

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE SONS OF IRAQ AND POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
THE SONS OF IRAQ AND POLITICAL RECONCILIATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

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In late 2006, Sunni tribes in Anbar Province began openly working with Coalition Forces (CF). This battlefield alliance resulted in a dramatic drop in violence turning Anbar from one of the most violent areas in Iraq to one of the most secure. This movement, known as the Sahwa or Awakening, soon spread throughout the country. In May 2007 Baghdad residents, inspired by the Sahwa movement rose up against Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) working with both US forces and the Iraq Security Forces (ISF). This movement spread to other areas and became known as the Sons of Iraq (Sol). These movements coincided with a change in strategy in Iraq to focus on protecting the populace and included the deployment of 30,000 additional Soldiers to Iraq. The Sol was an essential factor in a significant drop in violence in 2007. However, the relative stability gained with the support of the Sol has not resulted in significant political reconciliation at the national level.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE SONS OF IRAQ AND POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

In late 2006, Sunni tribes in Anbar Province began openly working with Coalition Forces (CF). This battlefield alliance resulted in a dramatic drop in violence turning Anbar from one of the most violent areas in Iraq to one of the most secure. This movement, known as the Sahwa, or Awakening, soon spread throughout the country. In late May 2007 Baghdad residents, inspired by the Sahwa movement rose up against Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) working with both US forces and the Iraq Security Forces (ISF). Many of these "local volunteers" were former insurgents who switched sides. Starting in the Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriyah, the movement spread throughout Baghdad and its outskirts, effectively defeating the Sunni insurgency. Initially the various and loosely connected groups went by a number of different names. For a while CF called them Concerned Local Citizens (CLC), but eventually settled on the Sons of Iraq (Sol). The resultant security the Sol helped establish allowed for development and the start of political reconciliation. However, the US embrace of this predominately Sunni led effort created tension with the Government of Iraq (GoI) and in some ways undermined the government's sovereignty. This paper examines the strategic impact of the Sol movement to evaluate both the positive and negative effects as they relate to furthering US policy.

What Was US Policy?

In measuring the success of the Sol movement, we must first understand US objectives in Iraq. The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* published by the Bush Administration in November 2005 defined victory in terms of short, medium and long term goals.

- **Short term**, Iraq is making steady progress in fighting terrorists, meeting political milestones, building democratic institutions, and standing up security forces.
- **Medium term**, Iraq is in the lead defeating terrorists and providing its own security, with a fully constitutional government in place, and on its way to achieving its economic potential.
- **Longer term**, Iraq is peaceful, united, stable, and secure, well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism.¹

The document goes on to summarize the end state as building “a new Iraq with a constitutional, representative government that respects civil rights and has security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order and keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven for terrorists.”²

By late 2006 the Bush administration realized that CF were not winning the war, leading to several strategy reviews culminating in a change in strategy and the deployment of over 30,000 additional soldiers. President Bush announced this change, despite significant opposition, during an address to the Nation on 10 January 2007. The President reemphasized policy objectives for Iraq as establishing “a functioning democracy that polices its territory, upholds the rule of law, respects fundamental human liberties, and answers to its people.”³ Furthermore, this democratic Iraq would “be a country that fights terrorists instead of harboring them.”⁴ This pronouncement reiterated policy objectives laid out in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.

Much of the media attention and political debate surrounding President Bush’s change in strategy focused on troop strength. “The Surge”, provided a two-word, simplistic explanation for the resultant success. In reality the drop in violence was due to a complex mix of factors to include: effective targeting by US Special Operations Forces (SOF), a decision by Muqtada al-Sadr to stand down his Mahdi army, the consolidation

of sectarian cleansing in Baghdad, population centric tactics by CF, and increased proficiency of ISF.

While all of these factors were important, the decision by local Sunnis in Baghdad to actively support CF was essential to securing the capital. Inspired by events in Anbar where tribal forces allied with US forces, Sunnis in Baghdad chose to ally themselves with CF. Starting with a few fighters who attacked al-Qaeda insurgents in late May 2007, the movement grew rapidly as CF and Sunni leaders saw the benefits of cooperation. US commanders throughout Baghdad point to the Sol as decisive in bringing security to their areas. However, working closely with what was essentially a US controlled militia created significant tension with the Iraqi government. In retrospect, did working with the Sol move the US closer to achieving policy objectives as described in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* and President Bush's 10 January 2007 address to the nation? Gaining a greater appreciation for the Sol movement necessitates a closer look at the causes of the Sunni insurgency, the emergence of the Anbar Awakening, the spread of the Awakening to Baghdad, and the effects of this movement not just militarily, but also politically.

Sunni Insurgency and Civil War

The fundamental issue once the US toppled Saddam Hussein's regime was who would wield power in the new Iraq. Decisions made by L. Paul Bremer head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) played a major part in the development of a Sunni insurgency to challenge both CF and the emerging Iraqi government. On May 16, 2003 Bremer issued CPA Decree 1 which denied jobs for the top four tiers of Saddam's Ba'ath Party.⁵ This decree left a large professional class of former government officials,

civil servants, leaders of state run corporations and university professors out of work. Many senior US military and civilian leaders argued against the decree since these people were necessary to run what remained of Iraq's infrastructure and economy.⁶ Additionally, these disaffected professionals provided the emerging Sunni insurgency with a core of leaders to recruit from.⁷ Shortly thereafter, on 23 May, Bremer issued CPA Decree 2 which abolished the security and intelligence services. With the stroke of a pen Bremer put hundreds of thousands of young men out of work.⁸

Bremer's decisions did not play well in Anbar which became the center of the Sunni insurgency. Along with the loss of Sunni dominance of Iraqi politics in Baghdad, the Sunni sheiks also lost their power and authority given to them by tradition and reinforced by Saddam Hussein's policies. Much of the officer corps came from Anbar and they were now out of work and disenfranchised.⁹ Writing in the forward to a collection of interviews on Marine experiences in Anbar, former Deputy Commanding General for the 1st Marine Division and Commander, Multinational Forces West Lieutenant General John Kelly said that the shock and humiliation of having the Iraqi Army disbanded played a significant role in the emergence of the insurgency. The Iraqi Army was the one institution that all Iraqis could be proud of for its successful protection of the nation against Iran during the 1980s. Its disbandment was seen as an intentional display of contempt for the Iraqi people. "In the minds of many, this is when our status as liberators ended and that of occupier began."¹⁰

The military cannot place all the responsibility for creating the insurgency on the shoulders of civilian leaders. Initial operations by US forces were often heavy handed and worked at cross purposes with the intent of establishing security. CF were trained

for high intensity combat operations with little if any emphasis on counter-insurgency. According to LtGen Kelly, when pressed Anbaris would generally say that early in the war Americans would overreact to small acts of violence, use excessive firepower and conduct midnight raids to arrest innocent people. These actions reinforced the rhetoric of the extremists and served to help the recruiting by insurgents.¹¹

The war took a dramatic turn for the worse on February 22, 2006 when AQI attacked the al-Askariya mosque in Samarra, almost completely destroying the dome. AQI designed the attack on this ancient Shia relic to provoke a violent response from Shia extremists against the Sunni populace. AQI wanted to create a sectarian conflict to undermine the Iraqi government and discredit the United States. AQI achieved their goal and thousands of Shia took to the streets killing over 600 Sunni in Baghdad by the end of March.¹²

Developments in the political arena fanned the flames of sectarian violence as Sunnis saw a sectarian-driven agenda within Prime Minister Maliki's government. Nouri al-Maliki came to power as a compromise candidate when Shia Islamist parties tried to form a government after the December 2005 parliamentary election. Maliki owed his position in part to the backing of Muqtada al-Sadr.¹³ In return, the Sadrist bloc received portfolios for six ministries within the Iraqi Government to include the Ministries of Health and Civil Society.¹⁴ Sadr's base of power came out of Sadr City in Northeast Baghdad where the black shirted fighters of Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) maintained control. JAM now had control of parts of the government and a militia of young men under Sadr's direction. This combination served to fuel the sectarian violence initiated by the Samarra bombing.

