



Iraq Casualties: U.S. Military Forces and Iraqi Civilians, Police, and Security Forces

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Summary

This report presents U.S. military casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) as well as governmental and nongovernmental estimates of Iraqi civilian, police, and security forces casualties.

For several years, there were few estimates from any national or international government source regarding Iraqi civilian, police, and security forces casualties. Now, however, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is reporting civilian casualty estimates. In addition, several Iraqi ministries have released monthly or total casualty statistics.

Nongovernmental sources also have released various estimates of Iraqi civilian, police, and security forces casualties. This report includes estimates from Iraq Body Count (IBC), the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count (ICCC), Iraq Family Health Survey (IFHS), the most recent study published in the *Lancet*, the Brookings Institution, and the British survey firm, Opinion Research Business (ORB).

Because the estimates of Iraqi casualties contained in this report are based on varying time periods and have been created using differing methodologies, readers should exercise caution when using them and should look to them as guideposts rather than as statements of fact.

This report will be updated as needed.

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U.S. Casualties

On August 31, 2010, President Obama announced that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq had ended. More than 100,000 troops have been withdrawn from Iraq, and a transitional force of U.S. troops has remained in Iraq with a different mission: “advising and assisting Iraq’s Security Forces, supporting Iraqi troops in targeted counterterrorism missions, and protecting our civilians.”¹ This mission is called Operation New Dawn (OND). **Table 1** provides statistics on fatalities and wounds in OND. All troops are slated for withdrawal from Iraq by the end of 2011.²

Table 2 provides statistics on fatalities and wounds during Operation Iraqi Freedom, which began on March 19, 2003, and ended August 31, 2010. Statistics may be revised as circumstances surrounding a servicemember’s death or injury are investigated and as all records are processed through the U.S. military’s casualty system. More frequent updates are available at DOD’s website at <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>.

A detailed casualty summary that includes data on deaths by cause, as well as statistics on soldiers wounded in action, is available at DOD’s website at <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>.

Table 1. Operation New Dawn, U.S. Fatalities and Wounded

(as of November 21, 2011, 10 a.m. EST)

	Total Deaths	Hostile ^a	Non-Hostile ^b	Wounded in Action
U.S. Military	65	38	27	303
U.S. DOD Civilian	—	—	—	—

Source: <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>.

- a. According to the Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as amended through 15 October 2011, a “hostile casualty” is a person who is the victim of a terrorist activity or who becomes a casualty “in action,” available at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/.
- b. The above-named reference defines a “non-hostile casualty” as a casualty that is not directly attributable to hostile action or terrorist activity, such as casualties due to the elements, self-inflicted wounds, or combat fatigue.

¹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the End of Combat Operations in Iraq,” press release, August 31, 2010, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/08/31/remarks-president-address-nation-end-combat-operations-iraq>.

² The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by the President on Ending the War in Iraq,” press release, October 21, 2011, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/10/21/remarks-president-ending-war-iraq>.

Table 2. Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. Fatalities and Wounded

(as of November 21, 2011, 10 a.m. EST)

	Total Deaths	Hostile^a	Non-hostile^b	Wounded in Action
U.S. Military	4,408	3,480	928	31,921
U.S. DOD Civilian	13	9	4	—
Totals	4,421	3,489	932	31,921

Source: <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>.

- a. According to the Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as amended through 15 October 2011, a “hostile casualty” is a person who is the victim of a terrorist activity or who becomes a casualty “in action,” available at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/.
- b. The above-named reference defines a “non-hostile casualty” as a casualty that is not directly attributable to hostile action or terrorist activity, such as casualties due to the elements, self-inflicted wounds, or combat fatigue.

