

CRS Report for Congress

Iraq: U.S. Military Operations

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Summary

Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, together with Iraqi long-range missile development and support for Al Qaeda terrorism, were the primary justifications put forward for military action. On March 17, 2003, President Bush issued an ultimatum demanding that Saddam Hussein and his sons depart from Iraq within 48 hours. On March 19, offensive operations began with air strikes against Iraqi leadership positions. By April 15, after 27 days of operations, coalition forces were in relative control of all major Iraqi cities and Iraqi political and military leadership had disintegrated. On May 1, 2003, President Bush declared an end to major combat operations. There was no use of chemical or biological (CB) weapons, and no CB or nuclear weapons stockpiles or production facilities have been found.

The major challenges to coalition forces are now quelling a persistent Iraqi resistance movement and training sufficient Iraqi forces to assume responsibility for the nation's domestic security. Though initially denying that there was an organized resistance movement, DOD officials have now acknowledged there is regional/local organization, with apparently ample supplies of arms and funding. CENTCOM commander General Abizaid, has characterized the Iraqi resistance as "a classical guerrilla-type campaign." DOD initially believed the resistance to consist primarily of former regime supporters and foreign fighters; however, it has now acknowledged that growing resentment of coalition forces and an increase in sectarian conflicts, independent of connections with the earlier regime, are contributing to the insurgency. Counterinsurgency operations are being intensified in Baghdad and al-Anbar province, focusing on a "clear, hold, and build" strategy.

According to DOD, as of January 2, 2007, 3,004 U.S. troops had died in Iraq operations. There have been more than 22,500 U.S. personnel wounded or injured since military operations began. Non-U.S. Coalition fatalities have totaled 250, while Iraqi security force fatalities from June 2003 through December 2006 are estimated to be 5,952.

The latest unclassified DOD statistics indicate that as of January 2, about 128,500 U.S. troops are in Iraq, and an additional 20,000 military support personnel in the region. An additional 21,500 troops are now scheduled for accelerated deployment over the next few months. About 14,100 non-U.S. troops are also in theater, with Britain being the largest contributor. Other nations contributing troops include Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia (Gruzia), Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Singapore, and Slovakia, South Korea, and Ukraine.

This report will be updated as events warrant.

Contents

Background	1
Military Planning and Initial Combat Operations	1
Options Considered	2
Combat Operations Prior to May 1, 2003	3
Post-May 2003 Operations	4
Iraqi Security Organizations	6
Iraqi Insurgency	7
Force Levels	8
Non-U.S. Forces	9

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Background

Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, together with Iraqi long-range missile development, and Iraqi support for the Al Qaeda terrorist group were the primary justifications put forward by the Bush Administration for military action. Since Iraq originally ended cooperation with U.N. inspectors in 1998, there was little information on the state of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenal; however, Administration officials were convinced that Iraq had reconstituted significant capabilities. Initially, leading Administration officials, most notably Vice-President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and his Deputy Paul Wolfowitz, stressed "regime change" or the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Later in 2002, WMD disarmament was emphasized as the primary objective. Expanding on this theme President Bush, in his speech before the United Nations on September 12, 2002, specified the following conditions for Iraq to meet to forestall military action against it:

- Immediately and unconditionally forswear, disclose, and remove or destroy all weapons of mass destruction, long-range missiles, and all related material.
- End all support for terrorism and act to suppress it.
- Cease persecution of its civilian population.
- Release or account for all Gulf War missing personnel.
- End all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food program and allow United Nations administration of its funds.¹

On March 17, 2003, President Bush issued an ultimatum demanding that Saddam Hussein and his sons depart from Iraq within 48 hours. On March 19, offensive operations commenced with air strikes against Iraqi leadership positions.

Military Planning and Initial Combat Operations

As military operations continue in Iraq, there has been considerable discussion about whether the initial planning for the war was adequate and based upon accurate assumptions. Prior to the onset of offensive operations, the Department of Defense released only limited official information concerning war planning or preparations against Iraq. There were, however, frequent and significant news leaks which provided a range of details. News reports indicated that the military options that were under discussion varied significantly in their assumptions regarding Iraq

¹ President Bush's Address to the U.N. General Assembly, Sept. 12, 2002.

military capabilities, the usefulness of Iraqi opposition groups, the attitude of regional governments, and the U.S. military resources that would be required.