Civilian casualties rose dramatically, especially in Baghdad, as the sectarian crisis escalated. Sunni insurgents attacked Shia markets causing massive casualties among the Shia populace. JAM responded with death squads targeting Sunnis. In turn Sunni extremists targeted Shia in Sunni neighborhoods with intimidation, kidnapping and murders. The violence effectively cleansed neighborhoods of one sect or the other as the two sides vied for power. Shia families in Sunni dominated areas packed up as many belongings as they could and moved to Shia neighborhoods. Simultaneously, Sunni families fled Shia neighborhoods for safer Sunni areas. The death toll among civilians rose dramatically peaking from September 2006 to January 2007 with several thousand killed each month, predominantly in Baghdad (see Figure 1).¹⁵

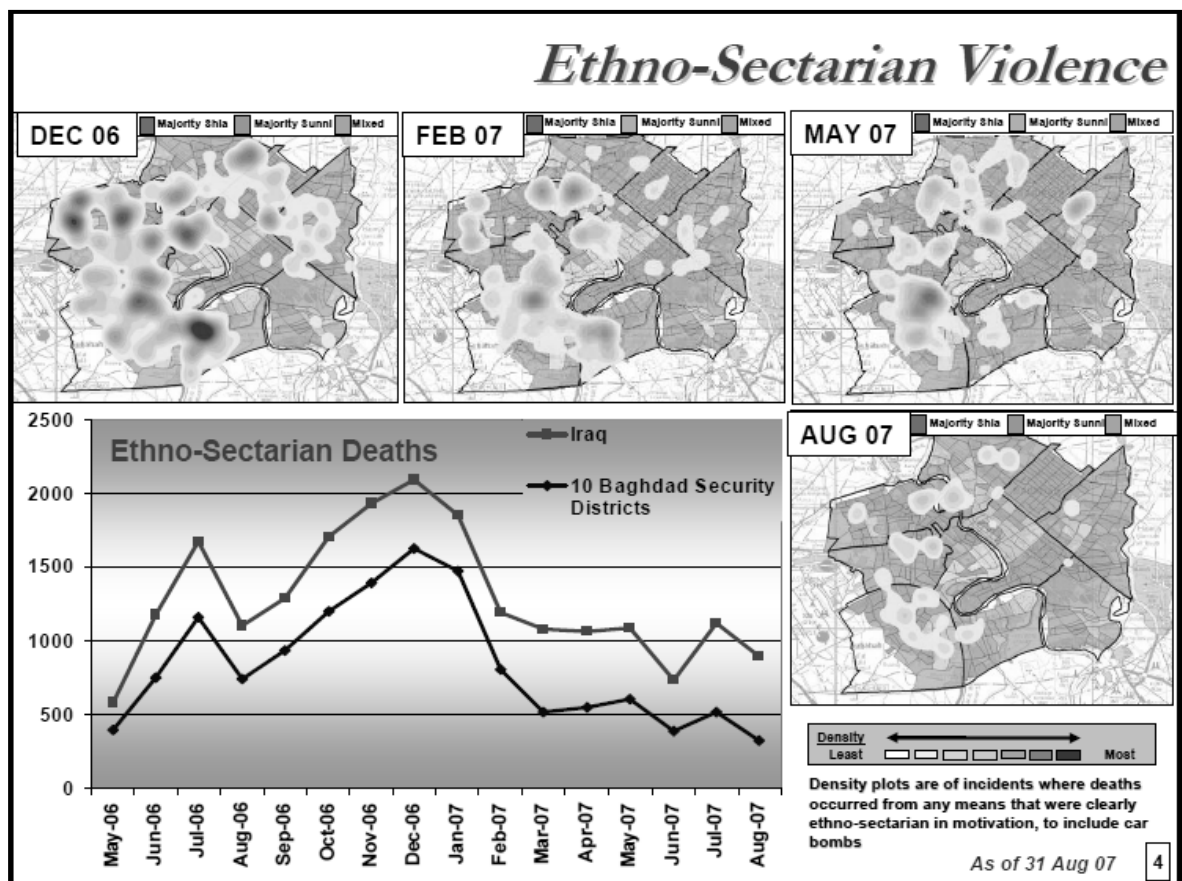


Figure 1: Ethno-sectarian Violence in Baghdad¹⁶

During this period, Sunni enclaves in Baghdad shrunk with Adhamiyah one of the few remaining on the east side of the Tigris River. On the west side, Shia militia made progress in gaining control of West Rashid and pushed Sunnis by the thousands into the Mansour District in northwest Baghdad. In November 2006 JAM began a brutal offensive to take control of the northwest neighborhood of Hurriyah just north of Mansour. JAM pushed out Sunni residents burning some homes while taking over the rest. Simultaneously, many Sunnis fled their neighborhoods in West Rasheed. Thousands were left homeless (see Figure 2).¹⁷

