



CRS Report for Congress

Iraq: Milestones Since the Ouster of Saddam Hussein

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Summary

On May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat in Iraq. Since then, hostilities and death tolls continue to rise. Tensions between the once dominant Sunni minority and Shia majority also continue to escalate. This report lists significant recent events in Iraq. Sources include, but are not limited, to White House press releases, the U.S. Department of State, U.N. Secretary-General's statements, and major news stories. For analysis and further review of the current situation, see CRS Report RL31339, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, by Kenneth Katzman. This report will be updated regularly.

Significant Events:

- 06/16/2007** At a news conference with Secretary Gates, in Baghdad, General Petraeus announced that his forces mounted a new offensive against al-Qaeda in and around Baghdad during the last 24 hours, making use of the nearly 30,000 additional troops President Bush ordered to Iraq.
- 01/26/2007** Lieutenant General David Petraeus is confirmed by the U.S. Senate to become the commander of the U.S. military forces in Iraq. The nomination was approved by an 81-0 vote. The vote also elevates Petraeus to a four-star Army general.
- 01/10/2007** President Bush announces a new Iraq strategy; about 21,500 more U.S. troops are to be dispatched to shore up security in Baghdad and restive Anbar province. Under the plan, U.S. and Iraqi troops hope to secure and help build Baghdad neighborhoods cleared of armed elements.¹

¹ For more information, see the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials," press release, January 10, 2007, at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/print/20070110-1.html>].

- 12/30/2006** Saddam Hussein is executed four days after an Iraqi appeals court upheld a ruling that he should hang for crimes committed in the deaths of 148 Shiites in the town of Dujail in 1982. Under the statute governing the Iraqi High Tribunal, the death sentence had to be carried out within 30 days.
- 12/6/2006** The Iraq Study Group (ISG) calls for a change of course in U.S. policy, saying conditions in Iraq are “grave and deteriorating,” and recommends gradual transition of combat to Iraqi forces. The commission was chaired by James Baker, former U.S. Secretary of State, and Lee Hamilton, a former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.²
- 11/08/2006** Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld steps down and President Bush nominates Dr. Robert M. Gates to be Secretary of Defense.
- 11/02/2006** Saddam Hussein is sentenced to death for crimes against humanity.
- 07/12/2006** The U.S. military announces an end to its controversial contract with Halliburton, the oil services company providing logistics support to U.S. troops in Iraq.
- 07/08/2006** Five U.S. soldiers are charged with the rape and murder of a young Iraqi woman and the murder of three members of her family in Mahmoudiyah. The incident marks the latest in a recent string of alleged incidents of abuse by U.S. soldiers that have drawn criticism from the Iraqi government.
- 06/08/2006** At the White House Rose Garden, President Bush announces the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the operational commander of the terrorist movement in Iraq. Osama bin Laden once called him ‘the Emir of al-Qaeda in Iraq.’ He was killed in a U.S. air strike on a safe house near Baquba.³
- 05/03/2006** Iraq’s parliament meets for its first full legislative session since it was elected in December 2005.
- 04/22/2006** President Jalal Talabani asks Shia compromise candidate Jawad al-Maliki to form a new government as prime minister. The nomination ends four months of political deadlock.
- 02/22/2006** A bomb attack severely damages the al-Askari shrine in Samarra, one of the holiest cities in Shia Islam. The bombing sparked reprisals against Sunnis in Iraq and increased fears of a civil war.

² United States Institute of Peace, Iraqi Study Group, available at [<http://www.usip.org/isg/about.html>].

³ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President on Death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” press release, June 8, 2006, available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060608.html>].