Options Considered

In the wake of the successful operations in Afghanistan against the Taliban, some Administration officials advocated a similar operation, entailing use of special operations forces in cooperation with indigenous Iraqi opposition forces, coupled with an extensive air offensive to destroy Hussein's most reliable Republican Guard units, command & control centers, and WMD capabilities. This approach assumed that the regular Iraqi army would prove unreliable, and could even join opposition forces once it was clear that defeat was imminent. To encourage this, significant emphasis would be placed on an intensive psychological warfare or "psyops" campaign to undermine the morale of Iraqi soldiers and unit commanders, persuading them of the hopelessness of resistance.²

While having the advantage of not requiring large staging areas (though some regional air basing would be required) or months to prepare, this was generally considered the riskiest approach. The weakness of Iraqi opposition military forces and their competing political agendas placed their effectiveness in question, and predicting the behavior of regular Iraqi Army units under attack was problematic. This option also did not address the possibility of stiff resistance by Republican Guard units in the environs of Baghdad, nor the troop requirements of a post-conflict occupation.

This "lite" option stood in contrast to the operations plan originally offered by U.S. Central Command. This option, often called the "Franks Plan," after Army Gen. Tommy Franks, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander who first briefed it to the President, called for a large-scale ground force invasion. News reports initially indicated, however, that this "heavy" approach did not receive the support of the DOD civilian leadership or White House advisors. Questions over the reliability of the regional support that would be necessary for staging areas and the length of time required for deployment were the major concerns.³ However, the White House rejection of the "Franks Plan" came prior to the decision to take the Iraq issue to the United Nations Security Council. When it became clear that Security Council deliberations and the re-introduction of U.N. inspectors to Iraq could delay the possibility of military action for several months, it was apparently decided that this interlude would allow time both to negotiate regional cooperation and to deploy somewhat more substantial forces to the Persian Gulf region, and military operations appeared to adhere closer to CENTCOM's original recommendations. As the ground force offensive slowed, however, there was increasing criticism of DOD's civilian

² "Timing, Tactics on Iraq War Disputed; Top Bush Officials Criticize Generals' Conventional Views," *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 2002, p. 1.

³ "The Iraq Build-up, II," *National Journal*, Oct. 5, 2002, p. 2866.

leadership for not permitting the deployment of even more ground forces prior to onset of operations.⁴

Combat Operations Prior to May 1, 2003

Offensive operations combined an air offensive and simultaneous ground offensive, in contrast to the 1991 campaign which saw weeks of air attacks to soften Iraqi resistance. U.S. Central Command's operational plan employed a smaller ground force than the 1991 Desert Storm operation, reflecting an assessment that Iraqi armed forces were neither as numerous nor as capable as they were ten years earlier, and that U.S. forces were significantly more capable. This option depended upon the continued cooperation of regional nations for substantial staging areas/airbases and required months to deploy the necessary forces.

Though press reports differed somewhat, reportedly over 340,000 U.S. military personnel were in the Persian Gulf region (ashore and afloat). The 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), the 7th Cavalry Regiment, and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force formed the bulk of the U.S. ground offensive. The 4th Mechanized Infantry Division arrived late in theater. Ships bearing its equipment remained off Turkey for weeks awaiting the outcome of negotiations to permit establishing a northern front attacking from Turkey, and then were diverted to the Persian Gulf when these negotiations fell through. The U.S. Navy deployed five of its twelve naval aircraft carrier battle groups. The Air Force had approximately 15 air wings operating in the region. Strategic bombers operated from the British airbase at Diego Garcia, and airbases in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. The United Kingdom deployed over 47,000 personnel, including a naval task force, an armored task force, a Royal Marine brigade, a parachute brigade, a Special Air Service regiment, and a Special Boat Squadron. The majority of these British forces were engaged in southeastern Iraq, securing the Umm Qasr and Basra region. Australia deployed approximately 2,000 personnel, primarily special operations personnel, and one F/A-18 attack aircraft squadron. Poland had 200 special operations troops around Basra. (For more detailed information, see CRS Report RL31843, *Iraq: International Attitudes to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Reconstruction*, by Steven A. Hildreth, Jeremy M. Sharp, Melanie Caesar, Adam Frost, and Helene Machart.)

