

Center for American Progress Action Fund



**Progress in Iraq:
A 2006 Report Card on the
Bush Administration's Iraq Policy**

Subject	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter
Overall Grade:	D	D-	F
Security and Stability:	D-	F	F
Governance and Democracy:	C+	C+	D-
Economic Reconstruction:	D-	D-	D-
Impact on U.S. National Security:	F	F	F

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Key Findings

Iraq today stands between civil war and utter chaos, hardly the hope of a bipartisan majority of 79 U.S. Senators who nearly a year ago called on President Bush to put forward a strategy for “the successful completion of the mission in Iraq.” That vote prompted the Center for American Progress to issue quarterly report cards assessing the Bush administration’s Iraq policy.

With fewer than three months remaining in 2006, our third quarter assessment of the Bush administration’s Iraq policy finds Iraq on the brink of collapse, with growing violence, increased sectarian tensions and divisions in the Iraqi national government, and few significant advances in Iraq’s economic reconstruction. All indicators point to the utter failure of President Bush’s strategy for Iraq.

Iraq is a weak and failing state, with tens of thousands of innocent civilians killed and at least two million civil war refugees and internally displaced Iraqis, including thousands of Christians who faced increased persecution during the last three years. In three key areas outlined in the Bush administration’s [“National Strategy for Victory in Iraq.”](#)¹ the United States has not achieved sufficient progress towards its goals:

1. Security: On the Brink of Total Collapse. Iraq’s conflict is now worse than [civil war](#); it’s on the brink of total collapse. The country suffers from at least four internal conflicts that risk further spiraling out of control—a Shiite-Sunni civil war in the center, intra-Shiite conflicts in the south, a Sunni insurgency in the west, and ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds in the north. Violence has increased in 2006, and recent estimates of Iraqis killed over the last three and a half years range from [40,000](#) to [several hundred thousand](#). At least 2 million Iraqis are refugees or have become internally displaced.

2. Political Transition: Divisions Persist, Extremism Rises. Iraq’s political transition hangs by a thread. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki introduced a national reconciliation effort that is ongoing. Ethnic and sectarian tensions persist, human rights abuses are endemic, press freedom has faced new restrictions, and women and religious minorities face new threats.

3. Economic Reconstruction: Iraqis Still Lack Basic Services. After spending more than \$30 billion of U.S. taxpayer money on reconstruction efforts, Iraq’s basic services and key economic indicators lag below pre-war levels. More than 5.6 million Iraqis live below the poverty line.

4. Iraq War’s Impact on U.S. National Security. Sixteen U.S. intelligence agencies [found](#) that the Iraq has helped Islamist extremists cultivate support around the world. In addition, the war in Iraq has diverted military and intelligence assets from capturing top al-Qaeda leaders and finishing the mission in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq also has weakened U.S. ground forces and undermined the readiness of our armed forces to respond to other crises.

¹ The underlined text throughout this report card represents hyperlinks to source documents, resources, and news articles with more information on the topics highlighted.



Security and Stability

F

The security situation is worse than civil war, with four internal conflicts threatening to spiral out of control and increase instability on Iraq's northern borders.

1. Iraq Death Toll Rises by Thousands

- **Thousands of Iraqis Killed.** Obtaining accurate sources on Iraqi civilian casualties is difficult, particularly with the [Iraq government recently taking measures to restrict the release of figures](#). The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq has reported that [6,599 Iraqis were killed](#) throughout the country in July and August, and the [Iraqi Health Ministry found that 2,660 Iraqis](#) were killed in just in the city of Baghdad in September (the Iraqi government has not yet released September casualty figures for the entire country). For the first six months of 2006, the [United Nations reported](#) that 14,338 Iraqis were killed. Estimates of Iraqis killed over the last three and a half years range from [40,000](#) to [several hundred thousand](#).
- **Pentagon report says Iraqi casualties increased 51 percent.** According to the Defense Department's most recent [quarterly report on Iraq](#), Iraqi casualties increased 51 percent in the summer compared to the spring.
- **Iraqi security forces targeted.** U.S. commanders [report that 4,000 Iraqi police](#) were killed and another 8,000 wounded in the last two years.
- **Militias continue to pose a security problem.** [In testimony to Congress in August, Central Command Commander General John Abizaid](#) said that militias undermine state institutions and contribute to sectarian violence. Coalition forces announced in late July and early August that it was [stepping up operations against militias and death squads](#). U.S. patrols are increasingly designed to uncover militia members [disguised as police](#). The continued strength of militias erodes the legitimacy of the Iraqi government and [encourages sectarian groups to take security into their own hands](#).