- 01/21/2006** It is announced that the Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance has emerged as the winner of more seats than any other group, with 128 out of 275 total seats in the December 2005 elections. However, the block fell short of an absolute majority, with Kurdish parties and Sunnis winning the remaining seats.
- 12/15/2005** Iraq holds its third nationwide election within the space of a year, this time to select a government with a four-year term of office. Sunnis, who boycotted the previous election in January 2005 turned out in large numbers, even in insurgent strongholds.
- 10/19/2005** The trial of former president Saddam Hussein and several of his senior associates begins in Baghdad. They are charged with killing 148 Shiites in the town of Dujail in 1982.
- 10/15/2005** Millions of Iraqis vote in a referendum on Iraq's new constitution, which would make Iraq an Islamic federal democracy. The constitution is adopted even though two Sunni provinces voted against it by a two-thirds majority. A third province fell slightly short of a two thirds vote which would have caused defeat of the constitution.
- 10/31/2005** About 950 Shia pilgrims — mostly women and children — are killed in a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad, set off by rumors of a suicide bomber in their midst.
- 07/02/2005** The first Arab ambassador to Iraq, Egyptian envoy Ihab al-Sherif, was kidnapped and murdered five days later, in what the Iraqi government describes as an attempt by insurgents to deter Arab countries from formalizing their diplomatic ties with the new regime in Iraq.
- 04/28/2005** Members of the newly elected Iraqi parliament sanction the first elected government since the fall of Saddam Hussein.
- 04/07/2005** Iraq's new president, Jalal Talabani, elected on April 6, 2005, names the Shia leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari as prime minister.
- 02/28/2005** 115 people are killed and 130 wounded in a suicide bomb blast in the town of Hilla, 60 miles south-east of Baghdad, in the bloodiest single attack since the fall of Saddam Hussein.
- 01/30/2005** Iraqis vote in the first democratic elections for fifty years, to elect provincial parliaments and a 275-member national assembly. Turnout is estimated at 57 percent, although the minority Sunni population boycotts the polls. The Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance wins a majority of assembly seats. Kurdish parties place second.
- 12/27/2004** The Iraqi Islamic party, the largest Sunni Muslim party, withdraws from the election.
- 11/30/2004** The Association of Muslim Scholars, a Sunni political group in Iraq, announces a boycott of upcoming parliamentary elections.

- 11/23/2004** An international conference to consolidate cooperation on Iraq is held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. Addressing the conference, Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said, “The international community as a whole must come together, within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1546. We must unite around the mission of supporting the political transition in Iraq. That is the best way to ensure that a sovereign, secure and self-confident Iraq takes its place in the region, and indeed becomes a beacon to other nations.”⁴
- 11/15/2004** US-led forces retake the Sunni rebel stronghold of Falluja, killing approximately 2,000, and capturing 1,200 people including a number of non-Iraqis.
- 11/08/2004** Iraq’s interim government declares 60-day state of emergency in most of the country to secure it before the January 30 elections.
- 08/27/2004** Moqtada al Sadr’s militia surrenders the revered Imam Ali Shrine compound in Najaf after a peace deal brokered by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq’s top Shiite Muslim cleric.
- 07/01/2004** Saddam Hussein appears before an Iraqi judge on war crimes and genocide charges.
- 06/28/2004** The United States hands over power to the interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Ambassador Paul Bremer leaves the country.
- 06/08/2004** Resolution 1546 is adopted by the U.N. Security Council. The resolution declares the end of the occupation of Iraq and endorses a fully sovereign and independent interim government that will serve from June 30, 2004, until elections in January 2005. The resolution defers the issue of the status of forces agreement (SOFA) to an elected Iraqi government.⁵
- 05/28/2004** The Iraq Governing Council (IGC) names Iyad Allawi, a secular Shia, who heads the Iraqi National Accord faction, prime minister of the incoming interim government.
- 04/30/2004** Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal breaks in U.S. media.
- 03/08/2004** IGC approves an interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which lays out a roadmap for parliamentary elections and a constitutional referendum.
- 03/02/2004** At least 143 people die in bomb attacks on worshipers at Shia shrines in Baghdad and Karbala.

⁴ Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt - Secretary-General’s address to the International Conference on Iraq, at [<http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=1194>].

