



Conflicts Forum Briefing Paper #1

Assessing The Iraqi Resistance Movement

**Prepared by the Research Staff of Conflicts Forum
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Both the U.S.-led allied forces and the Iraqi Government realize that the Sunni forces with whom they have negotiated with immediately following the January election have no real impact on the strength and growth of the Iraqi resistance. Some of those groups now have officials who hold cabinet posts, and many of the leaders of those first groups are now a part of the political process. In spite of this partial success, however, resistance attacks against Iraqi and coalition forces have increased significantly over the last year.

As a substitute, U.S. and Iraqi officials have taken new steps to deal with the representatives of the more substantive and broadly based Iraqi resistance. In a small village, near Balad, 60 kilometers north of Baghdad, U.S. officials have had several meetings with a limited number of resistance representatives in the hope of dampening the increasingly violent responses to the American military presence, and the growing resistance to the creation of a new government.

But who exactly comprises this Iraqi “opposition”? In an attempt to answer this question, Conflicts Forum surveyed resistance and government officials in Iraq over a period of three months to determine the composition of the resistance -- and its leadership. This Conflicts Forum Briefing Paper summarizes our findings by detailing the names, leadership and funding of this increasingly strong resistance movement.

1. Jaish Mohammed: Mohammed’s Army

Mohammed’s Army is the military wing of Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party (ABSP), formerly led by Saddam Hussein. It was founded by Saddam Hussein himself before the collapse of the regime in April 2003. The movement has never claimed responsibility of any attacks as part of its tactics to hide its activities. It is financed by ABSP and its members’ donations. It is comprised of disaffected former members of the Ba’ath Party leadership.

2. Majlis Shura Mujahidi Al Iraq: The Shura Council of Iraqi Mujahideen

The Majlis Shura Mujahidi Al Iraq is a salafist movement. It was formed after the collapse of Majlis Shura al Sunna as a result of the February fight in Fallujah. Its main area of operation is Ramadi and it claims responsibility of kidnapping an Australian citizen. Abdullah al Janabi is most likely the key personality behind the formation of this group, which receives its funding from individual Saudis.

3. The Abu Hafsa Al Masri Brigades

This brigade is one of many al-Qaeda formations working on the ground in Iraq. The leader of this brigade is a Saudi citizen who was infiltrated to Iraq from Afghanistan through the Iranian border. He arrived in Iraq to organize resistance units after Saddam’s fall in 2003. The brigade’s main base is in Kerma village, near Fallujah.

4. Ansar Saddam Al Mujahid

Ansar Saddam al-Mujahid is small, but extremely effective, with its major area of operation in Dora, near Baghdad. It consists primarily of pro-Saddam youth who were trained to carry out sabotage operations against American forces after the fall of the regime. The group is Sunni, and has claimed only one operation -- which took place in October 2003. Some sources on the ground in Iraq claim that the group has stockpiled large numbers of weapons in and around Dora and in an area south of Baghdad, called Hor Rijeb.

5. Al Faileq al Khas: The Special Corps

This highly-trained paramilitary group specializes in sabotage operations that target oil pipes and oil facilities. The group was formed under Saddam's patronage to prevent allied forces from exploiting Iraqi oil. Some sources have said that the group has detailed maps of the oilfields and work in oil-heavy areas north of Baghdad -- mainly in Tikrit and Beiji. The group is linked directly to Izzat al-Doori, the undersecretary of the ABSP.

6. The Salah al-Din Brigades

A small but violent group linked to al-Qaeda. Their main operational area is Mosul. This is a Sunni group led by an Amir, named Abu Ahmed, who was trained in Pakistan.

7. The Al Farouq Brigades (Al Farouq is the name for Caliph Omar bin Al Khattab)

The al-Farouq Brigades are the militant arm of the Iraqi Islamic Movement, which was formed in June 2003. The group is comprised of Arab Sunni Muslims mixed with some secular and former regime military officers. They operate primarily in Fallujah, Mosul and Ramadi. The group is anti-Saddam, but may now include Saddam loyalists in its ranks. It is known to cooperate with Saddam loyalists in some operations.