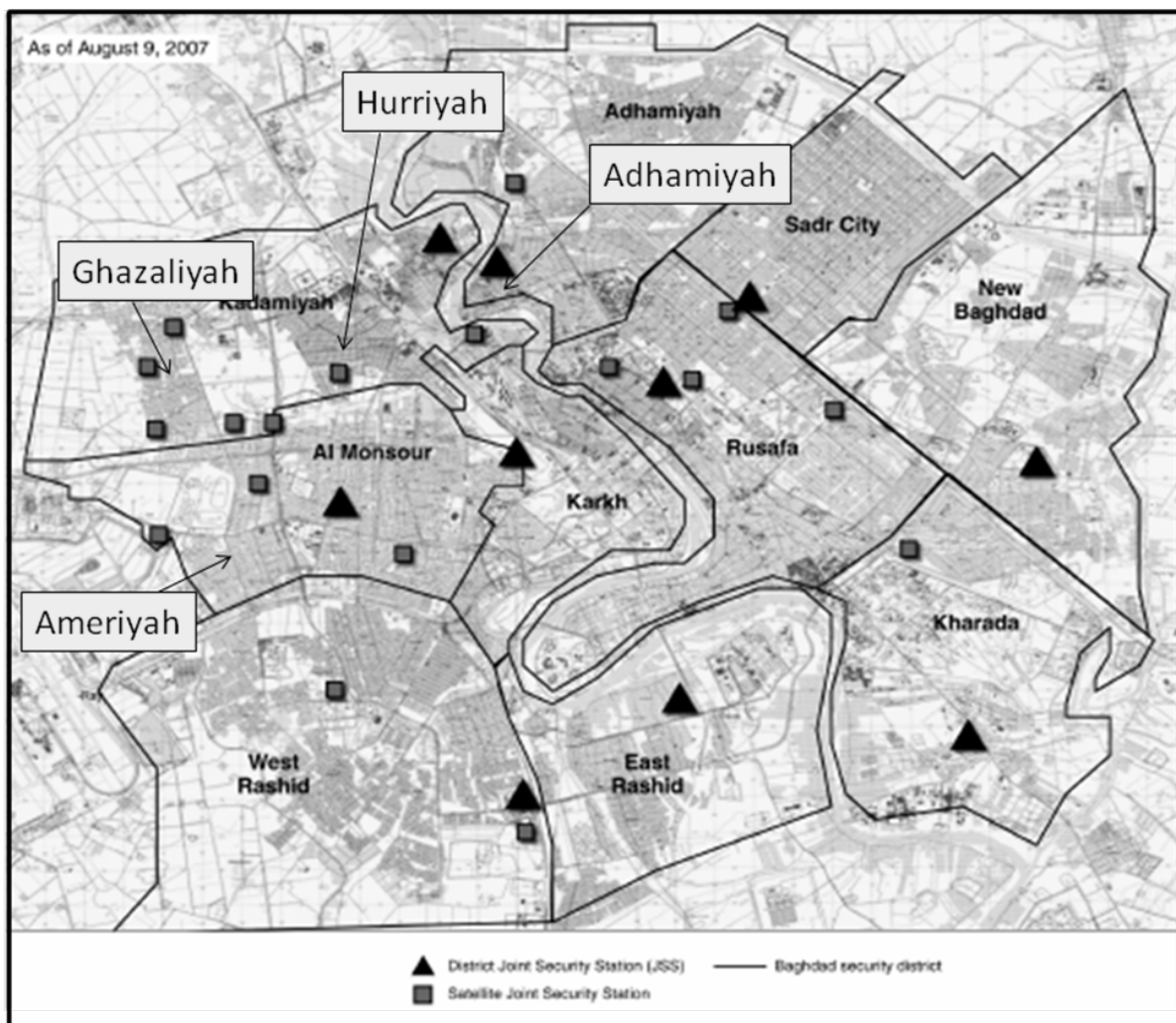


Figure 2: Baghdad Security Districts and Selected Neighborhoods¹⁸

The Shia controlled government reinforced JAM's ethnic cleansing operations through a denial of essential services. Sunni areas received considerably less electricity than Shia neighborhoods. Sunnis avoided the hospital for fear of being killed or taken prisoner by JAM since the Sadrists controlled the Ministry of Health.¹⁹ No banks operated in Sunni areas of Mansour forcing recipients of government checks to brave a trip to Shia areas to cash them.²⁰ Sunni areas also could not get access to government food rations at the government warehouse which brazenly flew Shia banners.²¹

The Anbar Awakening

As the level of violence increased in Baghdad, a positive development occurred in Ramadi when Sheik Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, more commonly known as Abu Risha, announced the formation of the Sahwa al-Anbar in September 2006.²² This organization openly allied itself with US forces to fight AQI. This movement emerged as the result of complex political-military interaction among CF, Sunni tribes and AQI. One of the essential ingredients to this development was the long term approach Marine Corps leadership took in attempting to pacify Anbar. Leaders based this approach upon a philosophy emphasizing political engagement and a methodology inspired by the Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* written in the 1930s and republished in 1990.²³

Anbaris initially embraced AQI to fight CF. However, a fissure developed between local insurgents and the foreign-based al-Qaeda. AQI focused on killing Americans and offered no future vision for Anbaris other than extreme violence. AQI's brutal tactics widened the political fissure with the killing of tribal leaders, brutal enforcement of their interpretation of Sharia, and forced marriages of girls in defiance of tribal traditions.²⁴

CF offered a viable alternative to al-Qaeda's brutal and grim dominance. The basis for this alternative came from the vision Major General James Mattis developed as the 1st Marine Division prepared to deploy to Iraq in 2004. Mattis viewed the population as key terrain essential for success in a counterinsurgency. He and his staff conducted an assessment of the demographics of Anbar Province resulting in the identification of three main groups: "the tribes; former regime elements; and foreign fighters."²⁵ Mattis understood that each of these groups required a separate approach but saw an opportunity to exploit differences between them, particularly the foreign fighters. Mattis' approach emphasized "proactive engagement of sheiks, respectful treatment of the population, and sustained efforts to restore essential services and infrastructure."²⁶ This approach resonated with Sunni leadership as they struggled to find their place in the new Iraq. Once the collective Sunni leadership of Anbar realized that working with CF against al-Qaeda was in their best interest, rapid and dramatic changes in the security situation developed.

Sheik Abdul Sattar Abu Risha announced the formation of the Sahwa al-Anbar (The Awakening in Anbar) in September 2006. His men targeted al-Qaeda militants within Ramadi and cooperated with COL Sean McFarland's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. The movement grew as local tribes turned from AQI and supported CF efforts. COL McFarland emphasized the impact this had on recruitment for the Iraqi police as the number of monthly volunteers swelled from a trickle to several hundred.²⁷ Eventually, thirty-five tribes and sub-tribes joined the movement.²⁸

In the end patience and discipline were the keys to turning the situation in Anbar around. CF and ISF effectively drove a wedge between al-Qaeda militants and local

tribal insurgent groups. The disciplined approach by Marines and Soldiers was a stark contrast from the brutality of AQI. While CF placed much emphasis on non-lethal means to achieving security, they did not shy away from lethal combat and demonstrated the ability to kill anyone who threatened the security they were trying to establish. As Sunni leadership realized that CF offered the best route to achieve their long term interests, they took advantage of that opportunity. As CF worked with their new allies, however, they had to balance the relationship with support for elected government leaders.²⁹ This balancing act would become crucial as the movement spread to the political center of the nation in Baghdad.

The Baghdad Awakening

As the Bush administration struggled to develop a strategy to address the increasing sectarian violence in Iraq, senior military leaders within CF took notice of the developments in Anbar. One of these leaders was British Lieutenant General Graeme Lamb who understood that success in Iraq was a long term affair. Drawing upon his experience in the conflict in Northern Ireland, he determined that reconciliation would require engaging the very insurgents CF were fighting. When he arrived in Iraq in 2006 he proposed reaching out to those insurgents open to reconciliation. This effort became known as the “strategic engagement initiative” and was embraced by Multi-National Corps, Iraq (MNC-I) commander LTG Ray Odierno and by Multi-National Force, Iraq (MNF-I) commander GEN David Petraeus.³⁰ MNF-I created the Force Engagement Cell, manning it with special operations and intelligence personnel, to reach out to possible reconcilable insurgents.³¹

Sunni leadership in Baghdad also took note of the success in Anbar and began reaching out to CF on a wider basis throughout the spring of 2007. Much of this

outreach occurred at the local level with Sunni leaders reaching out to CF commanders at the company and battalion level. Reconciliation at this grass roots level depended upon commanders who could seize the initiative and make peace with their enemies.³² The movement spread to Abu Ghraib where a former insurgent, Abu Azzam, encouraged hundreds of local volunteers to join a local police force the local US battalion was trying to form.³³ Local Sunni leaders also contacted US commanders in the outskirts of southwest Baghdad and near Taji.³⁴

In the Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriyah, Sunni imams approached CF as early as February 2007 to establish a security force.³⁵ However, the neighborhood was infested with AQI and these leaders would not talk openly about this proposal, but AQI's violent tactics finally pushed them over the edge. On the evening of 29 May, an imam contacted the local battalion to say volunteers would attack AQI the next day. Insisting they had to do this for themselves, he refused requests to allow CF to conduct operations based on his information. Over the next two days volunteers fought AQI for control of the community. On the second day, the imam called again desperately seeking support from CF. Two US platoons soon arrived at his mosque where volunteers were holding off an attack by AQI. The local ISF battalion also responded providing ammunition. Over the next few days CF, ISF and the local volunteers took initial steps to establish a partnership.³⁶

The movement quickly spread throughout Baghdad and surrounding areas. Commanders at all levels demonstrated initiative and flexibility in working with local leaders to establish a cooperative framework to establish security. However, proximity to the seat of power of the Iraqi government complicated the movement in Baghdad.