The invasion of Iraq was expected to begin with a 72-96 hour air offensive to paralyze the Iraqi command structure, and demoralize Iraqi resistance across the military-civilian spectrum. Intelligence reports indicating the possibility of striking Saddam Hussein and his immediate circle led to an acceleration of the operations plan, and an almost simultaneously onset of air and ground offensive operations. CENTCOM air commanders stressed that significant efforts would be made to minimize civilian casualties and damage to Iraqi physical infrastructure, and they were mostly successful in this effort.

With 25 days of offensive operations, coalition forces had relative control of all major Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Tikrit. CENTCOM

⁴ "Rumsfeld's Role as War Strategist Under Scrutiny," *Reuters*, Mar. 30, 2003.

pursued a strategy of rapid advance, by-passing urban centers when possible, pausing only when encountering Iraqi resistance. CENTCOM spokesmen characterized Iraqi resistance as sporadic and uncohesive. Oilfields and port facilities throughout Iraq were secured, as were all major air bases in Iraq. Though a few oil wells were set afire, all were quelled, and there has been only sporadic environmental sabotage. Allied forces did not encounter the mass surrenders characteristic of the 1991 campaign, however DOD reported that over 6,000 Iraqis were taken prisoner, and believes that many more simply deserted their positions. Iraqi paramilitary forces, particularly the Saddam Fedayeen, engaged in guerrilla-style attacks from urban centers in the rear areas, but did not inflict significant damage. Nevertheless, greater attention than anticipated had to be paid to protecting extended supply lines, and securing these urban centers, particularly around an-Nasiriyah and Najaf, and in the British sector around Umm Qasr and Basra.

Though CENTCOM commanders publicly expressed confidence in the adequacy of their force structure in theater, the Iraqi attacks in rear areas and the length of the supply lines to forward units led some to suggest that insufficient ground forces were in place to continue the offensive while securing rear areas and ensuring uninterrupted logistical support. These critics faulted DOD civilian leadership for overestimating the effectiveness of a precision air offensive and curtailing the deployment of more ground troops, suggesting that an ideological commitment to smaller ground forces and greater reliance on high-tech weaponry had dominated military planning.⁵

Without permission to use Turkish territory, CENTCOM was unable to carry out an early ground offensive in Northern Iraq. However, Special operations forces, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and air-lifted U.S. armor, operating with Kurdish irregulars seized Mosul, Kirkuk, and Tikrit. Cooperation with Kurdish militias in the north has been excellent.

Post-May 2003 Operations

With the onset of widespread looting and the breakdown of public services (electricity, water) in the cities, coalition forces were confronted with the challenges of restoring public order and infrastructure even before combat operations ceased. Though U.S. forces have come under criticism for not having done more to provide security, the transition from combat to police roles is a difficult one, particularly when an important objective is winning popular support. Harsh reactions risk alienation of the population, yet inaction reduces confidence in the ability of coalition forces to maintain order. Coalition forces also have had to try to keep Iraqi factional violence from derailing stabilization efforts, with very mixed success. There is a significant body of criticism that DOD's leadership's assumptions about the ease of

⁵ "Questions Raised About Invasion Force," *Washington Post*, Mar. 25, 2003, p. 17.

the post-war transition led to inadequate planning within the department and the disregard of extensive State Department planning efforts prior to the war.⁶