The al-Farouq Brigades have claimed responsibility for a number of allied forces casualties, issuing their claims in reports carried under the banner of "The Free Arab Voice," an Arab nationalist website, where they provide information on their operations. In these reports, the Al-Farouq Brigades have detailed their military operations and have claimed responsibility for a number of specific attacks against U.S. forces in Fallujah, Ramadi and the port city of Al-Bakr, near Basra.

The al-Farouq Brigades have established very insular small units, or cells, with each group being tasked according to their expertise. Two such types of cell groups or squadrons have been identified: reconnaissance squadrons and combat squadrons. The al-Farouq Brigades have alliances with the General Command of the Armed Forces, Resistance and Liberation in Iraq, which is a grouping of Saddam loyalists.

8. Firqet al-Medina al-Munawara (al-Medina al-Munawara Division)

The group consists of the remnants of the Iraqi Republican Guard, loyal to Saddam Hussein. The name is derived from the Medina Division Republican Guard that operated in Baghdad and Fallujah. After the dismantling of Iraqi Army remnants of the Republican Guard regrouped into the Firqet al-Medina al-Munawara and continued to operation under Baath party leadership.

9. The al-Nuaman Brigade

This is one of the many formations of the ABSP. Its area of operations is Mosul. Sources say that the commander of this brigade is Saad al-Ubaidi, who was a senior branch official of the ABSP.

10. The al-Quds Brigades

This group is a remnant of the al-Quds Army which was established after the Palestinian Intifada began in September 2000. This is a mujahideen group made up of Arab Sunni Muslims and is loyal to Saddam mainly due to his support for the Palestinians during the Palestinian uprising. Their commander, General Subhi Kamal Erzeyeg, was arrested by U.S. troops on August 20, 2003. The group continues to operate inside Iraq, particularly in the nation's mid-section around Sowara, Hilla and Baghdad.

11. Ansar al Islam: The Supporters of Islam

Ansar al-Islam was attacked by U.S. forces in April 2003 during the early stage of liberation war and suffered heavy casualties. Those who remained fled to Mosul, Irbel, and Iran. The original leadership is no longer in place, but the second echelon has managed to regroup the members of the movement, and has begun resistance activities, especially in Mosul and surrounding areas.

Some of the remaining fighters in the group have drifted back into Iraq from Iran in small units where they have joined forces with other foreign and domestic mujahideen. Well informed sources say that a number of Ansar al-Islam militants appeared in May in Mosul wearing police uniforms. The group kidnapped three people, who were later found dead. Ansar al Islam is one of al-Qaeda organizations in Iraq and police investigations prove that they were behind the murder of Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al Hakeen in Nejaf.

12. Tandheem al Qaeda fi Bilad al Rafidein

This Muslim group has large numbers of foreign fighters. It appeared in Iraq in June 2003 under the leadership of the Jordanian Abu Musab al Zarqawi. The group has claimed responsibility for "all" the armed resistance against U.S. forces, the Iraqi Police, the National Guards and all those who work with the allied forces. The group has announced its affiliation to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda. They demand the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq and all Islamic territories.

This is a hardline salafist organization who considers the Shiah of Iraq as infidels who must be killed. They have carried out many attacks against Shiite mosques and even devout Sunni officials who join the faith of other Islamic schools like Hanbali, Shafiee and Maliki. Those members of this group who have been killed in resistance operations have been buried in graves in and around Fallujah.

13. Mohammed Army (Firquet al Mutateween) Vanguard

This new formation was established as a part of the ABSP military wing after the defeat of party militia in Fallujah. The group consists of Saddam loyalists and maintains communication links with Mohammed's Army. In a recent statement the group announced its determination to "fight every foreigner until victory or martyrdom" and to "make the Americans regret their occupation of Mohammed's land." The organization has vowed to "carry out similar attacks against the agent Governing Council and all coalition forces." Its goal is to expand the conflict outside Iraq if

possible.

14. Gund al Haq: The Troops of Right

Little is known of this group other than they are local Arab Sunni Muslims with some nationalistic tendencies. They are in Latifiya, south of Baghdad.

15. Seraya Al-Jihad

This is an Arab Sunni Muslim mujahideen group with nationalistic and anti-Zionist tendencies who regard Osama bin Laden as their role model. Based in Fallujah, this group has sworn to kill the members of the Governing Council. Their command is made up of religious leaders from Fallujah. They have established contacts with foreign fighters and with the Zarqawi organization.