2. Attacks against U.S. Forces Increase

- **More than 2,700 killed and 20,000 wounded.** Before the start of October 2006, which is on course for being one of the deadliest months for the U.S. military in Iraq, more than [2,700 U.S. troops have been killed in action and more than 20,000 wounded](#) since the start of the war.
- **Most attacks target coalition forces.** Despite the growing Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence, U.S. and coalition forces are still the targets of the majority of attacks, according to a September 2006 [Government Accountability Office report](#). Total attacks on coalition forces from January to July 2006 were 57 percent higher than reported in the same period during 2005.
- **Majority of Iraqis supports attacks on U.S.-led coalition forces.** Moreover, [61 percent of all Iraqis](#) support attacks against U.S.-led coalition forces, representing a 14-point increase since [January 2006](#) according to a poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes. Fully nine in 10 Sunni Arabs approve of attacks on U.S.-led forces in Iraq. Support for attacks against U.S.-led forces increased among Shiites from 41 percent in January to 62 percent in September. Fewer than 20 percent of Kurds support these attacks.
- **Troops face four times more improvised explosive devices.** Despite new initiatives to counter improvised explosive devices announced by President Bush in a [speech last March](#),



coalition troops faced [1,200 improvised explosive devices](#), or IEDs, in August, about four times as many attacks as January 2004. A recent assessment of the IED problem based on British intelligence says, “Based on current usage, there are enough stocks of illegal explosives to continue the [same level of attack for 274 years](#) without re-supply.”

3. Worse than Civil War: Four Internal Conflicts; Instability in North

- **A Shiite-Sunni civil war in Baghdad and central Iraq.** For much of the last year, a vicious campaign of sectarian cleansing has been taking place in the neighborhoods of Baghdad and the surrounding central regions, with Shiite militias targeting Sunni Iraqis and Sunni insurgent groups bombing Shiite targets. The violence persisted despite a four-month old joint U.S.-Iraqi military campaign focused on Baghdad and plans to ring the capital city with a [series of trenches](#) to control movement into it.
 - **Misleading statistics presented in late August.** The United States [claimed progress](#) in Baghdad, citing statistics showing the number of deaths from sectarian violence in Baghdad declined more than 50 percent from July to August. However, military calculations of civilian deaths in Baghdad failed to include [car bombs and mortar attacks](#).
- **Intra-Shiite conflict in the south.** As Iraq’s central government flounders, political tensions have spilled over in Iraq’s regions, with battles between Iraqi Shiites in the streets of southern cities such as [Diwaniya](#) and [Basra](#). In these clashes, intra-Shiite political disputes have been played out in violence in the streets—and in some cases U.S. forces have supported one faction versus another. In September, [Basra’s anti-terrorism chief](#) was found murdered after being kidnapped in front of his house.
- **Sunni Arab insurgency in the west.** The Sunni Arab insurgency continues to undermine security in the western part of Iraq. The chief of intelligence for the Marine Corps in Iraq filed a [report last month](#) saying that al- Qaeda in Iraq has filled a political vacuum, saying it had become “an integral part of the social fabric.”
- **Arab-Kurdish violence in the North.** Violence and tensions have increased in [northern Iraq](#) between Arabs and Kurds, particularly in the disputed city of Kirkuk and the divided city of [Mosul](#). In Kirkuk a recent [series of bombings](#) targeting Kurdish and Arab political leaders and violence between Arabs and Kurds over [property disputes](#) have added up to a [“brewing crisis”](#) over the status of that city. In addition, the ethnically divided city of Mosul experienced an upsurge in violence in July and August, and shows [no signs](#) of letting up.
- **Instability on Iraq’s northern borders.** In addition to ethnic tensions inside northern Iraq, Iraq has witnessed attacks inside its borders from Turkey and Iran in the last few months. Both countries have [shelled northern Iraq](#) in response to attacks by Iraq-based rebel groups such as the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. The Turkish government and the Iraqi Kurdish leadership are [assuming increasingly confrontational stances](#) towards one another over the PKK issue.