U.S. forces are spread relatively thin throughout Iraq, and many argue that additional troops in theater could improve the pace and breadth of stabilization operations. DOD initially rejected this argument, stating that rather than adding more U.S. troops, the increased number of Iraqi security forces could be counted on to assist more extensively in stability operations. Indeed, CENTCOM's intent was to reduce the U.S. contingent to 110,000 by the end of May 2004. However, in April, 2004, uprisings in central and southern Iraq led CENTCOM to alter its plan, and to raise the number of U.S. troops to 141,000 by delaying the scheduled return of some units and accelerating the deployment of others. This number rose to almost 160,000 in early 2005 in anticipation of insurgents' efforts to disrupt the January 2005 Iraqi elections, and then has fluctuated from 138,000 to again 160,000 in place for the December 2005 elections. After these elections, DOD announced its intent to reduce the U.S. troop level by 7,000 to 8,000 by not replacing units scheduled to rotate back to home bases. On December 23, 2005, Secretary Rumsfeld announced that President Bush had approved the withdrawal of an undisclosed number of U.S. troops in 2006.⁷ A reduction to a "baseline" of 138,000 by Spring 2006, and further reductions in Summer 2006 were discussed. Troop levels have nevertheless continued to hover around 140,000.

Since the late fall of 2004, U.S. forces, with ISF participation, have undertaken fairly constant counterinsurgency operations, focused primarily on strongholds in central and western Iraq. Though these operations were uniformly successful in defeating or driving out insurgents, Iraqi security forces were subsequently unable to prevent their return, thus requiring repeated U.S. assaults in some areas.

The Bush Administration's decision to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, announced on January 10th, is intended to improve the ability to carry out the counterinsurgency strategy of "clear, hold, and build" undertaken over the last year. To cope with the inability or unwillingness of Iraqi security forces to maintain control of areas cleared of insurgents, the new plan will "partner" U.S. and Iraqi units down to the Iraqi battalion level in nine districts of Baghdad, establishing security outposts in each district from which to patrol and conduct raids. The emphasis is intended to be on Iraqi security forces taking the lead in all operations, with U.S. troops providing support as required. The Bush Administration has accepted the Iraqi government's assurance that counterinsurgency operations will be conducted without sectarian considerations, and will not be targeted solely against Sunni insurgents. This would be a departure from the previous situation, in which Iraqi government officials discouraged or prohibited operations against Shia militias.

A number of questions have arisen regarding the personnel increase and the new approach to counterinsurgency operations. Among them, are (1) Is the troop increase

⁶ Cordesman, Anthony, "An Effective U.S. Strategy for Iraq," testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Feb. 1, 2005; Diamond, Larry. "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2004.

⁷ "Iraq Contingent May Grow if Attacks Persist," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 26, 2005.

sufficient in number, given that the accepted COIN practice of 20 counterinsurgents per 1,000 population would require about 120,000 personnel for Baghdad's population of six million?⁸ (2) Will the current Iraqi government, which is dependent upon Shia militia leaders' support, hold to its commitment to permit operations against these militias? (3) How reliable and/or competent will Iraqi security forces be, given their previous performance? (4) Will ongoing discussions between U.S. and Iraqi military commanders result in a workable chain-of-command? (5) How long will it be necessary to sustain an increased U.S. military presence in Baghdad and al-Anbar province to ensure a stable security environment?

The attitude of the Iraq population remains the key element to stabilizing Iraq, and depends upon a variety of factors, such as the nature and extent of infrastructure damage and economic dislocation, the demands of ethnic and religious groups, and the speed with which a credible government can be established. Though a short-term post-war occupation was initially expected by some Administration officials, it is now believed that a continued deployment of military ground forces could be necessary for several years, though there are differences of opinion on the number of forces. The Iraq Study Group Report recommended no long-term increase in troop levels, though it did not oppose a short-term increase to stabilize Baghdad.⁹ A report prepared by the American Enterprise Institute recommends a substantial, potentially long-term increase of some 30,000 combat troops for intensified counterinsurgency operations.¹⁰