16. Ansar Al Sunna

This organization is quite effective in carrying out violent attacks. They have more than one leader in various parts of Iraq. In Mosul their leader is Abu Abdulla al Shafiee, who is Saudi. Around Mosul, in Baaj and Telaffar, their leader is Faisal Ahmed Ali, an Iraqi trained in Afghanistan. Followers of this group are Wahhabist and are extremely violent. They are known as throat cutters. Nearly all their victims are Shiite. They consider all people infidels and view themselves as the only true Muslims. They are extremely well-financed. Their finance comes mainly from Saudi Arabia and Syria. Ansar al Sunna also buys criminals and has used them in carrying out certain operations, or they may be used to collect information about certain targets.

17. The General Secretariat for the Liberation of Democratic Iraq

This is a left wing group of anti-Saddam secular nationalists. Little is known about this group and its operations, other than that they have publicly condemned the new Iraqi government for failing to provide security and basic services to the Iraqi population.

18. The Iraqi Liberation Army

This group first appeared on July 15, 2003, warning foreign countries not to send troops to Iraq. The group promised that foreign troops would be attacked. Its main operational area is Baghdad and Tikrit. It is one of the sixteen ABSP formations which normally do not claim responsibility for their attacks.

19. The Iraq Liberation Front

This group first appeared on April 28, 2003 in the Mansur district of Baghdad. They are Saddam loyalists. No other information is yet available.

20. The Iraqi Liberation Organization

The ILO first appeared on August 26, 2003. This is an Arab Sunni Muslim group that is known for issuing death threats to the Governing Council through the release of a tape with members of Islamic Jihad and Muslim Youth, which suggests that it has an ideology similar to those groups. It is also a military formation of ABSP.

21. The Iraqi National Islamic Resistance (The 1920 Revolution Brigades)

This is a group of local Arab Sunni Muslims who are anti-colonialist, and have some nationalistic tendencies. They claim operational affiliation with other groups and appeared publicly on June 16, 2003, referring to the U.S. as "American dogs" and warning foreign countries not to send troops to Iraq. This group is active in kidnapping foreigners. The organization has one local branch and operates primarily in the Sunni provinces west of Baghdad.

22. The Iraqi National Liberation Army

The Iraqi National Liberation Army first appeared in Baghdad on July 14, 2003. It claims that its members come from all ethnic groups and religions in Iraq. The Iraqi National Liberation Army is nationalistic and secular in nature and also claims support from the Hawza in Najaf, which suggests some Shiah involvement.

23. The Iraqi Patriotic Opposition

The Iraqi Patriotic Opposition has a long history of association with the Ba'ath Party in Iraq. They are now "supporting the armed opposition" most likely through raising money. They are known to have raised money internationally, especially in Italy.

24. The Iraqi Resistance

This group appeared on November 24, 2003, when it announced its existence in a phone call to the Australian CARE agency in the Mansur district of Baghdad. The group claimed responsibility for an RPG attack on their office and warned the agency to leave Iraq or face more such attacks. The group has also threatened "all such agencies" wherever they were housed, while also threatening to attack any oil installations in Iraq. They are another military wing of the ABSP.

25. Islamic Jihad

This Arab Sunni Muslim group first appeared on August 26, 2003 and is said to be the Iraqi incarnation of the Palestinian group by the same name, but not directly related to it. The group released a tape with Muslim Youth and Iraqi Liberation Organization, which suggests that they share a similar ideology with those groups.

26. The Jihad Brigades of Imam Ali bin Abi-Taleb

This Shiite Muslim group first appeared on October 12, 2003 in Fallujah, vowing to kill soldiers from any nation sending troops to help the coalition and to take the battle to the native soil of any nation that did. The Jihad Brigades have also promised to kill every one of the Governing Council members and any Iraqi cooperating with the coalition. The group has stated that Najaf and Karbala are its intended battlefields against the Americans.

27. Jihad Cells/Brigades

Appearing on July 22, 2003, the Jihad Brigades is made up of Arab Sunni Muslims and is anti-Saddam, with some nationalistic tendencies. The Brigades has publicly stated that attacking former regime members is wasteful, but they have threatened to kill all those that collaborate with the U.S. The group, possibly based in Baghdad, refers to the Governing Council as "traitors" and has urged Iraqis to boycott them.

