From Surge to Sovereignty

For the first time since April 2003, the U.S. military no longer patrols Baghdad's streets. In keeping with the terms of the Security Agreement, U.S. combat forces withdrew from Iraq's cities at the end of June. This landmark development represents another milestone on Iraq's road toward asserting complete sovereignty over its territory. Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) will still be able to call on their U.S. ally for assistance if they need support, and the U.S. military will continue to conduct joint operations with the ISF around cities and near the borders with other countries; but the Government of Iraq (GOI) now decides the timing and the terms of U.S. combat actions in urban areas.

Reshaping the U.S. Reconstruction Effort

This quarter, the U.S. military and the Department of State (DoS) took significant steps to reshape their presence in Iraq. On the military side, the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq will conclude its mission in December 2009, transitioning its responsibility for training the ISF to two successor organizations: the Iraq Security Assistance Mission (to assist the Iraqi Army) and the Iraq Training and Advisory Mission (to train Iraqi police forces). These new entities will confront an array of challenges, including improving the ISF's logistics, maintenance, and ability to conduct combined-arms operations. Ultimately, the DoS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will assume police training duties, as it currently does in more than 40 other countries.

In July, Ambassador Christopher Hill implemented a fundamental restructuring of the U.S. Embassy. No longer will the Embassy in Baghdad be managed by the traditional Ambassador–Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) leadership structure; instead, there are now two DCMs. Ambassador Robert Ford will serve as the primary DCM and supervise political matters, including provincial affairs and host-nation diplomatic relations. He will be second in the Embassy's line of succession. Ambassador Patricia Haslach will also serve as DCM, but her focus will be on overseeing U.S. reconstruction programs and ensuring the successful transition of these initiatives to the GOI. This reorganization implicitly recognizes—and seeks to remedy—shortcomings in the U.S. effort that SIGIR has highlighted in more than 300 audit and inspection reports over the past five years. The Embassy's new management will be responsible for assisting the GOI in locking in the recent gains that it has made in governance, security, and economic developments.

Regarding U.S. relief and reconstruction plans, programs, and operations in Iraq, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction provides independent and objective: oversight and review through comprehensive audits, inspections, and investigations; advice and recommendations on policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; prevention, detection, and deterrence of fraud, waste, and abuse; and information and analysis to the Congress, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the American people.

NIFM Representative formally transfers control of a Joint Security Station to the Iraqi Army. (NMIF photo)
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SIGIR Oversight

Iraqi future largely depends on whether the ISF can keep the peace. Nearly half of all U.S. reconstruction assistance—about $25 billion—has gone to support the Iraqi military and police. This quarter, SIGIR evaluated three U.S.-funded projects aimed at enhancing the ISF’s effectiveness. In Salah Al-Din, SIGIR found that construction of a $37.8 million support base for the Iraq Army (IA) is well on the way to successful completion. In Missan, SIGIR inspected a $1.2 million headquarters complex for a brigade of the IA’s 10th Infantry Division. The headquarters was fully operational, and IA personnel were attending to routine repairs needed to sustain the base’s current level of functionality. However, at the Taji National Maintenance Depot, near Baghdad, the story was more mixed. SIGIR auditors determined that poor planning and a lack of committed Iraqi trainers may prevent the IA from being able to repair its heavy equipment when the facility is turned over to the GOI at the end of the year.

SIGIR also inspected two U.S.-funded hospitals this quarter, finding serious deficiencies at both facilities. SIGIR concluded that the long-troubled Baarla Children’s Hospital will not meet the original objective of providing a “state of the art” pediatric hospital to serve the people of southern Iraq when it finally becomes fully operational sometime in 2011. Similarly, SIGIR found construction work on the Missan Surgical Hospital to be grievously behind schedule and lacking the essential equipment and staff promised by the GOI.

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SIGIR QUARTERLY REPORT

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION


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