4. Iraqi Security Forces Continue to Face Challenges Taking Control

- **Iraqis stand up, but U.S. forces not standing down.** Iraqi security forces are standing up in increasing numbers, but U.S. forces are not standing down. The [State Department reports](#) that by mid-September, 302,200 Iraqi soldiers and police had completed initial training and equipping, an increase of more than 10 percent since July 2006. In addition, the Iraqi government assumed greater control of its [own territory](#) and [parts of its armed forces](#). Yet the



overall American troop presence in Iraq increased by more than 10 percent since late July, to [147,000](#) from 127,000 previously. Central Command head Gen. Abizaid has said that this force level [“will probably have to be sustained through the spring, then we will reevaluate.”](#)

- **Questions remain about the quality of Iraqi forces.** Despite the increased number of Iraqi troops, questions remain as to the actual quality and skill of those troops. The [GAO raised concerns that the Pentagon’s reports](#) “do not provide information on shortfalls in personnel, command and control, equipment, and leadership.”
- **Motivation concerns and desertion issues.** Two Iraqi divisions in Anbar province are [short by 5,000 troops](#) and a [quarter of Iraqi reinforcements](#) for Baghdad have not shown up.
- **Sectarian divisions inside Iraqi security forces persist.** The [Pentagon’s most recent quarterly report on Iraq](#) states Iraqi military units are drawn largely on sectarian lines, usually only serving under commanders of similar sectarian affiliation. Some [Iraqi units refuse to deploy](#) to heavily contested areas such as Baghdad or away from their home regions, further exacerbating these problems.

5. Major Sectarian Cleansing Campaign Underway

- **Iraq’s sectarian war on the web.** [Newsweek reports](#) that sectarian cleansing campaigns in Iraq are posting execution lists on the Internet.
- **Iraqis changing their names for protection.** Many Iraqis [are changing their names](#) and seeking alternate identities to shield themselves from sectarian cleansing.
- **Mixed neighborhoods become sectarian battlegrounds.** Throughout the summer and early fall, numerous reports emerged of mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad becoming [sectarian battlegrounds](#), with militias dominating the landscape.

6. Growing Crisis of Internally Displaced Iraqis and Refugees

- **At least two million Iraqis are refugees or internally displaced.** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees now estimates that more than [1.5 million Iraqis are internally displaced](#), including 365,000 since the February 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra. The UNHCR also estimates that more than 1 million Iraqis have fled the country.²
- **Hundreds of thousands Iraqi Christians leave the country.** An estimated [200,000 to 300,000 Iraqi Christians](#) have left Iraq since 2003, with reports emerging that [death squads have targeted Christians](#). In Mosul, a [priest was kidnapped and beheaded](#) earlier this month. Some Iraqi Christian leaders have recently called for a [separate province for Christians](#).
- **Nearly 40,000 families move north.** Many internally displaced Iraqis are moving to the relative security of northern Iraq, increasing concerns among Kurds of [another “Arabization” campaign](#).
- **Iraqi professionals leaving the country.** Earlier this year, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants estimated that [40 percent of Iraqi professionals](#) had fled the country.



