics have not been revised since 2001 and are largely based on 2-D seismic data from nearly three decades ago. Over the past two years, multinational companies, at the request of the Government of Iraq (GoI), have reexamined seismic data and conducted comprehensive surveys of Iraq's hydrocarbons reserves in locations throughout the country. Geologists and consultants have estimated that relatively unexplored territory in the western and southern deserts may contain an estimated additional 45 to 100 billion barrels (bbls) of recoverable oil. While internal Iraqi estimates have ranged into the hundreds of billions of barrels of additional oil, the seismic data under review by a host of international firms seem to be pointing to more conservative, but significant, increases. Iraq has the lowest reserve to production ratio of the major oil-producing countries.

The essential services section on power, water, and sewers says almost nothing about consumer satisfaction, distribution, and impact on high risk areas (pp. 11-14). The same is true of the reporting on health care (p. 14).

The report does, however, describe a new and promising initiative to deal with the agricultural sector (pp. 14-15). This now accounts for 10% of the GDP, but 25% of employment and has a high impact in many of the more violent provinces.

Budget Execution

The Iraqi government's ability to actually spend its budget with less delay is an accomplishment of a kind (pp. 8). The section on Budget Execution, however, says virtually nothing about what the money is buying, the equity with which it is being spent and its impact on accommodation, and long standing problems with corruption and nepotism in a nation that has been a command kleptocracy.

Given the fact that the cost of the 2008 Iraqi budget has risen to \$48.4 billion, this is a critical area where meaningful progress reporting is needed.

Security Environment

This section describes real progress in a wide range of areas (pp. 16-22), as well as deep and continuing Iraqi concerns with many different forms of violence. (See pp. 24-26). The reporting on Al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) stresses that the threat is far from over, but also for the first time outlines in public major gains in attacking AQI that have come from significant advances in intelligence and tactics (pp. 18-19):

The overall reduction in attacks is a result of increased Coalition and Iraq force levels in support of operation *Fardh al-Qanoon*, pervasive pressure on AQI and militia extremists and their sanctuaries, the Sadr ceasefire, the shift from previously mixed sectarian communities into more homogeneous neighborhoods in parts of Baghdad, growth in local security volunteer initiatives, increased capability of the Iraqi forces, and sustained presence of Coalition and Iraqi forces among the population. Coordinated operations pushed AQI from strongholds within the capital, disrupted its supply networks in the area around Baghdad, and established a presence among the population that greatly enhances the effectiveness of security operations.

... The geographical concentration of attacks continues to shift as Coalition and Iraqi forces keep pressure on AQI and extremists, driving AQI further east and north as it searches for more secure operating areas and confronts local extremist groups that previously controlled those areas. As a result, high-profile attacks have increased slightly in Ninewa Province, while they have fallen off in Anbar and Baghdad. Specifically, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in Anbar Province have dropped 91% from January 2007 to November 2007, while attacks in the ten Baghdad security districts declined 67% for the same period.

Despite these gains, AQI retains the capability to conduct spectacular and highly lethal terrorist attacks in parts of central and northern Iraq. This helps explain the rise in car bomb attacks in July 2007 that temporarily disrupted an overall downward trend from February through November 2007. AQI has also shifted to a murder and intimidation campaign directed at its former Sunni allies in an attempt to counter the growing anti-AQI tribal movement. This strategy has not been productive, however, and the tribal movement continues to spread beyond western Iraq to other provinces such as Salah ad Din and Diyala, where the CLC program has been important in reducing AQI's capabilities.

Between February 1 and November 16, 2007, over 3,600 AQI members were killed or captured. This number includes the loss of 233 key AQI leaders—54 Emirs or upper tier leaders, 38 foreign terrorist and logistical network facilitators, 24 couriers and logistical leaders and 35 military Emirs and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) cell leaders. These losses have helped to significantly degrade AQI's leadership cadre and the effectiveness of insurgent operations.

It warns, however, that this progress could lead to new Shi'ite efforts at sectarian cleansing, and that Iran has not cut back on its support of such efforts (pp. 17-18):

The growing support of the local population resulted in the establishment of the Concerned Local Citizen (CLC) program in which a growing number of local citizens take part in the protection of their neighborhoods. 7 Some CLC groups form neighborhood watches, while others have been placed under U.S.-funded contracts to protect critical infrastructure. Some of the participants are reviewed for hiring by the Ministry of Interior (MoI). About 69,000 individuals are participating as members of the CLC program; approximately 80% are Sunni and 20% are Shi'a. Members of CLC groups have chosen to protect their neighborhoods and many are from former insurgent and other illegally armed groups. They have been persuaded to fight against extremists under Coalition force supervision. The GoI has issued an order to the Iraqi Army and police forces requiring cooperation with CLCs. The CLC program is proving crucial to the counterinsurgency effort but the slow pace of integrating the CLC members into GoI institutions, lack of alternative employment and fears by the Maliki government that these forces may return to violence or form new militias are of concern. The CLCs will require continued assistance from Coalition forces until the GoI assumes full responsibility for the program.