Commanders had to take this into account as they organized these groups. Also, while the movement in Anbar was based upon the tribal networks, the movement in Baghdad reflected an urban mosaic where tribal ties were weakened and professional relationships, particularly through military and school ties, were more important. As a result, one of the key differences of the Sol from the Anbar Awakening was that while still primarily a Sunni dominated movement, Shia were a part of most of the groups in Baghdad.³⁷

Eventually, the movement grew to over 99,000 Sols to include 29,177 in Baghdad by August 2008, just before their transition to full Iraqi control.³⁸ Initially, CF maintained control of these forces through security contracts to protect key infrastructure. However, over time CF transitioned greater responsibility to the GoI with the ISF assuming command and control even though CF still paid the contracts.³⁹ In October 2008, the GoI assumed full control of the Sol to include payments.⁴⁰

Embracing these local volunteers was a risky venture from the start. The risk of establishing multiple armed groups while the overall objective was to stand down sectarian militias was not lost on US leadership. Local leaders could potentially retain control of Sol groups and pose a threat to the government.⁴¹ While the security gained may allow US forces to begin to withdraw, establishing rival militias was clearly a departure from the President's vision and would not achieve policy objectives.

Improvements in Security

By late summer 2007 violence was clearly dropping in Iraq. As stated earlier, multiple factors led to this drop in violence.⁴² In testimony before Congress, General Petraeus cited improvements in Iraqi Security Forces and their taking on more

responsibility for operations. However, he gave the greatest credit to the emergence of the “tribes and local citizens” who rejected Al Qaeda and other extremists.⁴³

The biggest and most obvious impact of the Sol movement was the security it helped establish within Baghdad and other areas to which it spread. In area after area, recorded violence dropped precipitously wherever Sol groups stood up. The Sol allowed CF to target more effectively by providing accurate and timely intelligence on AQI operations and structure. The ability to get detailed human intelligence (HUMINT) made targeting much more effective.⁴⁴ Also, since some of the Sol were former members of insurgent groups, their incorporation into the security framework not only increased the number of counterinsurgents, it also worked to reduce the number of insurgents.⁴⁵

The surge in US forces and adjustment of tactics to get out into the community was designed to increase the protection of the population but was still not sufficient to provide adequate protection. The Sol brought not only the manpower necessary to “hold” the terrain, but also the trust of the local populace. By bringing these forces into the security framework CF and ISF finally had the numbers of personnel needed to ‘hold’ these communities once they were cleared. However, effective clearing did not come from large operations conducted by security forces. Instead the most effective clearing came from detailed intelligence provided by the Sol and focused raids based on this intelligence by either conventional or special forces. The level of intelligence necessary to conduct this type of clearing was not available until the locals themselves came forward to provide the information.⁴⁶

In any event, the Sol in Baghdad had a devastating effect on Al Qaeda's ability to conduct operations in the capital. By losing its grip on the population AQI lost its sanctuary and sought new bases of operation, which included the Diyala and Tigris River Valley's and the city of Mosul. Effective operations by Iraqi and CF in early 2008 continued to force AQI deeper into rural areas.⁴⁷ AQI simply could not find a populace to effectively blend in with. Although the organization remains a threat, it no longer controls the Sunni populace and has not been effective in perpetuating the civil war and chaos it desires.

The Sol also helped stop the expansion of JAM in Baghdad. In an article published by the Counter Terrorism Center at West Point, Dr. David Killcullen argues that local Sunni security forces in Baghdad created a "balance of power" effect which deterred JAM that might have thought about continuing the ethnic cleansing of Baghdad begun in 2006.⁴⁸ According to Lt. Col. Pat Frank, the Sol in Northwest Rashid, which consisted of both Sunni and Shia volunteers, were able to infiltrate both al-Qaeda and JAM in the mixed sectarian neighborhood, and defeat these organizations through effective targeting and providing a viable economic alternative for unskilled and unemployed young men.

The Politics of the Sons of Iraq

The Sol was more than a movement to provide security. It was also politically sensitive from its inception. While the Sol helped to undermine the insurgency, it also threatened political institutions that had already emerged within the new Iraqi polity. Embracing this movement marked a clear change in MNF-I policy by establishing formations outside official security forces. With this change came considerable benefits. The establishment of security enabled economic development, improvements in

infrastructure, and some level of reconciliation, especially at the local level. However, it also came with significant risks to the relationship between CF and the GoI that was played out at both the local and national levels.⁴⁹

At the local level, the Sol were generally tied to reconciliation efforts between CF commanders and local Sunni civil leaders. While the ultimate goal was to bring Sunnis into the political process, reconciliation started with an accommodation between the Sunni populace and CF.⁵⁰ CF commanders at the tactical level also had to use political skills to gain support from the ISF by leveraging relationships established with their ISF partners. Simultaneously, commanders used their influence with Sol leaders to shape and tailor the movement to deal with local conditions while keeping an eye on political strains with the ISF and the GoI.⁵¹ While the reconciliation of locals to include former insurgents with CF was a great step forward in establishing security, the challenge remained to reconcile these groups with the GoI. Herein lay the greatest political challenges at the operational and strategic level.

On 3 June 2007, General Petraeus sent an update to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates closing with a description of the dramatic events occurring in Ameriyah. He remarked that “For the first time we saw the Sunni population in Baghdad start to fight back against Al Qaeda in Ameriyah...We helped the element and we’ll see how it evolves. I suspect the Iraqi government will have significant qualms.”⁵² This brief summary accurately captured the significance of the Sol from its inception. On the one hand CF leaders saw the great potential to be gained in supporting this movement. On the other hand it brought great political risk in dealing with the Iraqi government. In essence, the US was backing what was, in effect, a Sunni-based militia at the same

time it was trying to build institutions within the Iraqi government to include security forces. As a result the US was both building up a government and undermining it at the same time.

By embracing and encouraging the Sol, GEN Petraeus, LTG Odierno and other leaders throughout CF assumed enormous political risk in their relationships with the GoI. However, along with great risk came great opportunity. Leveraging the capabilities of the Sol to defeat al-Qaeda provided political leverage to encourage the GoI to incorporate Sunnis into the new Iraq to include jobs within the security forces. GEN Petraeus and LTG Odierno used their positions to pressure the government to accept the Sol and press for wider reconciliation. In August 2007 GEN Petraeus brought Deputy Prime Minister Barhim Salih, the defense minister, and other officials to see firsthand the significant progress made in Ameriyah. Not only was Petraeus trying to get the government to accept the Sol, he also used such opportunities to discuss reconciliation.⁵³ Likewise, LTG Odierno conducted visits to key areas with senior GoI leaders, with much media attention highlighting the success of the Sol. However, an unintended effect of these senior leader visits was the embarrassment of senior Iraqi Army leaders. The Sol were getting credit for increased security which infuriated ISF leadership.⁵⁴