Governance and Democracy

D-

Iraq's political transition hangs by a thread, moving forward slowly in the face of widespread violence. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki introduced a national reconciliation effort that is ongoing. Ethnic and sectarian tensions persist, human rights abuses are endemic, the press labors under new restrictions, and women and religious minorities face new threats.

1. Political Process and National Reconciliation Efforts Continue

- **Prime Minister Maliki pursues national reconciliation efforts.** In late June, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki announced a [national reconciliation project](#) aimed at resolving sectarian differences through peaceful dialogue and compromise. The effort includes the creation of a Higher Commission for National Reconciliation, a commission comprised of political, tribal, ethnic, and sectarian leaders. Several prominent tribes joined the [national reconciliation effort in late August](#), and another session is tentatively scheduled for [later this fall](#).
- **National parliament convenes, but has problem of absenteeism.** After the formation of the Iraqi government was completed in June, Iraq's parliament met several times to discuss key issues—including naming a [committee to draft key constitutional amendments](#) in late September. However, the Iraqi parliament has suffered from a problem of absenteeism. [One-third of Iraqi lawmakers](#) were absent from some sessions this summer, and average Iraqis are beginning to feel that members of parliament are out-of-touch and corrupt. The parliament barely achieved a quorum necessary to [vote on a controversial federalism law](#). In addition, the parliament meets inside the Green Zone in Baghdad, disconnected from the general public.

2. Sectarian Divisions Persist

- **Sectarian militias tied to governing parties.** The United Nations [warns](#) that militias with ties to top political parties continue to operate outside of the law in Iraq, and U.S. officials have raised [concerns](#) that the current government lacks the willingness to confront these forces.
- **Sectarian militias infiltrate the Iraqi Interior Ministry.** [Elite units of the Interior Ministry](#) are populated from the ranks of the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army, facilitating claims of sectarian bias in the new government. Interior Minister Jawad Bolani has not eradicated militia influence in his ministry, leading to [reports in early September](#) of his possible dismissal. [Bolani has refused](#) to track the sectarian composition of his forces and take efforts to diversify the national police.
- **Disputes over federalism inflame the sectarian divide.** Iraq's parliament passed a law that would allow for the creation of a separate autonomous region in southern Iraq, raising sectarian tensions as [Sunni leaders accused Shiite leaders](#) of pushing through the law without consultation.
- **Kurds begin to distance themselves from Iraq.** This summer, Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani provoked controversy by [refusing to fly the Iraqi flag](#) above official buildings, arguing that Kurds view the flag as a symbol of the former regime. Iraqi Arabs, however, view this as a [betrayal](#) of Arab unity and the sacrifices made during the Iran-Iraq War.



3. Extremism Rises, Rights Abuses Persist, and Freedoms Erode

- **Torture worse now than under Saddam Hussein.** International monitors including a United Nations special investigator have warned that torture by government security forces, militias, and terrorists is [“out of hand” and worse now than under Saddam Hussein’s regime](#), and independent human rights groups report [endemic human rights abuses](#). In addition, the report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq details widespread instances of [arbitrary detention and torture of detainees in Iraq prisons](#).
- **Press freedom erodes.** At least a dozen [journalists have been charged](#) under Iraq’s laws that prohibit criticism of the government and public officials. Such laws have a stifling effect on press freedom and do not bode well for democracy. In early September, the Iraqi government [shut down Arab satellite news station Al Arabiya](#) for allegedly airing “hostile” reports aimed at fomenting sectarian war.
- **Women’s rights endangered.** The United Nations [reports](#) that women face particular threats to their security that impede their access to health services and education. Iraqi women have been targeted for [rape and other acts of violence](#) as extremism and lawlessness have increased.



Economic Reconstruction

D-

Iraq's government and the United Nations announced the formation of the International Compact with Iraq, a sign of hope for future international support to Iraq. Even though Iraq is an oil-rich country possessing the third-largest reserves in the world, Iraq now must import much of its refined oil products. More than 5.6 million Iraqis live below the poverty line. After spending more than \$30 billion of U.S. taxpayer money on reconstruction efforts, Iraq's basic services and key economic indicators lag below pre-war levels.