28. Liberating Iraq's Army

The ideology of this group is unknown. They show some nationalistic tendencies, target those who collaborate with the U.S. and have warned foreign nations against sending troops to Iraq. They are active in Anbar around Hadithah and have claimed responsibility for the assassination of Hadithah's pro-U.S. mayor. The group is pro-Saddam and is comprised of young Muslims and ex-military elements.

29. Martyr Khattab Brigade

This is an armed wing of a Sunni Muslim mujahideen group called "The Mujahideen of the Victorious Sect." Named after bin Khattab, a Saudi who commanded the Chechen mujahideen until he was poisoned by the Russians in 2002, they may have a relationship to the mujahideen in Chechnya. They appear to have foreign fighters in their ranks. This strongly anti-Saddam group refers to members of the former regime as "soldiers of tyranny and the devils of darkness who have handed over this Muslim country to their American masters." There have been claims the group has a training camp in Syria but this has not been confirmed.

30. Kataib al-Mujahedin fi al-Jamaah al-Salafiyah fi al-Arak

This Sunni Muslim mujahideen group claims as its spiritual mentor the Palestinian Muslim, Abdallah Azzam, who was Osama bin Laden's advisor in the 1980s. Abdallah Azzam encouraged many to join the Afghan jihad in the 1980s against the Soviet occupation, including Bin Laden. Azzam was killed by a car bomb in Peshawar in November 1989 by unknown attackers. He left behind dozens of books on religious doctrines, religious rulings and a comprehensive ideology of Jihad. This group includes foreign fighters. No other information is yet available.

31. Muslim Youth

Muslim Youth is a group of Arab Sunni Muslim young men that are pro-Saddam and are allied with White Flags and Mohammed's Army. They have publicly criticized the Jordanian Embassy bombing. Their main operational area is Baghdad, in Dura, Adamiyah and Saidiyah. Reliable sources have claimed that the leader of this group is a Ba'athist by the name of Kereem al Jubori.

32. The Nasserite Organization

The Nasserites are a small group of non-Ba'athist pan-Arab nationalists who claim involvement in anti-U.S. attacks. They have warned all foreigners to leave Iraq, condemned Governing Council as "traitors," and have lashed out at Shiah and Kurdish secessionism and those cooperating with the U.S. This group was an existing underground political party surviving from the 1960s that has since activated a military wing. The group is not part of the famous Pan Arab Nasserite movement led by Omar Nadhmi.

33. National Iraqi Commandos Front

The National Iraqi Commandos Front is a group of ex-Ba'athists and ex-military elements. They are active in Baquoba and Khalis. Reliable information indicates that this group carried out the most violent operations against National Guards elements, east of Baghdad. It is also believed that they work under the direct supervision of Abdul Baqi al Sadoon. Their leader is a Ba'athist

named Abdul Munim Al Ubaidi.

34. National Front for the Liberation of Iraq

The National Front is a combination of ten Iraqi resistance groups united under one front. The National Front for the Liberation of Iraq was formed the day after the fall of Baghdad. At the time, the group said they were comprised of nationalists and Muslims. Its leaders are secular and religious members of the Republican Guard. The NFLI says it is particularly active in Irbil and Kirkuk in the north of Iraq, in Falluja and Tikrit in the center, as well as Basra and Babil provinces in the south. The group includes many Arab volunteers and has allowed Saddam Fedayeen and ex-Ba'ath party members to join its ranks.

35. The Black Banners Organization (Munazzamat Al-Alam Al-Aswad)

The Black Banners is an Arab Sunni Muslim mujahideen group that has issued calls for the destruction of the Iraqi oil infrastructure to prevent the U.S. from profiting from oil revenues.

36. The New Return Party

The New Return Party is a group of Saddam loyalists which has appeared as a replacement for the Ba'ath Party. But the group rejoined the party after the emergence of the new leadership of ABSP. They are now working independently but under the supervision of Jaish Mohammed.

37. The Organization of Jihad Brigades in Iraq

This is a group of foreign Sunni Muslim mujahideen that emerged in late July 2003. Little is known about the group except that they have called for guerilla warfare and have threatened to execute "spies and traitors."