From the start the Shia dominated government was suspicious of the movement. Much of the Iraqi leadership, to include Prime Minister Maliki, saw the Sol as insurgents intent on overthrowing the government.⁵⁵ Adding even more complexity to the political environment was the threat the movement posed to established Sunni parties, particularly the Iraqi Islamic Party which saw the movement as a potential organized

competitor for support among Sunni Arabs.⁵⁶ From the Coalition perspective the rewards were worth the risks. According to Killcullen, the Sol helped to form an informal authority structure to build political unity and social coherence in Sunni communities which helped move them away from the fractured structure of the insurgency.⁵⁷ However, while the GoI saw the threat of a cohesive Sunni force, CF leadership saw a loose network that posed little threat to the government. To keep the Sol from becoming a threat to the government, CF commanders put restrictions on their operations to include limiting their movements and authorities to their own neighborhoods, banning the use of heavy weapons, and requiring that all operations had to be coordinated with CF and the ISF. CF also gathered biometric data consisting of retinal scans and fingerprints which were input into the Biometric Automated Toolset (BATS) available in each battalion. These measures helped mitigate the concerns of CF leaders, but did little to assuage the fears of Iraqi leadership.⁵⁸

Still, the government remained apprehensive of the movement and sought greater control. In December 2007, Iraqi government and CF leaders reached an agreement which confirmed ground rules for the Sol movement. This agreement included a cap on the number of volunteers to no more than 103,000. Rules also stated they could not represent a political party and must reflect the demographic balance in their areas. Finally, CF also could not provide arms to the Sol.⁵⁹ This agreement reflects not only the government's attempt to mitigate the potential for a Sunni led coup, but also an effort to prevent the Sol from becoming a political threat.

CF and the GoI found common ground in that neither viewed the Sol as a long term solution.⁶⁰ CF viewed the Sol as an opportunity to get more Sunni into the ISF,

especially the Iraqi Police (IP) which would establish security forces drawn from the people they were to protect. CF developed Operation Blue Shield to recruit volunteers, primarily the Sol, into the Iraqi police forces. Maliki initially balked at the idea. While he had earlier given tentative support to bringing volunteers into the police force in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad was another matter. Petraeus pushed Maliki on this issue and mitigated his concerns by asking the GoI not to accept a rogue, autonomous force, but a cohesive force consisting of men who pledged their loyalty to the government and would undergo background checks to include biometric screening.⁶¹

The way forward agreed to in December 2007 included a commitment by the Iraqi government to incorporate about 20 percent of the Sol into the ISF and transition the remaining 80 percent into civil service jobs or private sector employment.⁶² However, the transition was extremely slow, characterized by a complicated application and review process starting at the local level where recruits went through initial screening and vetting at the local level to include a panel of CF, ISF, and community leaders. Application packets then went to the Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation (IFNCR) which was an implementation committee established to oversee national reconciliation. IFNCR was formally under the purview of the Supreme Committee for Dialogue and National Reconciliation (SCDNR) but had a great deal of autonomy and reported directly to the Prime Minister's office. After screening IFNCR forwarded candidate application packets to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) for vetting, selection, and if approved, hiring orders. Even with this process the MOI remained reluctant to bring the Sol on board.⁶³

In September 2008, the GoI moved to exert even more control over the movement by announcing that it would assume full control for the Sol as of October 2008.⁶⁴ In a press conference, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir claimed the Sol for the government as “our sons, our citizens”, but he also provided a warning that all Iraqis came under the law and that while assuming control of the Sol, the government might arrest or detain some of its members. In reality the transfer to full Iraqi control was not completed until April 2009, but the government did move forward to eliminate political threats that might emanate from the movement through active targeting of Sol leadership.⁶⁵ The government also dragged its feet in incorporating the Sol into the ISF with just 13 percent brought in by August 2009 and only 10 percent transitioned to either public sector or government jobs.⁶⁶

The GoI continues to target Sol and other Sunni leaders throughout Baghdad. This includes the forced exile of an Sol leader from Ameriyah and the detention of a key Sol leader in Rashid in March 2009. This detention led to armed clashes between Sol and ISF, numerous detentions and the disbandment of the group. Leaders from Ghazaliyah and Arab Jabour are currently in hiding as the GoI has issued warrants for their arrest. Since the summer of 2009, the GoI has arrested over sixty Sunni leaders in the Baghdad area.⁶⁷ Granted, some of the arrests were likely warranted, however the cumulative effect of targeting Sunni leadership has served to continue the alienation of the Sunni populace from the government.⁶⁸

The GoI, dominated by Shia parties, has benefitted greatly from the current security situation which would not have been possible without the Sol assisting in the destruction of al-Qaeda and the securing of Baghdad. What remains to be seen is

whether the GoI will reach out to include the Sunni populace to a greater degree.

However, Prime Minister Maliki may not see any benefit in reconciliation. Al-Qaeda is no longer the threat it was in 2006 and 2007. Muqtada al-Sadr lost political influence as the threat from al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups decreased and after successful attacks on his supporters in Basra and Sadr City in 2008. Finally, Sunnis remain politically divided and targeting of their leadership prevents them from becoming an effective political force to threaten the Shia agenda during elections.

The question for US policy makers is this “good enough”? Does a stable Iraq with a sectarian government achieve US policy and further national security interests? With the Saddam regime out of power and the failure to find WMD, US policy solidified around establishing a stable democratic Iraq. The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* provides a standard to assess achievement of US policy objectives.

Assessing the Impact

On 27 February 2009 President Barak Obama laid out his policy towards Iraq in a speech to Marines at Camp Lejeune, NC. After praising the service of Marines and Soldiers for the relative peace and security they brought to Iraq, he outlined what he called a new strategy towards ending the war in Iraq and transitioning to full Iraqi control. The policy objective for this strategy was “an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self reliant.”⁶⁹ The President went on to say that to achieve this goal the US will “work to promote an Iraqi government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe haven to terrorists.”⁷⁰ However, he was perfectly clear that the US would not continue to commit its blood and treasure to achieve these outcomes. Instead he placed the responsibility on the Iraqi people to “choose a better future” and take advantage of the security that US forces helped to secure.⁷¹

Absent was any reference to establishing a constitutional democracy within Iraq. Instead the speech reflected a pragmatic assessment of the situation and an understanding of the limits of American power. However, as the US withdraws its forces and focus away from Iraq it is also losing influence on the ability to shape the political framework. This approach could force Iraqi's to take the lead in developing a stable government that balances the interests and concerns of the various ethnic and sectarian factions. However, the continued targeting and marginalization of Sunni leaders point to the consolidation of power of an Iraqi government that is only marginally representative of the people.