Shi'a extremist and criminal activities have become growing threats to security and stability as the role of insurgents and AQI wanes. The conflicts among communal groups for political power and resources continue, though AQI's ability to exacerbate these tensions with high profile attacks—while still a serious threat—has been degraded. Foreign malign influence continues to affect the security situation in Iraq. Foreign terrorists and suicide bombers still enter Iraq through Syria, albeit at a significantly reduced rate likely owing in part to increasing internal security efforts by the Syrians. Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Qods Force (IRGC-QF) efforts to train, equip, and fund Shi'a extremists also continue despite reported assurances to Prime Minister Maliki that Iran will cease lethal aid. Unequal adherence to Muqtada al-Sadr's call for a Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) forces ceasefire has resulted in schisms within the Office of Martyr Sadr and JAM, particularly among JAM special groups, but has also opened the door for increased engagement with the Shi'a community.

The report only touches on other major risks, however, including the Arab-Kurdish problems in the north (pp. 23-24); intra-Shi'ite problems in the south (24-25), lack of stability in Anbar and the west (p. 22), and violence in central and northern Iraq (pp. 22-23). It only describes the successes in Baghdad and not the major remaining problems and risks (pp. 21-22).

More generally, the report understates the permeating impact of lower levels of violence, crime, and extortion. It also ignores the polls that reflect a high degree of anger and hostility against the operations of MNF-I forces.

Rule of Law

The rule of law analysis (pp. 4-5) is almost totally decoupled from the analysis of local and regional political, sectarian, and ethnic issues; from the role of the police; from the impact of local security forces; and from the problems raised by a growing reliance on tribal justice and Sharia. It also ignores the need for a process of law to deal with ISF abuses and the handling of detainees.

The Iraqi Security Forces

The report provides the first attempt to compare something approaching actual manning in the Iraqi Security Forces to the number authorized, and the number of trained and equipped personnel actually assigned to the totals authorized. It is still clear, however, that there is no system for any element of the ISF that reports actual versus assigned manpower.

The data for the Iraqi Army does represent very real and continuing progress, but they also disguise the need for sustained US aid, combat support, and embeds. The executive summary also focuses almost exclusively on the army. It ignores the growing problems with the police, the continuing problems with the National Police, the uncertain status of the 69,000 men in the Concern Local Citizen (CLC) and the far larger Facilities Protection Service, and the lack of any clear linkage between the police development effort and the rule of law and criminal justice system at the local and provincial level. It notes that (p.v):

Iraq's basic combat and basic police training facilities continuously operate at or near capacity. As of November 15, 2007, the Coalition and the Ministry of Defense have generated 117 army battalions that are conducting operations at varying levels of capability; another 42 are currently in or planned for force generation. Ten divisions, 34 brigades, and 108 battalions have the lead in counterinsurgency operations in their areas of responsibility. *Many elements of the Iraqi Army are now capable of conducting counterinsurgency operations, but most also remain dependent on Coalition enablers.* Coalition advisors report steady but inconsistent improvement in the abilities of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior to perform key ministerial functions; develop and implement plans and policies; and provide direction and oversight to intelligence, personnel management, acquisitions, logistics, communications and budgeting. U.S.-funded programs and advisory efforts continue to improve the capabilities of the Iraqi forces but internal sectarian biases, commissioned and non-commissioned officer shortfalls, logistics deficiencies and

a dependence on the Coalition for many combat support functions continue to hinder the Iraqi forces' ability to operate without Coalition assistance.

The text of the main report provides far more detail of these developments (pp. 27-53), but the section on transferring security responsibility (pp. 27-28) ignores the lack of de-facto central government and ISF control in the provinces where responsibility has been transferred, the semi-autonomous nature of local Kurdish security services which evidently do not even have a reported strength and cannot be counted in the police manning data on p. 29, and the fact that competing and sometimes violent Shi'ite factions -- most with ties to Iran -- control the five provinces in the south shown as already transitioned or being ready for transition (p. 27).

The data on ISF strength shown on pages 29 and 42 show continuing progress, but also that major gaps still exist between authorized and real manpower, and in manning the police forces with trained manpower (63%). The footnotes to each chart make the limits in such data even more clear. Furthermore, increasing *authorized* (not *actual*) average army officer manning from 43% to 57% during March-October, and NCO manning from 33% to 43%, is not reassuring. The low NCO and officer manning does not track with some of the statements made about Iraqi combat capability (p. 33) or clearly track with somewhat similar data on p. 42. It is also all too obvious that the report omits any such data for the police.