Iraqi Casualties³

United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq’s (UNAMI’s) tally, 2,953 Iraqi civilians were killed and 10,434 were injured during 2010.⁴ In comparison, according to the same source, 3,056 civilians were killed and 10,770 civilians wounded in 2009.⁵

UNAMI also reports figures provided to UNAMI from the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights. According to these figures, 3,254 Iraqi civilians died and 13,788 were wounded in 2010.⁶ A separate report from the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights, published in October of 2009, gave figures of 85,694 civilian deaths from 2004 to 2008.⁷ The 2009 report specified that it included only those deaths due to terrorist attacks, defined as “direct bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, and forced displacement of the population.”⁸ In other words, the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights did not include in its 2009 total any civilian deaths that may have been due to coalition occupation or fighting between militias within Iraq. It is not clear whether this distinction was made with the 2010 data reported by UNAMI. Added together, the Iraq Ministry

³ In October 2010, the website <http://wikileaks.org/> released 391,832 classified reports of significant acts, or “SIGACTs,” taken during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Although Iraqi civilian deaths are often mentioned in these reports, and some have used the reports to compile new tallies of such deaths, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has asked that these reports continue to be treated as classified material.

⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Office and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *2010 Report on Human Rights in Iraq*, January 2011, p. 4, at http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI_HR%20Report_English_FINAL_1Aug11.pdf.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Iraq Ministry of Human Rights, “*The Mechanism of a Comprehensive Periodic Review/Iraq*,” October 2009.

⁸ *Ibid.*

of Human Rights would seem to have a tally of 88,948 Iraqi civilian deaths from 2004 through 2010.

**Table 3. UNAMI and the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights:
Iraq Civilian Dead and Wounded**
(2009-2010)

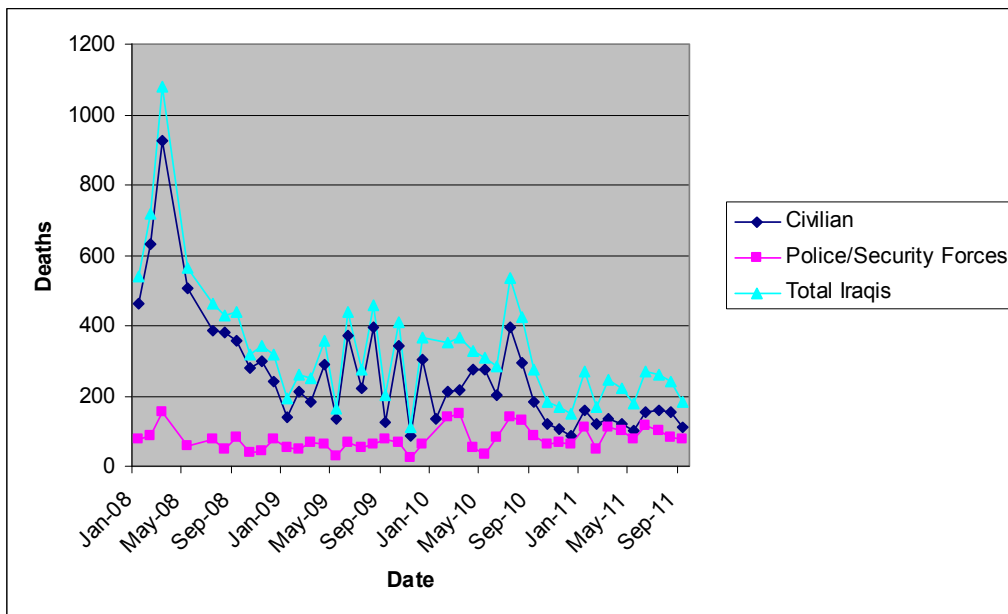
	UNAMI		Iraq Ministry of Human Rights	
	2010	2009	2010	2009
Civilian Deaths	2,953	3,056	3,254	N/A
Civilians Wounded	10,434	10,770	13,788	N/A

Source: United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Office and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *2010 Report on Human Rights in Iraq*, January 2011, p. 4, at http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI_HR%20Report_English_FINAL_1Aug11.pdf.

Iraq Health Ministry

Along with the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights, other Iraqi ministries also have kept data on civilian deaths. The Iraq Health Ministry releases data on civilian deaths and the Iraq Ministries of the Interior and Defense release data on police and security forces deaths. Each of these ministries releases their data to the press on a monthly basis. According to their totals, 9,466 civilians and 2,238 Iraqi police and security forces have died since January 2008. **Figure 1** charts the deaths of civilians and police and security forces as reported by the Iraq Ministry of Health.