Undoubtedly Iraq has made significant progress since the winter of 2006-2007 when it appeared that a full-scale civil war would engulf the country. The security situation has improved dramatically with violent attacks down in almost every category (see Figure 3). According a recent Department of Defense report to Congress on the progress of the war in Iraq, violent acts are at the lowest levels they have been in five years.⁷² The report states that AQI is severely degraded and many of the Shia militias have transitioned from violence to political activity. However, the report continues to stress that security gains are fragile with several Sunni and Shia groups still actively conducting operations against US and Iraqi forces. AQI, while degraded, continues to possess the capability to conduct spectacular attacks.⁷³

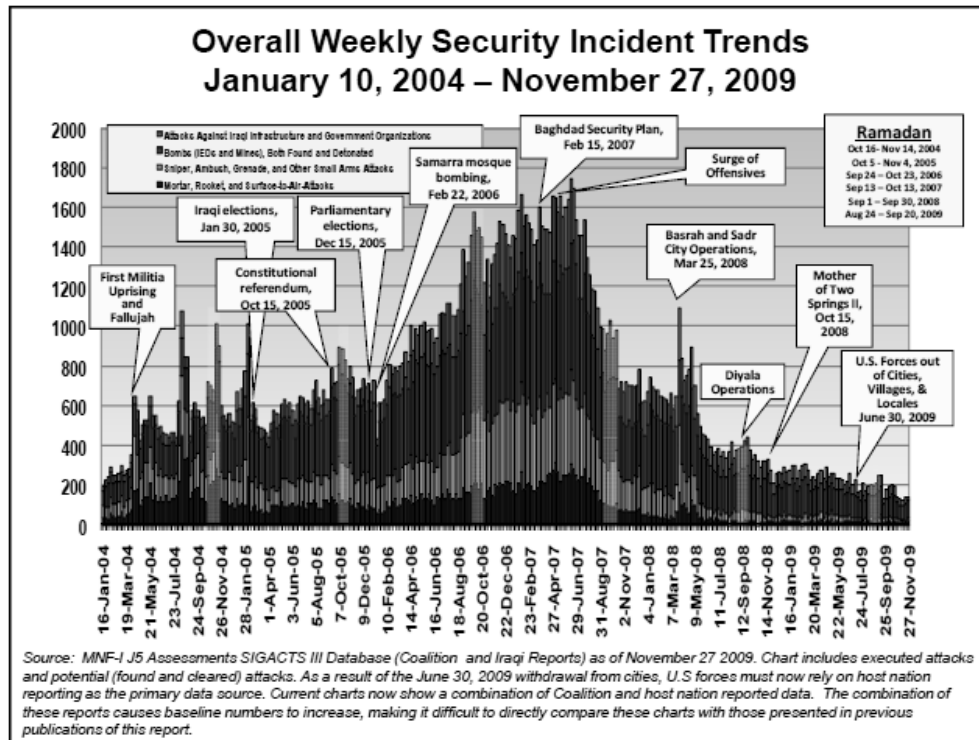


Figure 3: Weekly Security Incident Trends⁷⁴

Iraq has made some progress towards political and economic development. Politically, Iraq successfully conducted provincial elections in January 2009 followed by a national election in March 2010. Also, the Council of Representatives has demonstrated a desire to provide increased oversight of the executive since April 2009.⁷⁵ Economically, Iraq shows some signs of improvement with projections for GDP to grow by 6 percent in 2009, lower rates of under and unemployment, and inflation dropping to 7.9 percent by July 2009 from an average rate of 13 percent in 2008.⁷⁶ However, gains in these two tracks remain marginal at best and depend on maintaining security. According to the DoD report to Congress “Iraq remains fragile primarily because many of the underlying sources of instability have yet to be resolved, putting security gains at risk.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

The Sol were necessary to create the current security conditions in Iraq. These security conditions were necessary to give political leaders breathing space to seek political accommodation and reconciliation. While embracing the Sol gave CF leaders leverage to push the GoI towards accommodation that leverage has waned as the US draws down its forces. Ironically and perhaps counter-intuitively, the movement has helped increase Prime Minister Maliki's consolidation of power. The Sol were essential to defeat of al-Qaeda which was the greatest source of instability within the country. With this threat significantly diminished the justification for maintaining armed Shia militia disappeared. Maliki, working with CF, effectively marginalized the Sol as a political movement with restrictions placed on their activities. Lists provided to the Iraqi government as the Sol came under its control also provided the government with information to control the movement and gave the government the ability to target key leadership.

Currently, the Iraqi polity remains suspended between the short and medium term goals as articulated in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*. Iraq is making steady progress in fighting terrorists and taking the lead in conducting counterinsurgency and counter-terrorist operations. The country has moved forward with political and economic development, but the government has not embraced democracy and continues to act in a sectarian manner. As US forces continue to withdraw, it has less leverage in which to push Iraq towards greater reconciliation. As a result, the US has adjusted policy to reflect lowered expectations and has committed to withdrawing troops out of the country by the end of 2011. In the end, Iraqis themselves will have to decide if they will achieve the long term goals envisioned by the Bush

administration. An Iraq that is peaceful, unified, stable, and well integrated into the international community depends upon political reconciliation across the spectrum of Iraqi society. Failure to achieve this reconciliation will lead to continued instability and at the worse case a return to violence and perhaps civil war. Efforts at integrating the Sol have fallen short of promises by the government. This failure coupled with arrests and exile of Sol leaders exacerbates the mistrust inherent in the Sunni populace and holds the seeds for future conflict if not adequately addressed.

A future conflict could take any number of forms, but would likely start with renewed sectarian violence in response to the Gol's targeting of Sunni leadership. As US forces withdraw from Iraq, local cease fires brokered by CF with citizens in Sunni dominated areas break down and IED and small arms attacks against ISF increase. The Gol responds with increased arrests of Sunni leaders and heavy-handed tactics to root out insurgents. Due to the decentralized nature of the Sunni opposition, Prime Minister Maliki could continue to consolidate power by isolating rivals from the political process using the legal system to arrest and convict these rivals. In effect the Prime Minister establishes a dictatorship with only a veneer of democracy. The great danger in this is that the Prime Minister could overreach, galvanizing the Sunni populace and a return to the ethnic violence that engulfed Iraq in 2006 and 2007.⁷⁸

Endnotes

¹ National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (Washington, DC: The White House, November 2005), 1.

² Ibid.

³ George W. Bush, *President's Address to the Nation*, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>, January 10, 2007, (accessed, 18 December 2009).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 12-13.

⁶ Tom Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 158-161.

⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 159, 191.

⁸ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 3.

⁹ MajGen James N. Mattis, "Interview 1: Preparing for Counterinsurgency," interviewed by Charles P. Neimeyer, in *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, ed. Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 33.

¹⁰ LtGen John F. Kelley, "Forward", in *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, ed. Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), viii.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² David Killcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 120.

¹³ Anthony Cordesman, *Iraq: Milestones, Benchmarks and Real World Problems* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 30 October 2006), 3, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/061030_iraq_benchmarks.pdf (accessed February 27, 2010).

¹⁴ Iraq Slogger, "Sadrists Question PM's List for New Ministers," May 10, 2007 at http://iraqslogger.powweb.com/index.php/post/2725/Sadrists_Question_PMs_List_for_New_Ministers?PHPSESSID=5428def7b492ec4ccdf478fdbf6aaaff9, (accessed February 27, 2010).

¹⁵ Killcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, 125-126.

¹⁶ Reprinted from General David H. Petraeus, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq," September 10-11, 2007, available at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/pet091007.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2010).

¹⁷ COL J.B. Burton, "ISW Interview with Col J.B. Burton, Commander of Dagger Brigade Baghdad, Iraq," interview by Kimberly Kagan, *Institute for the Study of War*, November 14, 2007, <http://www.understandingwar.org/isw-interview-col-j-b-burton-commander-dagger>

brigade-baghdad-iraq (accessed February 28, 2010). Also, author's personal experience. CF leaders talked to many of the displaced persons after this happened. 1-5 CAV conducted a search operation in the neighborhood of Adl just south of Hurriyah in order to demonstrate CF ability to secure the area. The battalion began patrolling the boundary between the two neighborhoods to try to stop the Shia expansion.

¹⁸ Reprinted from United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Committees, *Securing, Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks* (Washington, DC: US Government and Accountability Office, September 2007), 48, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071195.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2010). Labels of key neighborhoods added by author.

¹⁹ COL Burton, "ISW Interview with Col J.B. Burton, Commander of Dagger Brigade Baghdad, Iraq."