38. The Political Media Organ of the Ba'ath Party (Jihaz al-Ilam al-Siyasi lil Hizb al-Ba'ath)

The Political Media Organ of the Ba'ath Party is a group of Saddam loyalists and Ba'ath Party members. The group is based in Amman. They are the second organ of Ba'ath media and they have signed their statements under the legitimate Ba'ath leadership.

39. Popular Resistance for the Liberation of Iraq

This is a Ba'ath formation linked to Jaish Mohammed.

40. Al-Rifah

This is a group of former high-ranking military officers based in Mosul and is said to be a significant force of Saddam loyalists.

41. Al-Awda (The Return)

This is a group of Saddam loyalists based in northern Iraq. It is made up of former security service members, Iraqi military and midlevel Ba'athists that have been organized into cells spread throughout Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, Tikrit, Fallujah, Ramadi and possibly other areas. This group is said to be the Ba'ath Party under a new name. The group first appeared on May 14, 2003. Al

Awda is headquartered in Mosul and is led by Mohammed al-Samidai, who was a leader in the Ba'ath party in Mosul. Al-Samidai is said to have coordinated his activities with other Ba'ath party leaders from north and central Iraq, including some from Kirkuk, Mosul, Tikrit and Baghdad.

42. Saddam's Fedayeen

Saddam's Fedayeen was originally a paramilitary force established in the wake of the 1991 war. "Saddam's Men of Sacrifice" were considered a notoriously violent paramilitary group specializing in counter-insurgency operations for the regime in Baghdad. Many are now rumored to have renounced their loyalty to Saddam and have switched to advocating traditional Muslim jihad.

43. Salafist Jihad Group

This Arab Sunni Muslim mujahideen group first appeared on July 28, 2003 and may be a faction of the group by the same name operating in Morocco. In a videotape aired by Al Arabiya, the group vowed they would fight a "holy war" against U.S. President George Bush and his administration: "Bush, Rumsfeld and decision makers in the 'black house' and in the Pentagon -- we will shake the ground under your feet and we will send a fire upon you which only God can prevent." (Salafist is a general term in mainstream Sunni Islam used to describe a desire to live according to a strict interpretation of early Islam).

44. September 11 Revolutionary Group

This is a group of former Saddam Fedayeen from the villages surrounding Balad. They are Arab Sunni Muslims that are pro-Palestinian and nationalistic in nature. They have carried out roadside bombings and have attacked military convoys on the main road between Baghdad and Mosul.

45. Harakat Ras al-Afa

This is a group of Saddam loyalists that originated in the Ba'ath Party in Hawija amongst the Arab Sunni tribes. They work in Beiji, Hawija and Kirkuk.

46. Unification Front for the Liberation of Iraq

A little-known organization, this group is apparently anti-Saddam and anti-Ba'athist, and has called on all Iraqi forces to unite to fight the U.S. occupation. They have announced their responsibility for some attacks in Baghdad and Samara.

47. Al Yaqda

This is an Arab Sunni Muslim group operating in Fallujah. They have filmed three or four operations they have implemented and have sent tapes of them to Arab satellite channels in which they said that "Saddam and America are two faces of the same coin." They have said that they are carrying out attacks on American forces in many other Iraqi cities. After the U.S. attack on Fallujah, their leaders fled to Mosul and Telafer and joined a Zarqawi group. One of their leaders, named Mahmood al Jubori (Abu Khalid) escaped to Syria, but he has recently returned to Mosul.

48. White Flags

The White Flags are a local Arab Sunni Muslim mujahideen group operating in the Sunni Triangle. They are anti-Saddam and are allied with the Muslim Youth and Mohammed's Army. They have criticized the Jordanian Embassy bombing but no other information is yet known about their operations. It is thought that they are behind some of the more recent kidnapping operations.

49. The Hamza Platoon

This Arab Sunni Muslim group first appeared on October 10, 2003 in Fallujah demanding the release of a local sheikh named Sheikh Jamal Nizzal, who had been arrested by U.S. forces.

COMMENTARY

The Iraqi resistance has failed to unify all these groups into one organization, despite the best efforts of a number of nationalist leaders. The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party is among the most active of the resistance groups, and is behind much of the leadership of even the smallest resistance contingents. The ABSP's fighters are responsible for nearly all national sabotage operations, especially those targeting oil pipes, the water supply, electricity stations and attacks on the infrastructure of the Iraqi police and army.