Figure 1. Iraq Ministry of Health: Civilian and Police/Security Forces Deaths
January 2008-September, 2011



Source: Iraqi government figures as reported in Reuters and Agence France Presse at the beginning of each month.

Note: Does not include data from the Iraq Ministry of Human Rights report.

Nongovernmental Data

The Iraq Body Count (IBC) website bases its casualty estimates on media reports of casualties, some of which may involve security forces as well as civilians.⁹ Using media reports as a base for casualty estimates can entail errors: some deaths may not be reported in the media, whereas other deaths may be reported more than once. The IBC documents each of the civilian casualties it records with a media source and provides a minimum and a maximum estimate. As of November 21, 2011, the IBC estimated that between 103,640 and 113,230 civilians had died as a result of military action. In a separate analysis of its data, the IBC also estimated that, between January 2006 and November 2008, 4,884 Iraqi police had been killed.¹⁰

A separate analysis used IBC data to look at Iraqi civilian deaths caused by perpetrators of armed violence during the first five years of the Iraq War.¹¹ The researchers found that coalition forces caused 12% of civilian deaths, anti-coalition forces caused 11%, and unknown perpetrators caused 74%. In addition, they applied a “Dirty War Index” (DWI) and found that the most indiscriminate effects on women and children were from unknown perpetrators firing mortars, non-suicide vehicle bombs, and coalition air attacks. They concluded that “coalition forces had a higher DWI than anti-coalition forces for all weapons combined, with no decrease over the study period.”¹²

The Iraq Coalition Casualty Count (ICCC) is another nonprofit group that, like the IBC, tracks Iraqi civilian and Iraqi security forces deaths using media reports of deaths. ICCC is also prone to the kind of errors likely to occur when using media reports for data: some deaths may not be reported, whereas other deaths may be reported more than once. The ICCC estimates that there were 50,152 civilian deaths from March 2005 through July 2011, and 8,825 security forces were killed from January 2005 to July 2011.¹³

Earlier studies include “the *Lancet* study.” In 2006, researchers from Johns Hopkins University and Baghdad’s Al-Mustansiriya University published their most recent cluster study on Iraqi civilian casualties, commonly referred to in the press as “the *Lancet* study” because it was published in the British medical journal of that name. The study surveyed 47 clusters and reported an estimate of between 426,369 and 793,663 Iraqi civilian deaths from violent causes since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom to July 2006.¹⁴

In a more recent cluster study, a team of investigators from the Federal Ministry of Health in Baghdad, the Kurdistan Ministry of Planning, the Kurdistan Ministry of Health, the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology in Baghdad, and the World Health

⁹ Iraq Body Count at <http://www.iraqbodycount.net>. IBC is a nongovernmental organization managed by researchers and volunteers.

¹⁰ Iraq Body Count at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/surge-2008/>.

¹¹ Madelyn Hsiao-Rei Hicks, Hamit Dardagan, Gabriela Guerro Serdan et al, “Violent Deaths of Iraqi Civilians, 2003-2008: Analysis by Perpetrator, Weapon, Time, and Location,” *Public Library of Science Medicine*, February 2011, at <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1000415>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Iraq Coalition Casualty Count at <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/IraqiDeaths.aspx>. ICCC is a nongovernmental organization managed by researchers and volunteers.

¹⁴ Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy et al., “Mortality After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey,” *The Lancet*, October 21, 2006, 368 (9545), pp. 1421-1429.

Organization formed the Iraq Family Health Survey (IFHS) Study Group to research violence-related mortality in Iraq.¹⁵ In their nationally representative cluster study, interviewers visited 89.4% of 1,086 household clusters; the household response rate was 96.2%. They concluded that there had been an estimated 151,000 violence-related deaths from March 2003 through June 2006 and that violence was the main cause of death for men between the ages of 15 and 59 during the first three years after the 2003 invasion. This study seems to be widely cited for violence-related mortality rates in Iraq. Neither the *Lancet* study nor the IFHS study distinguish among different victims of violence, such as civilians versus police or security force members. The studies do not reflect trends that occurred during the period of the most intense civil violence from early 2006 through the end of 2008.