Iraqi Security Organizations

The Bush Administration has made the ability of the Iraqi Security Force (ISF) to defeat the insurgency and maintain order the pivotal element of continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. Though ISF performance has been generally poor, with many personnel deserting and some actively joining the insurgents, Administration officials continue to believe that a strengthened training effort will provide more reliable units. This approach was endorsed by the Iraq Study Group, whose report recommended that the training and equipping of the ISF become the primary mission of the U.S. military in Iraq. The Multi-National Security Transition Command- Iraq [<http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/>] has responsibility for this training effort. Participants include U.S., Australian, and NATO trainers.¹¹ Though initial efforts were hampered by delays in staffing U.S. personnel, lack of equipment, and difficulties in retaining Iraqi personnel, the objective of 325,000 trained ISF personnel has almost been reached. There are still, however, some serious concerns that Iraqi security forces remain under-equipped, lacking sufficient vehicles, heavy

⁸ *Counterinsurgency Operations*, U.S. Army Field Manual FM100-34, p.26

⁹ *Iraq Study Group Report*, Baker, et al., Vintage Books, 2006. Also available at [<http://www.usip.org/isg/index.html>].

¹⁰ *Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq*. Frederick Kagan, American Enterprise Institute, December 2007. Also available at [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.25292/pub_detail.asp].

¹¹ For additional information, see CRS Report RS22093, *Iraq's New Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, by Jeremy M. Sharp.

weapons, and communications equipment.¹² There are also strong indications that the security forces have been significantly infiltrated by insurgent supporters.¹³ Independent estimates of the time required to develop a full complement of fully capable security forces range up to five years.¹⁴

As of January 10, 2007, the State Department's *Iraq Weekly Status Report* provided the following statistics.

Iraqi Security Forces (operational)	
Police	159,000
Other Ministry of Interior Forces	28,900
Army	132,700
Air Force	900
Coastal Defense Force	1,100
Total	323,000

Iraqi Insurgency

Coalition troops, Iraqi security forces, and civilian support personnel continue to come under frequent and deadly attacks, primarily in central Iraq, but sporadically in southern and northern Iraq also. This constant potential for attack affects the pace and mode of reconstruction and stabilization operations. Troops must assume a potentially hostile environment, yet try to avoid incidents or actions that erode popular support. In addition to continuing attacks on coalition personnel, there have been attacks on infrastructure targets (e.g., oil/gas pipelines, electrical power stations and lines) hindering efforts to restore basic services to the civilian population. Attacks on oil pipelines also threaten to further delay the use of Iraqi oil exports to fund reconstruction programs. Though it is virtually impossible to fully protect these pipelines from sabotage, it is hoped that ongoing efforts to train specialized Iraqi units will provide coalition troops some assistance in this mission.

Though initially denying that these attacks were the work of an organized resistance movement, DOD officials have now acknowledged there is at least regional/local organization, with apparently ample supplies of arms and funding. CENTCOM commander Gen. Abizaid, has characterized the Iraqi resistance as “a classical guerrilla-type campaign.”¹⁵ Though many attacks have been made with improvised explosives, the resistance also has access to mortars, rocket launchers,

¹² Eric Schmitt, “Effort To Train New Iraqi Army Is Facing Delays,” *New York Times*, Sept. 20, 2004, p. 1.

¹³ Richard Opiel, “Friend Or Enemy? The Iraqi Uniforms Don’t Always Tell,” *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 2004. John Lumpkin, “Insurgents Said To Be Infiltrating Security Forces,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 22, 2004.

¹⁴ Barry Renfrew, “Report Says Iraqi Forces May Take 5 Years To Build,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 20, 2004.

¹⁵ DOD News Briefing, July 16, 2003.

and surface-to-air missiles looted from Iraq army depots. For example, one of the President's quarterly reports to Congress on Iraq operations noted that only 40% of Iraq's pre-war munitions inventory was secured or destroyed prior to April 2004.¹⁶ The resistance has also moved from solely guerrilla-style attacks to utilizing suicide bombers. DOD believes the resistance to comprise primarily former regime supporters such as Baathist party members, Republican Guard soldiers, and paramilitary personnel. Captured documents have given some indication that preparations for a resistance movement were made prior to the war, including the caching of arms and money. However, others are concerned that growing resentment of coalition forces and increasing intra-sectarian conflict, independent of connections with the earlier regime, are contributing to the resistance. Estimates of the size of the insurgency have ranged as high as 30,000.¹⁷ There is, however, no reliable methodology for determining actual numbers for an insurgency that operates for the most part clandestinely. It is generally assumed that the insurgency has a core of combatants, with a significantly larger pool of active and passive supporters. Captured documents have given some indication that preparations for a resistance movement were made prior to the war, including the caching of arms and money.