Muslim organizations are also not unified. Muslim groups have worked separately, with little coordination. There is some small cooperation between Zarqawi's organization and some salafist groups. Foreign fighters are operating throughout the country. Some foreign fighters have come in for the most part independently in defense of the Muslim lands and have joined a variety of local groups.

ANALYSIS

The Motivation of Resistance Fighters

Most resistance fighters are motivated by the religion of Islam or by Iraqi or Arab nationalist tendencies, and not by support for Saddam Hussein. In truth, some resistance group cadres do not know who leads them, or the origin of their funding and weapons. The ideology of many of the fighters is described by Iraqi experts as being "post-Saddam" -- as a simple combination of Islamism and nationalism, covering a wide spectrum of Muslims' viewpoints that converge on the common goal of ending U.S. military rule inside the country. The U.S. occupation is an assault on both Islam and the entire Arab World, resistance leaders claim, and is therefore viewed as something that must be resisted. Senior Saddam loyalists are more active in the command and control, recruiting, planning, hiring, weapons procurement, financial, and logistical support of the resistance than in actually carrying out operations.

Currents

The Muslim Current:

Most Muslim resistance fighters are Iraqi Sunni and Shia Arab Muslims, many of them with a decidedly militant background. However many are merely pious, Sunni, tribal, Arab Muslims who claim to be "fighting for Islam." They are not necessarily fundamentalists.

The Saddam Loyalist Current:

A minority of fighters, and not a particularly large group, are Saddam loyalists. Many of these are involved in the resistance's senior leadership. This leadership is self-described as "the hidden leadership." These Saddam loyalists play a significant role in financing the resistance. A number of former Saddam loyalists are present in anti-Saddam groups. When present they are required to take a vow to renounce loyalty to his regime. A number of the former Saddam Fedayeen reportedly converted quickly to the Islamic agenda, becoming members of active Islamic resistance groups.

The Mercenary Current:

The United States alleges that some fighters are mere mercenaries. In fact, foreign mercenaries make up very few of the resistance population.

The Turkmen Current:

A few Turkmen are known to have taken up arms, but most have not.

The Kurdish Current:

Very few Kurds have taken up arms, and most of those are hard-line Muslims, such as the Al-Ansar group. However, this group is now said to be defunct and some of their mujahideen have joined other active groups.

The Christian Current:

A few Iraqi Christians are known to have taken up arms, but most have not.

Foreign Fighters

In the summer of 2003, reports indicated that Syrian resistance fighters outnumbered local fighters in carrying out attacks in Fallujah, Ramadi, Baghdad, Baqubah, Balad, Tikrit and Mosul. However, these reports were contradicted by reports in November indicating most fighters in most parts of Iraq are native Iraqis. Most of the foreign fighters in the post-major combat phase (defined as after May 1, 2003) have been Syrians and Lebanese, with Jordanians, Yemenis, Palestinians, Kuwaitis, Saudis and North Africans (mostly Egyptians and Algerians) being most significant among the balance.

Many foreign fighters can be described as Arab nationalists, rather than Muslim mujahideen. Dozens of Arab fighters have come from France and hundreds from Europe. In addition to the nations above, others have arrived in Iraq from Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Bangladesh, Qatar, Sudan, Somalia, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Saudi dissident leaders have claimed that 5000 Saudi mujahideen were present in Baghdad in November 2003. U.S. intelligence believed there were up to 15,000 Saudis in Iraq in September 2003. There were at least 120 Jordanians in the Sunni Triangle fighting U.S. forces as of November.

There were also reports that several hundred Kuwaiti (anti-Kuwaiti regime) mujahideen were heading into Iraq in November 2003. Iran reportedly filtered in 11,000 to 12,000 Iranian fighters to the Shiah South. These were mostly Revolutionary Guard cadre who entered the country during the Karbala pilgrimage in the spring of 2003. This group has, for the most part, been working to gain influence in the region and is operating peacefully. There is some evidence that Iranian fighters may be stockpiling arms in the South, along with other Iraqi Shiah armed groups. These arms are being stockpiled for later use.

The number of Al-Qaeda fighters actually operating in Iraq is unknown, with estimates ranging from 300 to 1000 total fighters.

Foreign Fighters During and Before Major Combat (March 19 - May 1, 2003):

Many foreign fighters entered Iraq before and during major combat operations. An attempt was made to organize these fighters under a central command towards the end of major combat operations. Just after the fall of Baghdad to U.S. forces, the central command of the Arab mujahideen stated there were 8000 foreign fighters in Baghdad alone. These foreign fighters took heavy casualties during the invasion, and many returned home after Baghdad fell. Now, in the post-war phase, they are returning.

About 1500 to 2000 Palestinians entered Iraq during major combat operations, mostly from a splinter group of the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades aligned with Syria and located in Lebanese refugee camps. About 30 to 40 more members of the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades came from just one town in the West Bank.

Fighters from Romania and Vietnam (Communists), Indonesia, Russia, Dagestan (8000) and Malaysia reportedly were also headed for the battlefield in the post war phase, but it appears they never made it. Hamas and Islamic Jihad each sent units of 300 fighters, with Islamic Jihad's mujahideen coming through Lebanon. Hezbollah sent approximately 800 mujahideen and they continued to trickle in long after major combat ended. Hezbollah operatives went mostly to the South after the end of the major combat. Lashkar-e-Toiba, a Pakistani group active in Kashmir and that also maintains a Saudi presence, sent a number of mujahideen, possibly as many as 100 to 200 fighters, during the major combat phase, and suffered casualties. The Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Hezb-e-Islami, and HUM (Pakistani Kashmiri fighters) all sent mujahideen, with most arriving after the fall of Baghdad.

Al-Qaeda Foreign Fighters

Al-Qaeda appears to now have an open presence in Iraq. In the months prior to the war, when conflict seemed inevitable, small units of al-Qaeda formed cells in Baghdad, but were ordered to stay clear of Saddam's regime. This group numbered only 30 to 40 fighters. They fought during the war and remained afterwards, when they were reinforced by other operatives. Gradually the number has increased. Many of the al-Qaeda who came to Iraq during and after major combat phase appear to have come in via Iran, either across the border east of Baghdad, or to the north through the Kurdish areas. A few others have come across the Turkish border into the Kurdish zone. After the collapse of the regime, foreign fighters flowed into the country across the Syrian, Kuwaiti and Saudi borders.

Regional Characteristics of the Resistance

Ramadi, Khaldiya, West to the Syrian border in Al Anbar:

Much of Iraqi resistance around Ramadi and the part of Anbar west of Ramadi (Hadithah, Hit, Qusaybah) is coming from the Sunni Arab tribes. Often with nationalistic tendencies, most of these Arab Sunni Muslims are anti-Saddam, with almost 100 percent support for the resistance in the towns of Ramadi and Khaldiya. Many police in Fallujah and Ramadi also support the resistance.

Diyala Province:

The resistance here is made up of Arab Sunni Muslims from local tribes, former Iraqi military and ordinary Iraqis angry about the occupation, with some foreign fighters that are mostly Arab nationalists rather than Muslim activists, and a few Saddam Fedayeen and Ba'ath Party members. The resistance here is generally anti-Saddam. Mohammed's Army has a large presence in this region and they reportedly have an all-female battalion in this province. There is some Shiah resistance in Baqubah and many police in Baqubah support the resistance. There is almost 100 percent support for the resistance here.

Salah-al-Din Province South of Balad:

The resistance in this area is almost exactly like the resistance in Diyala Province. There are some pro-Saddam elements around Dujayl. This area overall is a mix of Sunni-Shiah Arab Muslims and the Shiah appear to be sitting out the war. Many police in Bani Sad support the resistance.

Samarra:

The resistance here is similar to that in Diyala Province and Salah-al-Din Province, with the exception that the resistance here is mostly secular. The secular groups include Ba'athists, nationalists, Iraqi patriots and those who want revenge for family members harmed by the U.S. The Ba'athists in Samarra tend to be Arab nationalist Ba'athists, and many are anti-Saddam. Muslim activists are also prominent but have a much smaller presence. Samarra was not treated well by Saddam's regime so there are only a few regime supporters among the resistance. Former Iraqi military, including high-ranking officers, are active here. Almost 100 percent support for the resistance exists among the population here. Many Iraqi police here support the resistance and the police force appears to be at least partly infiltrated.