What is also deeply disturbing is the lack of any analysis of the total impact of ISF manning. If the manning in the Facilities Protection Service (p. 41) and CLC is added to the total of roughly 492,000 men assigned to the ISF, the total rises to a figure of well over 600,000. This ignores party militia and security guard manning, but it is a disturbingly high reliance on jobs in the security sector for a nation that the CIA estimates has a total work force of under 8 million. It also does not reflect Iraqi government plans that call for more than 60,000 more men for an authorized strength of 555,789 versus the 492,000 assigned actually reported in the table on p. 29.

The data on the Iraqi regular military are generally reassuring, if one accepts that the real world rate of progress is going to need very substantial aid and embeds at least through 2009. The report does continue to report Iraqi army units as "in the lead" when many or most of the units require US embeds, partner units, and/or air support and other enablers. At the same time, a statement made on page 31 announces for the first time that, "Of all formed Iraqi Army units, 77% are rated as being able to plan, execute, and sustain operations with minimal or no assistance from Coalition forces." This seems to indicate that 90 battalions of the 108 battalions "in the lead" have acquired a much higher degree of independence, but it remains very vague as to the level of US embeds and support. At some point, US reporting must distinguish progress in far more detail both to be credible and to provide a basis for real world planning of a sustained US aid and troop level plan.

The report dodges around major problems and delays in US arms deliveries to Iraqi forces. (pp. 31-33). These remain a major problem, and may help explain why the report only discussed trained manpower, and no longer uses the term "trained and equipped."

The report describe both some reassuring progress by CPATT in helping the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), as well as some important warnings about the serious problems that remain in the Ministry of the Interior (pp. 34-36), but does not fully address the serious manpower quality, vetting, and training problems in the police, or potential new budgeting and accounting problems in MoI spending (p. 35).

What is far more serious, is that the description of the police effort focuses solely on the central government effort, and only touches briefly (pp. 38-39) on the reality that much of the police remain local or with limited and ineffective training and vetting, and that real-world police and security activity is increasingly sectarian, ethnic, local and regional, and impacted by tribal auxiliaries and a wide range of local security forces and militias. This situation is compounded by problems in manning the US-led transition teams or embeds described on p. 37, although major progress seems to be continuing in creating such teams.

Reading between the lines, important progress seems to be taking place in reducing the problems with the National Police (p. 39). The manning levels have dropped to an average level of 60%, elements are being broken up into specialized units that seem less likely to commit Shi'ite sectarian acts, retraining may be gathering in impact, and much of the force is to be moved out of Baghdad and rebased where it is far less likely to commit sectarian abuses.

The size of the National Information Investigation Agency (NIIA) is described, but few details are provided on its role and effectiveness. It also seems from the report that the force is largely ineffectiveness. (p. 41)

The report touches on the MoI portion of the Facilities Protection Service, but provides no picture of the overall size of the FPS and other security elements in the government as a whole. (p. 41).

There is reporting on continuing progress in equipping the army with heavier weapons, and progress in the air force and navy. However, there still is no indication of a plan or effort to create an Iraqi military capable of defending the nation against foreign threats. Such a plan may well be premature, but like most of the above issues, it indicates that another 3-5 years of US effort and aid seem necessary. (p. 43, 48-50).

Conditionality

It should be stressed that these issues are not an indication that the US will fail in Iraq, but rather that it must act consistently over time to prevent failure and achieve its strategic goals. It is equally important to stress that there is only so much the US can do, and it cannot give Iraqis a blank check or try to sustain its effort if the risks outlined above make the US position untenable.

The previous analysis strongly argues that many of the Congressional benchmarks and

implied deadlines issued to date are unrealistic goals and measures of success. At the same time, this does not mean that the US should not establish more realistic goals and steadily push the Iraqis to achieve them.

A strategic partnership requires both sides to be partners. So far, Iraq's leaders have not been able to move forward on their side at the rate required, and victories against AQI are not "victory." Only real progress in all of the five areas outlined earlier – especially political accommodation – can justify a continued US presence and sacrifices. Any major waves of sectarian or ethnic violence, or the rise of new threats against US forces, could make that effort untenable.

Looking over the past year, the odds of success in achieving the US strategic goals in Iraq have probably increased from considerably less than even to slightly better than even, *but only if both sides move forward and set realistic goals*. The key at this point also seems to be much more substantial Iraqi progress towards political accommodation, both to win sustained US support and to lay the groundwork for a broad Iraqi belief that sustained progress is actually achievable.