⁵ United Nations Security Council S/RES/1546 (2004), available at [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/no4/381/16/pdf/no438116.pdf?openelement>].

- 01/28/2004** David Kay, former head of Iraq Survey Group (ISG), testifies before the Senate Armed Services Committee saying that pre-war weapons of mass destruction (WMD) assessments were “almost all wrong,” although he adds that Iraq did conceal WMD-related activities in violation of key U.N. Security Council resolutions and that it did retain an intention to restart its WMD programs at a later date.⁶
- 12/13/2003** Former president Saddam Hussein is captured by U.S. forces.
- 11/15/2003** The United States and the IGC agree to speed up transition to sovereignty by June 30, 2004.
- 10/23/2003** An international donor meeting held in Madrid, Spain, pledges \$13 billion to fund Iraqi reconstruction in addition to the \$20 billion promised by the United States. The Madrid meeting was attended by representatives of more than 70 nations and international bodies, including the World Bank, UNICEF, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
- 08/29/2003** Car bomb in Najaf kills more than 120 people, including Ayatollah Mohammed Bakir al-Hakim, a leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. He was both a revered cleric and Shiite political leader.
- 08/19/2003** U.N. envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello is among 20 dead in bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad.
- 08/07/2003** A car bomb outside the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad kills at least 14 people and wounds dozens.
- 07/13/2003** U.S.-appointed 25-seat IGC meets for the first time.
- 05/23/2003** Paul Bremer, the top U.S. civilian administrator in Iraq, issues Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) order no.2, which dissolves the Iraqi Armed Forces, the ministries of Defense and Information, and other security institutions that supported Saddam Hussein’s regime.
- 05/22/2003** United Nations Security Council adopts Resolution 1483, lifting sanctions on Iraq and providing for the phasing out of the Oil-for-Food Program (OFFP) within six months. In accordance with the resolution, the program (new contract agreements) will terminate on November 21, 2003, and will be taken over by the U.S. occupation authority, the CPA. Since then, Iraq has sold its oil unfettered — oil revenues are no longer held in a U.N.-run escrow account, and the program’s oil sales monitoring infrastructure is no longer in operation.⁷

⁶ For more information, see CRS Report RL32217, *Iraq and Al Qaida: Allies or Not*, by Kenneth Katzman.

⁷ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1483 (2003), available at [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/no3/368/53/pdf/no336853.pdf?openelement>].

- 05/18/2003** In a hand-delivered private message, Bremer requests two additional divisions of troops (roughly 40,000 soldiers) from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to help counter the steady streams of violent attacks. He receives no response.⁸
- 05/16/2003** Bremer issues CPA Order No.1, disbanding the Ba'ath party.
- 05/11/2003** Bremer succeeds Jay Garner as chief U.S. administrator in Iraq.
- 05/01/2003** President Bush announces major combat operations in Iraq have ended.⁹
- 04/11/2003** The United States lists 55 most-wanted members of former regime in the form of a deck of cards. Former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz is taken into custody.
- 04/21/2003** A former lieutenant general, Jay Garner, arrives in Baghdad, soon after Saddam's fall.
- 04/09/2003** U.S. forces advance into central Baghdad. Saddam Hussein's grip on the city is broken. In the following days Kurdish fighters and U.S. forces take control of the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. There is looting in Baghdad and elsewhere.
- 03/19/2003** In an address to the American people, President Bush announces that coalition forces began striking Iraqi military targets to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. "These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. More than 35 countries are giving crucial support — from the use of naval and air bases, to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honor of serving in our common defense," he said.¹⁰

⁸ FRONTLINE, "The Lost Year in Iraq: Fighting on Two Fronts," Public Broadcasting Service(PBS), at [<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/cron/>].

⁹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Operation Iraqi Freedom, "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended," press release, May 1, 2003, available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html>].

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Middle East and North Africa: Timeline of Iraq: 1932-2003," available at [http://www.U.S.info.state.gov/mena/archive_index/Timeline_of_iraq_19322003.html].