1. Advances in International Support for Iraq

- **Formation of compact offers some hope for future support.** This summer, the Iraqi government and the United Nations announced the formation of the [International Compact with Iraq](#), a five-year vision for reconstruction designed to increase international involvement in Iraq. The compact held its first meeting in [Abu Dhabi on September 10](#).

2. Lags in Economic Indicators and Basic Services

- **5.6 million Iraqis below poverty line.** Iraq's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs estimates that about one in five Iraqis live below the poverty line, with 40 percent of those below the poverty line living in ["absolute and desperate deteriorated conditions."](#)
- **Double digit unemployment.** Most current estimates of [unemployment in Iraq](#) range from [25 percent to nearly 50 percent](#).
- **Oil production still lags below pre-war levels.** Oil production has only [recently begun to approach](#) the prewar level of 2.5 million barrels per day, but remains roughly 0.2 million barrels below that average. Security problems and aging energy infrastructure have combined to suppress Iraq's oil exports, costing [Iraq a potential \\$16 billion](#) from January 2004 to March 2006.
- **Fuel shortages require Iraq to import gasoline and other refined oil products.** Iraq has the [third-largest proven reserves of oil](#) in the world, yet it is [planning on spending \\$800 million](#) to import refined oil products from its neighbors—including a [deal with Iran](#)—to counter widespread fuel shortages. Iraq's three main oil refineries are refining only 350,000 barrels of oil per day, roughly half of the pre-war total of 700,000. In addition, Iraq's fuel shortage has created a black market for gas, distorting the economy and undermining the authority of the Iraqi government.
- **Electricity generation.** According to the [Defense Department's report on Iraq](#), electricity generation has improved 15.8 percent over the previous quarter, to an average peak output of 4,573 megawatts. This [level](#), however, still falls short of current demand. While areas outside Baghdad receive more hours of power (12.1 hours per day), the capitol's electricity remains [below prewar levels at 8.1 hours per day](#). Furthermore, the [focus on increasing generation](#) has come at the expense of transmission and distribution projects, one-third of which have yet to start.

3. Continued Mismanagement in Reconstruction Projects

- **Special inspector general details mismanagement and corruption.** The U.S. [Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction](#), or SIGIR, continues to uncover troubling cases of mismanagement and corruption, including:



- **Shoddy construction of the Baghdad Police College.** An [on-site inspection](#) by SIGIR of the Baghdad Police College—called “the [most essential civil security project in the country](#)” by SIGIR chief Stuart W. Bowen—revealed structural problems in the construction. The \$75 million effort was headed by Parsons Corporation, whose reconstruction record is so poor that SIGIR is now planning an audit of Parsons’ \$1 billion worth of reconstruction contracts.
- **USAID hid costs of Basra hospital project.** The United States Agency for International Development, the State Department agency in charge of \$1.4 billion in reconstruction money in Iraq, used a series of accounting procedures to [hide cost overruns](#) as administrative costs or overhead. SIGIR exposed these procedures in [an investigation](#) of delays and overruns on a Basra pediatric hospital constructed by Bechtel.
- **U.S. reconstruction agencies are behind in plans for transition.** SIGIR reports that the agencies in charge of reconstruction in Iraq are falling [behind in their plans for transferring authority for reconstruction programs and projects to Iraqis](#). While working groups on many transition problems have been formed and processes for the individual transfer of assets have been worked out, SIGIR reports that “there is no overall strategic plan for transferring [Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund]-funded reconstruction projects and assets to the Iraqi government.” This leads to uncertainty as to whether current programs and projects can be sustained beyond the short-term by the Iraqi government when it assumes responsibility for them.



Impact on U.S. National Security F

Sixteen U.S. intelligence agencies found that the Iraq war has helped Islamist extremists cultivate support around the world. In addition, the war in Iraq has diverted military and intelligence assets from capturing top al-Qaeda leaders and finishing the mission in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq also has weakened U.S. ground forces and undermined military readiness.