Baiji:

This area is known to be a stronghold of support for Saddam and the resistance was originally comprised of former regime supporters and foreign fighters. However, by November 2003, there were more and more former Iraqi military joining the fight, and many were anti-Saddam. There is 100 percent support for the resistance in the town of Baiji, including among the police who refuse orders from the U.S. military command.

Fallujah:

The Iraqi resistance in Fallujah is tribal in nature and primarily made up of Arab Sunni Muslims, with some suspected of links to the Muslim Brotherhood. There are also former Ba'athists present in the resistance in Fallujah, but all groups operating here are led by Sheikhs. Muslim activists are dominant here, with 100 percent support for the resistance in this town where numerous resistance groups are based. Some foreign fighters are active here, but the number does not appear to be very large.

Mosul:

Iraqi resistance in Mosul is the pretty much the same as Fallujah, except it lacks the 100 percent support of the town, although support is still considerable, especially in Arab West Mosul. There is also a significant pro-Saddam element in Mosul, and a very significant component of former Iraqi military, especially officers.

Ninewa Province North, South and West of Mosul to the Syrian border:

Resistance in this area is more active than would be expected but is extremely difficult to characterize. In the immediate vicinity of Mosul the resistance resembles the city's resistance. Towards the Syrian border, the resistance changes, with some Bedouin tribes active in the resistance. There is considerable conflict between the Kurds and the Arab Sunni Muslims in the area, especially in towns like Sinjar near the Syrian border. Most of the fighters appear to be local Arab Sunni Muslims. Some of the fighters in this area are just local farmers upset with the U.S. Local Kurds are hardly involved at all, with the Kurdish areas in Ninewa engaging in little resistance activity, but some of the remainders of Ansar Al-Islam have been captured in the area.

Tikrit:

Resistance in Tikrit is pro-Saddam, although not all Tikrits are pro-Saddam. There is almost 100 percent support for the resistance in Tikrit itself. This strongly pro-Saddam region extends from Tikrit up to Baiji, over to Hawija and down to around Balad. The police force here is at least partially infiltrated.

Kirkuk Area and Tammim Province:

Resistance in the Kirkuk Area and Tammim Province is quite active yet very hard to characterize. The situation is highly fluid amongst all resistance groups in this area at the moment. The resistance forces are suspected of being dominated by Arab Sunni Muslim activists. Resistance operations are confined to the Sunni Arab quarters of Tammim.

Balad Area:

Resistance in the Balad area is exclusively coming from Arab Sunni Muslims; it is tribal in nature and exists only in the ring of villages surrounding Balad and not in Balad itself. The city of Balad is made up of Shiah who are largely neutral. The resistance in the Balad area is pro-Saddam and 100 percent support for the resistance exists in these villages. The Iraqi police are completely infiltrated in these villages, and almost all of them are active in the resistance when they are off-duty.

The Upper South:

Resistance south of Baghdad down to the areas surrounding Karbala and Hilla is a mix that reflects the ethnic and tribal diversity of the region, which is comprised of Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiah Arabs. There are more Shiah towards Karbala and it is impossible to characterize the resistance coming from this area. The resistance in the Upper South is mostly Arab Sunni Muslims, possibly resembling the resistance coming from Fallujah, Ramadi, Khaldiya and Abu Gharaib.

Latifiyah:

This is an Arab Sunni Muslim town in the Upper South and is notably hostile, as evidenced by the assassination of seven Spanish intelligence officers here in November 2003. The police ignored the incident and local civilians cheered while others danced on the bodies. This area is a hotbed of resistance which is coming from Arab Sunni Muslims.

Basra:

Resistance in Basra is significant, but its tendencies are not known. Local Shiah leaders allege that the resistance is coming from Ba'athists, but there is no evidence to prove that. A few foreign fighters are present here. Basra is quite hostile and has the atmosphere of a war zone, with attacks and shootings every day. Almost none of the locals appear to be happy about the occupation, though many claim that the occupation is "better than Saddam."

Baghdad:

Resistance in Baghdad itself is a mixed bag of anti-Saddam nationalists, Arab Sunni Muslims, Muslim mujahideen such as Mohammed's Army, Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters. The latter two seem to be responsible for most of the spectacular attacks. Some Ba'athists are now anti-Saddam and the resistance here covers the complete political and religious spectrum.

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