Force Levels

On January 10, in an effort to improve the security situation in Baghdad and al-Anbar province, President Bush announced that an additional 17,500 Army personnel and 4,000 U.S. Marines will deploy to Iraq. The units to deploy over the next several months include the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Ft. Bragg, NC); 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (Ft Riley, KS); 2nd and 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (Ft. Benning, GA/Ft. Stewart, GA); and 4th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Ft. Lewis, WA). In addition to these five brigades, the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division of the Minnesota National Guard will have its deployment extended. The Marine Corps will extend the deployment of two reinforced infantry battalions and the 15th Expeditionary Unit. Additional support units may be deployed, depending upon requirements. The Army units will join operations in Baghdad, while the additional Marines will augment Marine units already in al-Anbar province. This will bring the number of U.S. troops engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Baghdad to approximately 32,500. The Iraqi government is expected to contribute nine Army brigades to the new Baghdad operations, for a total of approximately 20,000 personnel.

The last official unclassified statistics released by DOD on January 2, 2007 indicate that the United States military personnel in Iraq totaled 128,569 personnel and comprised the following:¹⁸

Active Duty:

Army: 72,598; Air Force: 8,591; Navy: 3,553; Marine Corps: 21,554

¹⁶ *A Report Consistent with the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq*, 108th Congress, 2nd Session. Document No. 108-180, Apr. 21, 2004.

¹⁷ *Iraq Index*, Brookings Institution, December 2006, p. 17.

¹⁸ Information Paper, Joint Chiefs of Staff Legislative Liaison, January 2, 2007

National Guard:

Army National Guard: 13,508; Air National Guard: 412

Reserves:

Army: 5,600; Air Force: 412; Navy: 926; Marine Corps: 1,004

Non-U.S. Forces

A key element in the Defense Department's consideration of troop requirements in Iraq is the willingness of other nations to contribute ground forces. The State Department has reported that as of January 10, 2007, about 14,100 non-U.S. troops from 25 other nations are in Iraq, but has not released a nation-by-nation breakdown of these contributions. The United Kingdom is the largest other single contributor, with about 7,000 troops. Other nations contributing troops include Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia (Gruzia), Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, South Korea, and Ukraine. Most nations, however, have deployed relatively small numbers of troops, and questions remain about their operational capabilities.¹⁹ Some nations that the United States approached for assistance (e.g., Turkey, Pakistan, India) indicated that their participation would be dependent upon, at a minimum, a United Nations resolution authorizing operations in Iraq. However, after the United Nations Security Council passed such a resolution, there still was no enthusiasm for contributing military forces. For these and other nations, significant domestic political resistance to participation in Iraq operations remains a consideration. For example, 2005 national elections in Spain resulted in a new government that withdrew the Spanish contingent from Iraq immediately. The contingents from Honduras and the Dominican Republic, which were dependent upon Spanish forces for command and logistic support, also withdrew. Other countries that have withdrawn their forces or have announced intentions to do so include Italy, Japan, South Korea, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

Though many NATO nations have unilaterally contributed troops, the Bush Administration's efforts to obtain an institutional NATO commitment to providing combat troops have proven unsuccessful. However, in January 2006, NATO announced that all member nations are contributing to the training of Iraqi security forces. The nature of the contributions vary by nation from the purely monetary to training missions on-site in Iraq. NATO officials have noted that the on-going operations in Afghanistan, where it commands the International Security Assistance Force, remain its primary focus.

¹⁹ "G.I.'s Doubt Foreign Troops Readiness," *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 7, 2003, p. 1.