1. Iraq War Hinders Battle against Global Terror Groups

- **National Intelligence Estimate finds that Iraq war fuels radicalism.** The consensus judgment of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies outlined in a [National Intelligence Estimate on “Trends in Global Terrorism”](#) prepared last spring and partly declassified in September was that “the conflict in Iraq has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement.”
- **Iraq war hinders hunt for bin Laden.** The trail of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden has gone [“stone cold,”](#) in part because key U.S. assets have been diverted to Iraq, including U.S. special forces units with language skills and unmanned aerial vehicles used to monitor terrorists’ movements.
- **Iraq diverted resources from completing the mission in Afghanistan.** An undermanned and under-funded international effort and a resurgent Taliban have pushed the war in Afghanistan to a violent crossroads. The British defense minister expressed [concerns](#) in September that the war in Afghanistan could spread.
 - **Insufficient troops in Afghanistan.** NATO commanders have stated that they do not have enough troops on the ground to accomplish their objectives and make progress, resulting in pleas from [NATO’s secretary-general, Tony Blair,](#) and [NATO’s ground commander](#) for more troops
 - **Insufficient reconstruction funds for Afghanistan.** The United States has spent [\\$318.5 billion in Iraq,](#) compared to \$88.2 billion in Afghanistan. Iraq has received more than five times more reconstruction money than Afghanistan, and over twice the amount for training security forces. According to James Dobbins, former Bush administration envoy to Kabul and veteran of nation-building efforts in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the effort in Afghanistan is the [“most under-resourced nation-building effort in history.”](#)
- **Iraq diverts attention away from the rise of extremist Islamists.** Focused on a growing civil war in Iraq, U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic assets have been diverted away from other fronts where extremist Islamists have grown in influence and power, including:
 - **Pakistan and North Waziristan.** This fall, Pakistan announced an agreement with tribal elements connected to the Taliban and al-Qaeda elements in regions on the Afghan-Pakistan border. [The agreement](#) with tribal leaders allows these militants to operate freely on both sides of the border.
 - **Hezbollah in Lebanon.** Hezbollah’s attacks against Israel and its actions in Lebanon have reportedly [enhanced the stature of Islamist groups](#) throughout the region.
 - **Hamas in the Palestinian territories.** Ten months after [Hamas](#) was elected to



power, the Islamist group retains key governmental positions in the Palestinian Authority and has [fought](#) with the opposition Fatah Party.

- **Somalia.** Civil war and a weak interim government has allowed an Islamist movement known as the “[Union of Islamic Courts](#)” to [take power in Mogadishu](#). Somalia’s Islamists are [threatening to escalate their conflict](#) with the interim government to include Ethiopia, whom they accuse of siding with the interim government.

1. Iraq War Harms U.S. Military Readiness

- **Two thirds of Army units not ready for other wartime missions.** Congressional leaders on defense and military issues recently reported that [two thirds of active Army units](#) are not ready for wartime missions and that the Army National Guard is in worse shape.
- **Numerous units being sent for second and third tours.** The Third Infantry Division—the Army unit that spearheaded the drive to Baghdad—is getting ready to [deploy to Iraq for the third time](#) in December, short on equipment, training, and personnel. Both the Army and Marines are also warning that the current level of deployment is on the verge of causing [long-term damage](#).
- **Army and Marine equipment shortfalls.** The Army and [Marine Corps](#) are experiencing significant problems with equipment shortages due to the war in Iraq. The Army and Marines face [equipment shortfalls](#), forcing it to strip equipment from non-deployed and reserve units and ship it to Iraq, where they then leave it.



Acknowledgements

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Dr. Korb served as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and Logistics) from 1981 through 1985. In that position, he administered about 70 percent of the Defense budget. For his service in that position, he was awarded the Department of Defense's medal for Distinguished Public Service. Mr. Korb served on active duty for four years as Naval Flight Officer, and retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain.