



A CASE STUDY: THE WAR IN IRAQ

BY CONGRESSMAN J. RANDY FORBES
VIRGINIA'S FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The war in Iraq has largely been the issue at the forefront of our political and social frontiers over nearly the past five years. Every day we hear varying reports on the status of success in Iraq, some stating that we have made significant progress, others claiming we are worse off now than before we entered Iraq. We hear reports on the troop levels in Iraq and the amount of money we are spending over there. We hear reports of the number of casualties of U.S. soldiers and the latest figure of car bombs and al-Qaeda attacks on Iraqis.

With all the different reports and status updates coming from Congress, the media, and the Department of Defense, it is easy to lose track of what that facts really are and to become lost in a myriad of perplexing questions. What is the root of conflict in Iraq? What is our current strategy? How much are we really spending on the war in Iraq? What is our military commitment to Iraq? All of these are valid questions, and ones that are largely failing to be addressed by popular media and the federal government.

That is why I have created *A Case Study: The War in Iraq*—to address those questions that are often overlooked. Only after understanding the mixture of variables that impact the war in Iraq can we make an informed decision about where we stand. I look forward to hearing from you on this issue as well. I invite you to visit my website, <http://randyforbes.house.gov>, and email me with your questions and concerns regarding the war in Iraq. With kind personal regards, I am

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Randy Forbes".

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



IRAQ AT A GLANCE



A Brief Background on Iraq

Iraq is a Middle Eastern country that shares borders with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. For the past four-and-a-half years, it has been the focal point of military operations in the United States after a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq and removed the government of Saddam Hussein. The new Iraqi government faces political conflicts among major sectarian groups in Iraq as it tries to establish a democratic government. Violent conflicts as a result of al-Qaeda and Iraqi insurgents have also plagued the country. Iraq was originally formed after World War I, once the Ottoman Empire fell apart as a result of British occupation. In 1958, an Iraq “republic” was created, and was primarily ruled by military strongmen, the most recent being Saddam Hussein.

Quick Facts on the Country of Iraq As Compared with the Commonwealth of Virginia

	Iraq	Virginia
Population	27.5 million	7.5 million
Demographics	Shia Arab - 60%; Sunni Arab - 17-20%; Kurd - 15-20%; Christian - 3%	Christian – 76%; Non-religious – 12%; Jewish – 1%; Muslim – 1%
Comparative Area (*in thousands)	437 sq kms* (slightly more than twice the size of Idaho)	39.5 sq miles*
GDP	\$87.9 billion (purchasing power parity)	
GDP per capita	\$3,000 per year	
Unemployment Rate	25-30%	3%
Inflation Rate	60%+	2.5%

CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

Library of Congress: Country Study <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/igtoc.html>

Who’s Who in Iraq?



Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki

Nouri Al-Maliki - the Prime Minister of Iraq under the new Iraqi government. Al-Maliki was the senior Shia member of the committee that drafted Iraq’s new constitution. He leads a 37 member cabinet. *See photo on left.*

Ambassador Ryan Crocker – the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq since March 2007. He was in Baghdad as the first Director of Governance for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and served previously as Ambassador to Syria, Ambassador to Kuwait, and Ambassador to Lebanon. Ambassador Crocker offered [testimony](#) before Congress on the status of the War in Iraq alongside General Petraeus.

General David Petraeus – the commanding general of the Multi-National Force Iraq, overseeing all coalition forces in Iraq. The U.S. Senate [voted](#) unanimously to confirm Gen. Petraeus’s nomination as commanding general in Iraq. He assumed this position in February 2007. General Petraeus offered [testimony](#) before Congress on the status of the War in Iraq alongside Ambassador Crocker. *See photo on right, www.dodmedia.osd.mil.*



Vice President Tariq al-Hardini – the top Sunni in Iraq. He threatened to pull out of the government in May, but lost three siblings in 2006 sectarian attacks, causing him to stay.

Muqtada al-Sadr – the head of an anti-U.S. Shia militia called the Mahdi Army that has waged insurgency against U.S. forces in Iraq.

Abu Ayyab al-Masri – believed to be the commander of al-Qaeda in Iraq since June 2006 when its former leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed in a U.S. airstrike.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN IRAQ

The Ethno-Sectarian Situation in Iraq



of the major cultural and religious groups in Iraq.

In Iraq, the core problem is a cycle of sectarian violence driven by mistrust in a corrupt government, personal safety that is only found in ethnic militias, and long-held division among Iraq's three largest groups: Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds. These distinct social groups have very strong religious differences where beliefs are so deep rooted that they cause many of the conflicts we see in the Middle East today. The depth and rigidity of the Iraqi people's allegiance to their particular tribe and religious beliefs is incomparable to any group's in the U.S. The political divisions between U.S. liberal and conservative citizens do not even scratch the surface compared to the impact that the Iraqi people's beliefs have on their daily lives. To understand the conflicts in Iraq, you must first understand the background

Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds – Sunni and Shia are two different denominations under the religion of Islam, while Kurd is an ethnicity. About 95% of Iraq's population adheres to some form of Islam, and almost all Muslims are either Sunni or Shia. Shia Arab make up 60% of the country, Sunni Arab make up 17-20%, and Kurds make up 15-20%. The division between the Sunnis and Shias dates back to the 7th century because of religious and political disagreements over who was the rightful leader of the Islamic nation. Both of these denominations are Iraqi Arab Muslims, who dominate two major areas in Iraq. The Kurdish minority, however, are not Arabs. They are the largest ethnic minority in Iraq and have been locked in a struggle with the government in Baghdad since the Iraqi Republic was founded in 1958, although most violent activity in Iraq stems from the conflict between the Sunnis and Shias.

The Religion of Islam - Because Islamic law does not recognize the separation of church and state, the impact of religion on the daily life of Muslim countries is far greater than has been found in the West since the Middle Ages. Islam is a monotheistic religion that is based on the teachings of Muhammad. Islamists observe the Five Pillars of Islam: 1) The Recitation of the shahada "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet," 2) Daily Prayer (salat), 3) Almsgiving (zakat), 4) Fasting (sawm), 5) Pilgrimage (hajj). A minority of Muslim authorities recognize a sixth pillar of Islam - Jihad. Jihad means to "strive or struggle." Jihad is the crusade to protect Islamic lands, beliefs, and institutions, and is also considered the requirement to do good works and to avoid all evil thoughts, words, and deeds. Many consider Jihad as the war to protect Islam. It is the only warfare permissible under Islamic law.

Who's Fighting in Iraq?

Following the political vacuum left by the removal of Saddam Hussein, each faction is seeking to maximize its power and influence in the new Iraq, and each group has their own objective. The Sunnis' objective is to regain some of the power that they had under Saddam Hussein. The most extreme Sunni insurgency groups fight under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq, including al-Qaeda in Iraq. The Shia's objective is to secure a strong hold on its recently gained political power and

to exact revenge on the Sunnis after 1300 years of conflict. The Mahdi army (known as JAM) is one of the largest Shia insurgency groups. The Kurds want to create and protect an autonomous region for the Kurdish people after being persecuted for many years under Saddam.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq - Al-Qaeda's leaders, particularly Osama bin Laden and the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have been outspoken in declaring al-Qaeda's twin goals as a terrorist organization: 1) the expulsion of foreign forces from Islamic society, particularly the U.S., and 2) the creation of a country ruled by Islamic law. Al-Qaeda's leaders view the situations of unrest in Iraq as an opportunity to pursue their goals. As a result, al-Qaeda has been known for supporting and encouraging the insurgency in Iraq. According to its own leaders, al-Qaeda views Iraq as the starting place to spread violence on behalf of Jihad across the Middle East, and eventually seeks to expand the violence to a direct confrontation with Israel.

The Political Situation in Iraq since 2003

After Saddam Hussein was overthrown as Iraq's government leader, the U.S. established a temporary, U.S.-led occupational government (the Coalition Provisional Authority, or CPA). On June 28, 2004, the U.S. shifted leadership to an appointed Iraqi government, who later voted on a constitution and elected a broadly Shia-led government. The Sunnis boycotted this election in 2005. The new Shia government has yet to take major steps to reduce popular resentment of Sunnis. Political reconciliation among the major groups has been slow and fragmented, as a result of distrust and power struggles.

In 2006, the U.S. and the Iraqi government agreed on a series of benchmarks that the Iraqi government must meet in order to demonstrate that they are working towards political reconciliation. Of these benchmarks there are four particular areas that the Iraqi government must address in order to take progressive steps towards political reconciliation:

De-Ba'athification – De-Ba'athification is the process of dissolving Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist party. The CPA removed Ba'athist leaders and party members from government and banned them from future employment in the public sector. The Iraqi Council of Representatives (similar to the House of Representatives), which has 275 members, is now responsible for drafting legislation to reform the de-Ba'athification process, but no consensus exists on the future for former Ba'ath party members in Iraqi government. Sunnis would like more access to the government, and the Shias don't want to allow this. As it stands now, the Iraqi government's draft of de-Ba'athification legislation has been referred to the Council of Representatives.

Distribution of Oil Wealth – An issue of tremendous importance to the Iraqis is the equal distribution of oil resources among the people of Iraq so all Iraqis benefit from oil wealth. Oil revenue is hugely important to the Iraqi economy, accounting for half of Iraq's GDP. There are four separate pieces of legislation needed to ensure oil wealth is distributed equally. Currently all but one has been drafted. None have been enacted. This is difficult because oil is located in the Kurdish/Shia region but not in the Sunni region. There are also national Iraqi concerns about foreign investment, which might increase overall production and refinement capacity.

Formation of Regions – Some Iraqi leaders believe that the right to form regions would help protect the Iraqi people's rights. There are many questions to be answered with regards to what aspects of each region the federal government will control (water, ports, oil, etc) and how the Iraqi government will resolve the status of disputed areas. Areas like the town of Kirkuk that are mixed ethnically and have strong religious history are considered by multiple sects to be "their land", and are thus controversial as to which group should govern them.

Constitutional Reform and Elections – Provincial elections in Iraq were held in January of 2005, and many Sunnis boycotted the election. As a result, mostly Shia and Kurdish people were elected in provinces that have largely Sunni populations. Now Sunnis are under-represented and the Iraqi government must write new provincial elections laws. *In photo to the left by the US Marine Corps, Iraqi voters display their ink stained fingers for proof that they voted.*



The Regional Situation in Iraq

Iraq's neighbors have historically had a significant influence on the country and each have a stake in the economic, political, and security outcomes in Iraq. When considering Iraq's future as a country, one must also consider the regional perspectives of Iraq.

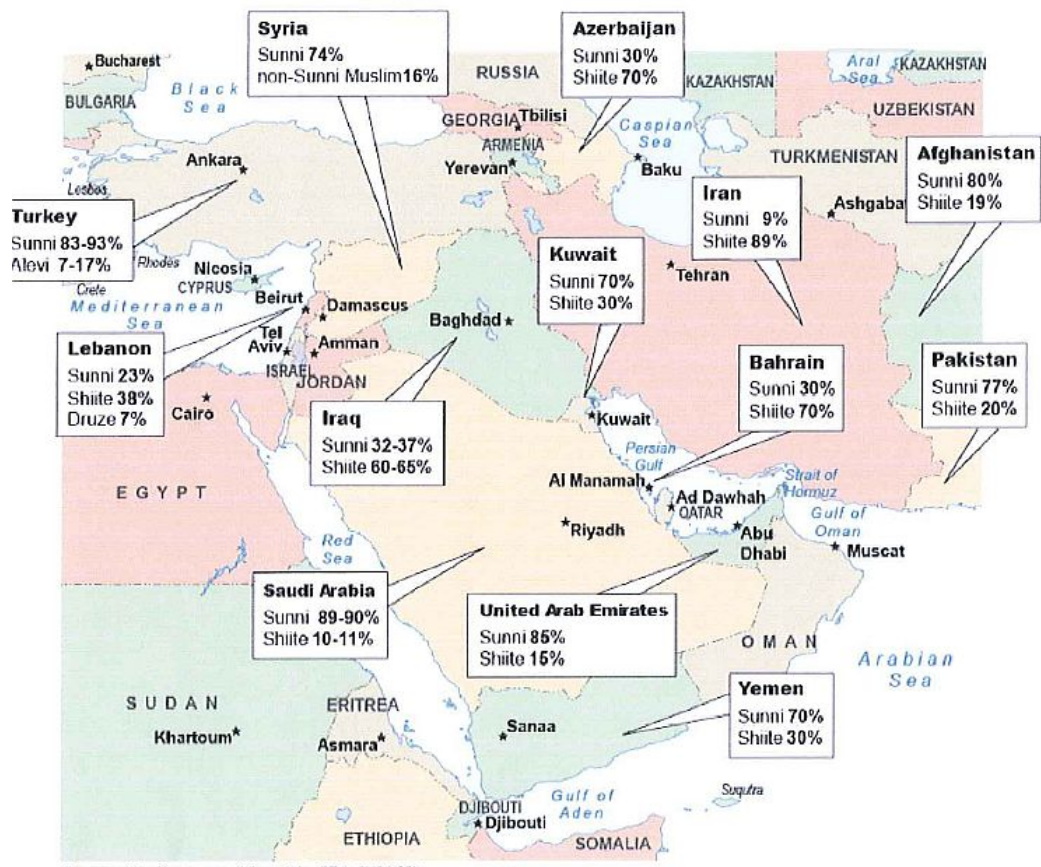
Iran – Iran is a Shia country. Therefore, it is supportive of Shia groups in Iraq, and has provided funding, training, and some of the most lethal weapons used against coalition forces, known as EFPs (Explosively Formed Projectiles). Ambassador Crocker [testified](#) that attempts to reach out to Iran were nearly entirely unproductive.

Turkey – Turkey's main concern in Iraq is to prevent the emergence of an Iraqi Kurdish state that seeks to partition territory from Turkey. This could lead to a buildup of separatist Turkish Kurds and create a safe haven for anti-Turkish terror.

Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia wants to prevent Iraq's instability from threatening Saudi Arabia's own security. As a Sunni country, they want to ensure Sunnis are not oppressed under the largely-Shia Iraqi government. This has delayed Saudi Arabia from establishing a diplomatic presence in Iraq, though they are slowly beginning that process. The Saudi Arabia government also wants to ensure that the revival of Iraq's oil industry doesn't threaten Saudi Arabia's dominance in this area, and any support they do provide to Iraq and the U.S. does not undermine the support it has among the largely Sunni citizenry.

Syria – Syria has many similarities with Iraq in regards to ethnic-sectarian divisions, which dominate both societies. Syria sees Iraq as an important neighboring state; however they also see Iraq as a potential threat and a rival for leadership in the Arab world. As a Sunni nation, Syria also is wary of Shia dominated government and is believed to tacitly allow foreign insurgents to join the Sunni fight for power.

The following graph created by the Congressional Research Service provides a regional breakdown of the major cultural groups.



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (1/24/06)

TIMELINE OF MAJOR ACTION IN IRAQ

October 10, 2002 – [House votes for use of military force against Iraq, 296 – 133](#)

March 20, 2003 – U.S. launches U.S.-led coalition in Iraq

April 9, 2003 – Saddam statue toppled in Iraq

April 21, 2003 – [The Coalition Provisional Authority](#) (CPA) is established

December 14, 2003 – Saddam is captured

June 30, 2004 – The CPA is dissolved and control is turned over to the Iraqi government is established

September 7, 2004 – CNN reports the death toll of U.S. soldiers in Iraq reaches 1,000 [CNN.com, 9/8/04]

January 30, 2005 – Iraq holds first general election

October 15, 2005 – Iraqi government adopts its new constitution

February 22, 2006 – The al-Askari Mosque (the Golden Mosque), one of the most important Shia mosques, is bombed

December 6, 2006 – [Iraq Study Group Report](#) is released

June 1, 2007 – Surge in Iraq begins as 30,000 additional combat troops ordered to Iraq have now arrived

September 10, 2007 – Gen. Petraeus testifies before Congress on current situation in Iraq in his [report to Congress](#). He recommends a five brigade drawdown from now until mid-2008, which represents nearly 25% of the combat power currently in Iraq.

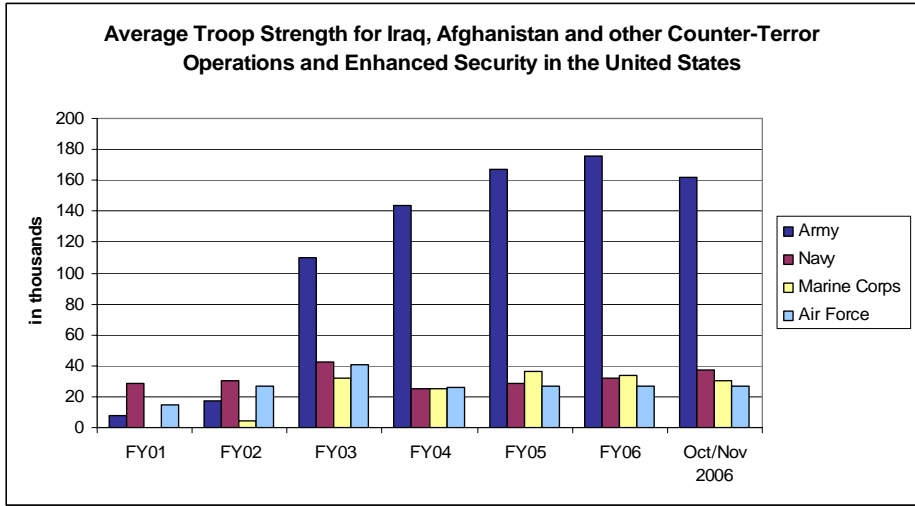
U.S. MILITARY COMMITMENT IN IRAQ

The Number of Troops in Iraq

At the beginning of this year, the Administration announced a troop increase in an effort to improve the security situation in Baghdad and al-Anbar province. The so-called “surge” includes five brigade combat teams, or 30,000 military personnel. As of July 2007, the Department of Defense reported there were 156,247 U.S. military personnel deployed to Iraq. 133,000 are active duty, and 23,000 are National Guard or Reserves personnel.

The U.S. Army counterinsurgency field manual recommends 1 military soldier per every 50 citizens. The Iraqi government is expected to provide 20,000 military personnel to participate in stabilization efforts. If we maintain the current U.S. troop levels, meeting the suggested goal of 1 military soldier per 50 citizens would require the Iraqi government to provide 120,000 personnel. There are currently 360,000 Iraqi Security Forces, and 165,000 of those are defense forces. However, only about one-half to two-thirds of those defense forces are on duty or available at any one time.

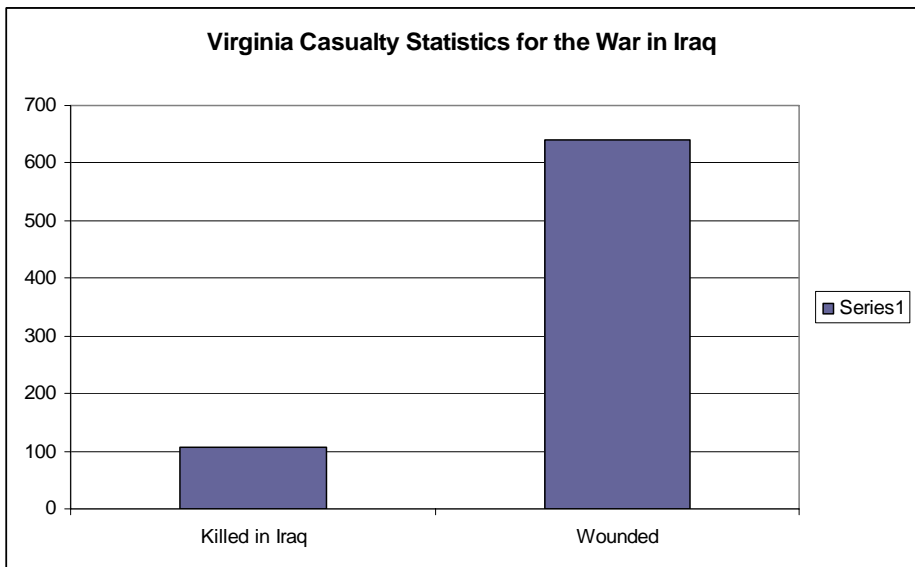
The following graph with figures from the Congressional Research Service offers a breakdown of troop strength by military branch for Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Counter-Terror Operations.

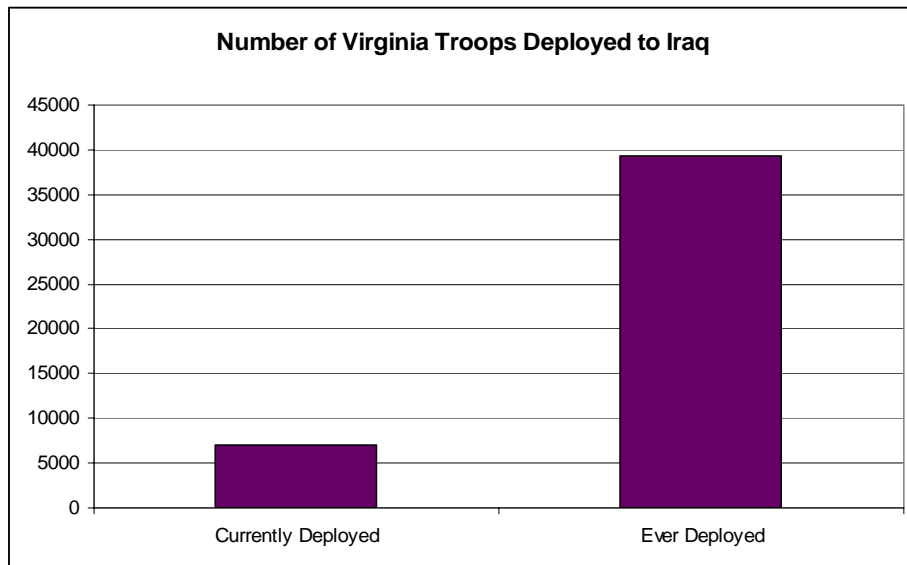


Number of Operation Iraqi Freedom U.S. Military Casualties as of September 10, 2007

	Killed in Action	Non-Hostile	Totals
Combat Operations Mar03 - Apr03	109	30	139
Post Combat Operations May03 - Present	2,966	647	3,613
Totals	3,081	678	3,752

The following graphs represent the troop statistics for the soldiers in the state of Virginia involved with the War in Iraq.





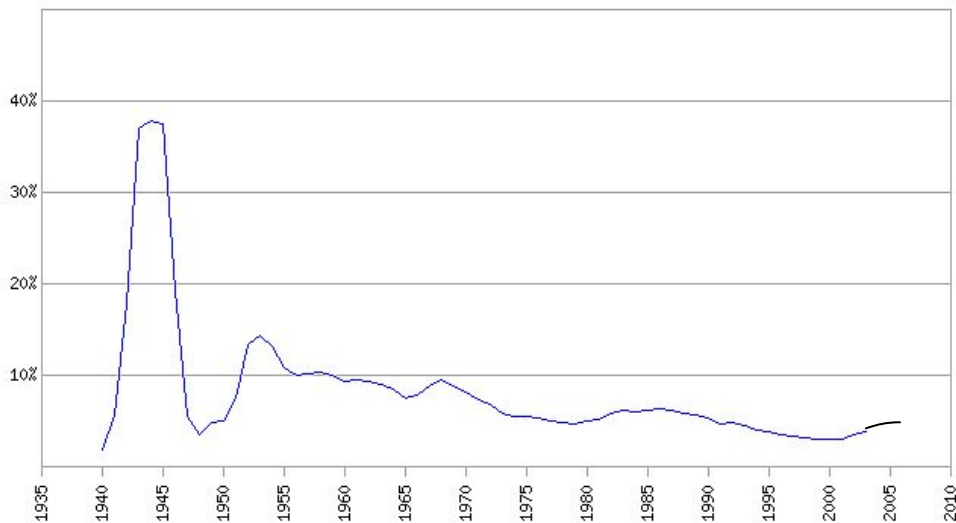
Funding for the War in Iraq

How much has Congress appropriated since the attacks on September 11th? Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has initiated three military operations. Operation Enduring Freedom covers Global War on Terror operations and operations in Afghanistan. Operation Noble Eagle provides needed security improvements on military bases across the U.S. and covers homeland security operations. Finally, Operation Iraqi Freedom, the most reported of the three, began with the invasion of Iraq and continues to provide counterinsurgency and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. These three operations are all considered under the “cost of war” funding numbers that are reported.

Since the beginning of the war, Congress has appropriated just over \$610 billion for these three operations combined. That number roughly amounts to about \$2026 per American citizen to cover the cost of the War in Iraq. 75% of that funding goes specifically to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, while an additional \$190 billion for security initiatives and veterans medical costs as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Overall U.S. defense expenditures currently account for 4.06% of the GDP. Today’s figures are at or below average for defense spending. Our current defense expenditures as a percentage of GDP are not more than couple hundredths of a percentage in difference from peace times. The chart below shows our trends in military spending as a nation since 1940 (just before World War II).

Defense Spending As a Percentage of GDP from 1940 – 2006



Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>; graph Truth and Politics.org

Table 3.1: outlays by superfunction and function: 1940--2009, in [Office of Management and Budget, Historical Tables, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2005](#)

What do funding needs for the future look like? Earlier this year, Bush requested \$140 billion up front to fund the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Just recently, Bush added an additional \$50 billion to that request. Future costs will continue to be determined by any necessary equipment resets and veterans benefits for soldiers serving in Iraq. Troop levels will continue to be the primary determining factor in the amount of dollars needed to appropriately fund the operations.

The Current U.S. Strategy

Within Iraq, coalition forces are taking a “bottom-up” approach to combat al-Qaeda and the Iraq insurgency. U.S. forces are beginning by working with local commanders and negotiating with tribal leaders in an effort to remove al-Qaeda’s local influence one tribe at a time. Coalition forces are attempting to refocus small tribe leaders’ efforts from supporting al-Qaeda to supporting the new Iraqi government. We have seen mixed success in this strategy. Additionally, current strategy calls for a temporary increase of U.S. forces as needed to maintain progress in Iraq.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR THE WAR IN IRAQ

There have been a wide range of proposed strategies in regards to the U.S.’s continued efforts in the War in Iraq. The following list includes some of the more widely supported strategies, although this list is not all-inclusive:

Immediate Withdrawal - This strategy calls for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. It would take approximately one year to 18-months to achieve complete withdrawal.

Maintain Current U.S. Military Presence – This strategy calls for continuation of the troop surge, which officially began in June 2007. The surge provides additional troops to provide adequate reconstruction assistance and increased pressure on the Iraqi government to become independent.

Partitioning of Iraq – This strategy would partition Iraq into three major areas, separating the Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds as a means of controlling sectarian violence. Many say the challenge in this would be parceling out Iraq’s oil reserves and major cities in a way that was acceptable to all three major groups. Neighboring countries are concerned of threats to their own security if this happened. Senators Joe Biden and Sam Brownback and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Michael O’Hanlon, support this strategy.

Targeted Troop Reduction – This strategy would provide for a gradual drawdown of troops in particular areas as security gains are met. To begin with, this means bringing 5,700 troops home by Christmas 2007 and five of the 20 brigades currently in Iraq home by mid-2008. President Bush, Gen. Petraeus, and Senator Warner support this strategy.