In 2007, a British firm, Opinion Research Business (ORB), conducted a survey in Iraq in which it asked 2,411 Iraqis, “How many members of your household, if any, have died as a result of the conflict in Iraq since 2003 (i.e., as a result of violence rather than a natural death such as old age)? Please note that I mean those who were actually living under your roof?” Extrapolating from its results, OBR estimated “that over 1,000,000 Iraqi citizens have died as a result of the conflict which started in 2003.”¹⁶

Finally, the Brookings Institution has used numbers from the following sources to develop its own composite estimate for Iraqi civilians, police, and security forces who have died by violence: the U.N. *Human Rights Report*, the Iraq Body Count, the U.S. Central Command’s General David Petraeus’s congressional testimony given on September 10-11, 2007,¹⁷ Iraqi government sources, and other sources. By combining all of these sources by date, the Brookings Institution estimates that between May 2003 and July 2011, 115,515 Iraqi civilians died and between June 2003 and July 2011, 10,125 Iraqi police and security forces died.¹⁸

Table 4 provides Iraqi civilian, security forces, and police officers casualty estimates from nongovernmental sources. These estimates are based on varying time periods and have been created using differing methodologies, and therefore readers should exercise caution when using and comparing these statistics.

¹⁵ Iraq Family Health Survey Study Group, “Violence-Related Mortality in Iraq from 2002 to 2006,” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, January 31, 2008, pp. 484-492.

¹⁶ The Opinion Business Research, “New analysis ‘confirms’ 1 million+ Iraq casualties,” January 28, 2008, at <http://www.opinion.co.uk>.

¹⁷ Reproduced in the Department of State *Iraq Weekly Status Report*, September 12, 2007, at <http://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/92176.pdf>.

¹⁸ Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index: Tracking Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, September 30, 2011, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index.pdf>.

Table 4. Non-Governmental Sources: Iraqi Civilian and Police/Security Forces Deaths
2003-2011

Source	Civilians	Police/Security Forces
Iraq Body Count	103,640 - 113,230 ^a March 19, 2003 - November 21, 2011	4,884 ^b (Police only) January 1, 2006 - November 30, 2008
Iraq Coalition Casualty Count ^c	50,152 March 2005 - July, 2011	8,825 (Security Forces only) January 2005 - November 2, 2011
Brookings <i>Iraq Index</i>	115,515 ^d May 2003 - July 2011	10,125 ^e June 2003 - July 2011
Opinion Business Research ^f	“Over 1,000,000” March 2003 - September 2007	
The Iraq Family Health Survey (the “WHO study”) ^g	151,000 (May include police and/or security forces) March 2003 - June 2006	
<i>The Lancet</i> , “Mortality after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq” ^h	426,369 - 793,663 (May include police and/or security forces) March 19, 2003 - July 31, 2006	

Sources: Prepared by CRS using noted sources below. These estimates are based on varying time periods and have been created using differing methodologies, and therefore readers should exercise caution when using and comparing these statistics.

- a. Iraq Body Count, June 11, 2010, at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>.
- b. Iraq Body Count, June 11, 2010, at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/surge-2008/>.
- c. Iraq Coalition Casualties Count, June 11, 2010, at <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.
- d. Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index: Tracking Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, October 28, 2011, p. 3, at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index.pdf>.
- e. Ibid, p. 4.
- f. The Opinion Business Research, “New analysis ‘confirms’ 1 million+ Iraq casualties,” January 28, 2008, at <http://www.opinion.co.uk>.
- g. Iraq Family Health Survey Study Group, “Violence-Related Mortality in Iraq from 2002 to 2006,” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, January 31, 2008, pp. 484-492.
- h. Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy et al., “Mortality After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey,” *The Lancet*, October 21, 2006, 368 (9545), pp. 1421-1429.

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