²⁰ Greg Jaffe, "In Iraq, an Army Officer Battles to Open a Bank," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2007.

²¹ Author's personal observation. In February 2007, local Sunni leadership in the Khadra Neighborhood Advisory Council complained of the inability to get allotted food rations from the government food warehouse which was just a few miles away in the neighborhood of Washash. These leaders described the attack on a truck driver who was killed visiting this warehouse and showed a picture of him after he was killed. 1-5 CAV leadership visited the warehouse which was flying Shia banners even though it was a government facility. One could tell which sect controlled an area of Baghdad by whether they flew these banners or not. The manager of the warehouse claimed he was Sunni and promised to take the banners down. He agreed to provide the food, but had no way of ensuring the safety of the truck to and from the warehouse. 1-5 CAV eventually arranged for the Iraqi Army to escort trucks to the warehouse in order to get food shipments to the Sunni areas.

²² Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler, eds., "Introduction," *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 12; Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 104-105; David Mays, "Security, Economy, Services Improving for Iraqi Citizens," *American Forces Press Services*, September 14, 2007, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47453> (accessed March 20, 2010). Sheik Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi was a Sheik in the Anbar city of Ramadi. In September 2006 he organized a tribal movement called the Sahwa al-Anbar or the Awakening of Anbar to directly confront AQI. He worked directly with COL Sean MacFarland and the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division which was attached to the Marines in Anbar Province. This movement continued to spread throughout Anbar and served as the inspiration for other groups to form throughout Iraq to include Sunnis in Baghdad. Sheik Sattar was assassinated on September 13, 2007 by a roadside bomb just outside his farm near Ramadi.

²³ LtGen James T. Conway, "Interview 2: US Marine Security and Stabilization Operations," interviewed by Major John P. Piedmont and David B. Crist on June 21 and July 7, 2005 in *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, ed. Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 43-45. Lt. Gen Conway states that as he was preparing for I Marine

Expeditionary Force to return to Iraq in 2004, they went back to the *Small Wars Manual* for doctrinal guidance. Interviews throughout this volume reinforce this approach despite disagreement with Army leadership at certain points.

²⁴ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 271-272.

²⁵ McWilliams, "Introduction", *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁷ Ibid., 12.

²⁸ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 272.

²⁹ McWilliams, "Introduction", *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives: US Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, 14.

³⁰ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 97.

³¹ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 97-98; David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 264-265. This cell was manned primarily by special operations and military intelligence personnel.

³² Cloud, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army*, 265-266.

³³ COL Kurt Pinkerton, e-mail message to author, December 19, 2009; Cloud, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army*, 265. In November 2006 LTC Kurt Pinkerton, commanding 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry, took over his sector just to the west of Baghdad which included the village of Abu Ghraib. In this area he inherited a homegrown security network from the previous battalion in which small villages defended themselves from al-Qaeda. Pinkerton developed procedures to reinforce these villages with his Quick Reaction Force (QRF) if insurgents attacked a village. As they gained more security, his unit found that other villages were doing the same since there were no ISF in the area. LTG Lamb then introduced a local Iraqi named Abu Azzam to Pinkerton. Abu Azzam, admitted to fighting as an insurgent, but later participated in the first tribal uprisings in Anbar. He asked Lamb's help in getting Al-Qaeda out of his home village near Abu Ghraib. In April, Pinkerton asked for Abu Azzam's help in recruiting for the local police force in the area. The response was astonishing. About a week later Pinkerton drove out to a school to about 800 local Iraqi's willing to volunteer. Pinkerton emphasized the importance of Abu Azzam's influence in getting the local populace to turn against al-Qaeda and join the security forces and to get the local government to reestablish itself. He also points to the importance of an influential Shia sheik who asked to establish checkpoints to "prevent AQI from entering the area, prevent sectarian strife, and reunite the communities." Pinkerton cited a mix of three primary drivers for the start of the Sahwa movement in his area: "1) small villages defending their self upon arrival,

2) a civilian leader, Abu Azzam, reached out to the USG seeking assistance in resisting AQI, and 3) local sheiks wanting the authority to protect their people....The integration of these three drivers brought the area under control.”

³⁴ LTC George Glaze, e-mail message to author, December 4, 2009; COL Kevin MacWatters, e-mail message to author, November 14, 2009. In late February and early March 2007, LTC George Glaze, commander of 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, went to visit one of his companies attached to 1st Battalion, 77th Armor in Ramadi. During this visit the 1-77 Commander introduced Glaze to Abu Risha who told him there were locals in his area of responsibility who he should meet. Within a week, local Sunnis came forward to his company responsible for Radwahniyah to discuss working with CF. Locals also came forward and approached another company commander in Sadiyah. COL MacWatters reports first indications of active local support in April or May 2007 in the Sunni village of Falahat where they he negotiated with locals for the establishment of checkpoints by locals in June 2007.

³⁵ Personal notes. In February the author attended a meeting with local leaders in Ameriyah. Just before going into the building an aid for a Sunni imam, one of the most important members of the community, told 1-5 CAV leadership that the imam wanted to help in building a police force, but not to bring it up in the meeting. Later, battalion leadership learned that members of Al-Qaeda were at the meeting. In subsequent visits to this imam we discussed a potential security force several times.

³⁶ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 231-237. Robinson gives the most accurate account of what happened in Ameriyah in late May and early June 2007.

³⁷ LTC Pat Frank, e-mail message to author, December 10, 2009; COL Kevin McWatters, e-mail message to author, November 14, 2009; COL Kurt Pinkerton, e-mail message to author, December 19, 2009; Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 239. LTC Frank states that the Sol in NW Rashid area of Baghdad was split evenly between Shia and Sunni member. COL McWatters said the movement in his area was tied to Sunni-Shia reconciliation. Pinkerton noted the importance of a Shia sheik in the Sol movement just west of Baghdad. In Ameriyah Abu Abed's inner circle included several Shia friends from before the war. Shia even on a small scale was essential to making the movement more politically palatable both locally and nationally.

³⁸ Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*. Washington D. C.: Congressional Research Service, 2 April 2009. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34387.pdf>. Accessed 8 January 2010, 117.

³⁹ Colin H. Kahl, Michel A. Flourney, and Shawn Brimley, *Shaping the Iraq Inheritance* (Washington: Center for a New American Security, June 2008), 24, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/FlournoyKahlBrimley_Iraq%20Inheritance_June08.pdf (accessed December 14, 2009).

⁴⁰ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 11.

⁴¹ Steven Metz, *Iraq & the Evolution of American Strategy*, (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 189.

⁴² Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 2.

⁴³ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 298.

⁴⁴ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 325; COL Kevin MacWatters, e-mail message to author, November 14, 2009; LTC Jeff Broadwater, e-mail message to author, November 14, 2009; author's personal experience. Incorporating the Sons of Iraq into our operations increased our information dramatically which enabled our targeting efforts.

⁴⁵ Killcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, 181. Killcullen mentions this is a discussion on force ratios. He points to "the fact that 95,000 former insurgents and tribal fighters are now on our side...". However, it is more likely that only a small percentage of the Sol were insurgents.

⁴⁶ Killcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, 145. Killcullen points out that "clearing" in a counterinsurgency "does not mean *destroying the enemy* in it but *rescuing the population* in it from enemy intimidation or, more clinically, separating the enemy from the population." There is much truth to this statement. Several "clearing operations" were conducted in northwest Baghdad to little effect. CF and ISF could only effectively rid or clear the enemy out of the area once with the support of the local populace.

⁴⁷ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 53.

⁴⁸ David J. Killcullen, "Field Notes on Iraq's Tribal Revolt Against al-Qaeda." *CTC Centinel*, Volume 1, Issue 11, 4.

⁴⁹ LTC Pat Frank, e-mail message to author, December 10, 2009. LTC Frank commanded 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry in the West Rashid district of Baghdad.

⁵⁰ MAJ Tom Sills, "Counterinsurgency Operations in Baghdad: The Actions of 1-4 Cavalry in the East Rashid Security District," *Military Review*, 89, no. 3: 99. This article focuses on 1-4 CAV's "Close Encounters" program, which emphasized getting closer to the people through various COIN techniques such as census operations. The description of disenfranchisement of the Sunni populace mirrors conditions in the Mansour Security District.

⁵¹ LTC George Glaze, e-mail message to author, December 4, 2009; COL Kurt Pinkerton, e-mail message to author, December 19, 2009. Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 2611-18 IN had to mitigate friction between the Sol in Sadiyah with the notorious Wolf Brigade of the National Police which had a reputation for promulgating a Shia agenda.. Robinson mentions that in Abu Ghraib, a battalion commander had to deal with accusations by the Iraqi Army that Sol had attacked IA checkpoints. Fifty of the volunteers were detained but Pinkerton, the battalion commander, was able to show through video footage that the attack did not originate from Abu Ghraib. LTC Jeff Broadwater, e-mail to author, November 14, 2009.

⁵² Cloud, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army*, 263.

⁵³ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 245.

⁵⁴ COL James Nickolas, e-mail message to author, November 20, 2009. COL Nickolas states that the success of the Ghazliyah Guardians (GG) caused friction with the Iraqi Army, especially as the GG claimed they brought security to the neighborhood. The VIP visits with accompanying media coverage further embarrassed IA senior leadership who stated they were “uninformed” about the program. Author’s experience. IA leadership purposely attempted to undermine the program during a VIP visit to Ameriyah. LTG Odierno brought several senior members of the Gol to Ameriyah to discuss reconciliation and the integration of the Sol with CF and the ISF. An IA major briefed that there was no coordination done between the local Sol and the ISF. He failed to mention the numerous meetings conducted each week where the IA battalion commander, US battalion commander, and local Sol leader met to discuss issues and plan for future operations.

⁵⁵ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 259-260.

⁵⁶ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 121; LTC George Glaze, e-mail message to author, December 4, 2009. According to LTC Glaze, commanding 1-18 IN, the IIP tried to control hiring of the Sol in Radwahnayah and Dadiyah. He saw this as political maneuvering to allow the IIP to save face even though it was the Sol under the control of local leaders who had the courage to confront AQI. Author’s personal experience. The IIP lost a significant amount of face in Ameriyah when its local headquarters was blown up by AQI and the guards did nothing to stop it. The IIP infiltrated the organization in an effort to keep an eye on developments and also take credit for participating in the movement even though they did not actively fight against al-Qaeda. At the local level political jockeying developed as the IIP tried to regain support from the people after being seen as ineffective in countering AQI.

⁵⁷ Killcullen, “Field Notes on Iraq’s Tribal Revolt Against al-Qaeda,” 4.

⁵⁸ COL Marty Stanton, e-mail message to author, January 4, 2010; LTC Frank, e-mail message to author, December 10, 2009; COL Kevin MacWatters, e-mail to author, November 14, 2009; author’s personal experience. COL Stanton served at MNC-I and was responsible for reconciliation efforts. He stated that one of the strengths of the Sol was its decentralized nature. There was no national leadership for “The Awakening.” LTC Frank stated that there was no formal connection between the Anbar Sheiks and his area of operations in northwest Rashid in Baghdad. He also discouraged Sol ties with the groups in Mansour to the north. COL MacWatters states that the movement in his area was tied to efforts at reconciliation. MacWatters and his subordinate commanders actively worked to keep the local Sol from joining the Al-Anbar Awakening political movement to ensure the local groups continued to work within the reconciliation framework he helped establish with local Sunni and Shia leadership. One of the restrictions placed on the Sol in Ameriyah was that they could not conduct operations outside Ameriyah and could not carry weapons outside of Ameriyah. This restriction was standard for all the groups in northwest Baghdad.

⁵⁹ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 121.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search For a Way Out of Iraq*, 253-254. CF units placed controls on the movement from the start to include prohibiting operations outside of their assigned areas, requiring cooperation and oversight from both CF and ISF, and requiring members to be enrolled in Biometric Automated Toolset (BATS) by submitting to fingerprinting and retinal scans. Coalition commanders also used the leverage of money and the ability to fire and even detain those that violated the rules as they were established.

⁶² U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, September 2009), 1 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/9010_Report_to_Congress_Nov_09.pdf (accessed February 14, 2010).

⁶³ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 122; Michael Eisenstadt and Ahmed Ali, "How This Ends: Iraq's Uncertain Path toward National Reconciliation," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, July 17, 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C05&CID=3091> (accessed March 20, 2010).

⁶⁴ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 123.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: Report to Congress*, 1.

⁶⁶ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 123; COL Richard Welch, e-mail message to author, February 3, 2010; LTC Monty Willoughby, Commander, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, telephone interview by author, December 14, 2009; Ned Parker, "The Rise and Fall of a Son's of Iraq Warrior," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jun/29/world/fg-sons29> (accessed March 10, 2010).

⁶⁷ Ned Parker, "Iraq Election Means Life or Death for US Ally," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 2010, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-fg-iraq-raad11-2010mar11,0,4895708.story> (accessed March 11, 2010).

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: Report to Congress*, 1-2; COL Richard Welch, e-mail message to author, February 3, 2010; Ned Parker, "The Rise and Fall of a Son's of Iraq Warrior," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jun/29/world/fg-sons29> (accessed March 10, 2010).

⁶⁹ Barak Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," February 27, 2009, linked from *The White House Home Page* at "Briefing Room, Speeches & Remarks," http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq (accessed March 21, 2010).

⁷⁰ Ibid. The strategic objectives are reinforced in the quarterly Department of Defense reports to Congress, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*. The March 2007 reports says the US strategic goal is for “a unified, democratic, federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and that is an ally in the war on terror.” In contrast the September 2009 report states that the strategic goal is an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant with a just, representative, and accountable government; a state that is neither a safe haven for, nor sponsor of, terrorism; an Iraq that is integrated into the global economy and a long-term U.S. partner contributing to regional peace and security.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, September 2009*, November 4, 2009, 22, http://www.defense.gov/home/features/iraq_reports/index.html (accessed February 6, 2010).

⁷³ Ibid., 22-23.

⁷⁴ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, December 2009*, January 29, 2010, 24, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Master_9204_29Jan10_FINAL_SIGNED.pdf (accessed March 20, 2010).

⁷⁵ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, September 2009*, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁷ Ibid., viii.

⁷⁸ Stephen Biddle, *Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 2: Reversal in Iraq*, (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, May 2009), 1-2; Ned Parker, “Machiavelli in Mesopotamia: Nouri Al-Maliki Builds the Body Politic,” *World Policy Journal* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 17-25. Biddle provides several possible scenarios for future violence. I believe a combination of his first two scenarios, renewed sectarian violence and the reversion to dictatorship, is plausible. Parker outlines how Maliki has effectively consolidated power and argues that Iraqi’s will support a strong-man in order to achieve stability even at the expense of the establishment of democratic institutions.