Regardless of which strategy is used, there will likely be continued U.S. military presence in Iraq for the near future. Force protection and anti-terrorism forces will continue to be necessary as it relates to the defense of U.S. embassies in the Middle East, the overall War on Terror, and in the horn of Africa..

WHERE I STAND

On Iraq and its Importance in the War on Terror...

With our desire to get our troops back home as quickly as possible, we must be careful to note that almost every objective analysis, including the one completed by the Iraq Study Group, concludes that failure in Iraq will place our country in grave danger. If our troops leave prematurely, al-Qaeda forces may establish a safe haven as they did in Afghanistan during the 1990s and direct their efforts on overseas attacks in the United States. Also, the Middle East itself may devolve into war on top of 30% of the world’s oil reserves, which would severely disrupt the global and U.S. economies. There is no quick or easy

solution to establish a stabilized Iraq , but the stabilization of Iraq is vitally important to our fight in the War on Terror.

On the Surge...

Regarding the recent surge in U.S. forces, I want to ensure that any increase in military power is matched by similar increases in the political and military commitments of the Iraqi government. It is now up to the Iraqis to put aside their sectarian differences and establish their country together. The surge has resulted in a noticeable reduction in deaths related to religious and ethnic differences, and much remains to be done in Iraq, particularly in regards to political progress.

On the Petraeus Report...

Gen. Petraeus, regarded by many as one of the most respected military leaders in the country, personally delivered a 'Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq,' which he wrote himself and did not clear with anyone in the Pentagon, the White House, or Congress before his oral testimony. His report represents one of the most accurate and credible assessments of the realities in Iraq. The General's report left no question that a premature drawdown of our forces would likely have devastating consequences. He went on to emphasize that the security in Iraq is improving and that the Iraqis are slowly taking on more of the responsibility for protecting their citizens. Accordingly, he is recommending a 20% reduction in U.S. combat forces over the next few months. Word of these troop reductions is good news for the men and women serving in Iraq and their families and should be encouragement for all of the United States.

On What is Coming in Congress...

The reports provided by Gen. Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker present an accurate and credible assessment of Iraq, and an opportunity for Members of Congress to work together in acknowledging our security and political successes in Iraq and our various needs for improvement. Whatever our individual thoughts on the war were in the past, we must put them aside and come together with a unified plan. We will work best if we undertake a bipartisan effort. We must decide how to best fund the war, and we must remember that any vote now will either affect the price we pay now, or the price we will have to pay later.

On Our Troops...

Our men and women in uniform and their families are a key reason we have made the successes that we have in Iraq and in the War on Terror. Their continued dedication and sacrifice for their country is not only noticed, but appreciated and respected. We commend our fine soldiers for the tireless and selfless work they take on each day to defend our nation. If you would like information on sending words of gratitude to our troops or would like to have a flag flown over the Capitol on behalf of a soldier deployed to Iraq, please see the links below.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

For more information on the War in Iraq, I encourage you to utilize the following resources used to produce this document. I would appreciate hearing your thoughts on the War in Iraq. Please take a moment to [Email](mailto:forbes@forbes.house.gov) me via my website, or call my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-6365.

Multi-National Forces in Iraq

<http://www.mnf-iraq.com/>

Special Investigator General on Iraq Reconstruction

<http://www.sigir.mil/>

Department of State Iraq Weekly Status Report

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/90714.pdf>

House Armed Services Committee

<http://armedservices.house.gov/>

Iraq: Regional Perspectives and U.S. Policy

<http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/regionalperspectives.pdf>



Iraq Study Group Report

<http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/iraqstudygroupreport.pdf>

Gen. Petraeus' Report to Congress

<http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/petraeusreport.pdf>

Maps

<http://www.congress.gov/erp/rs/html/RS21396.html>

Have a Flag Flown Over the Capitol for a Soldier Deployed to Iraq

<http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/Flag%20Form.doc>

Support Our Troops

<http://www.americasupportsyou.mil/americasupportsyou/index.aspx>