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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE



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11 February 2005

Iraq: Elections Disrupt, Do Not Derail, Insurgents



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Iraq: Elections Disrupt, Do Not Derail, Insurgents [redacted]

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Sunni insurgents failed to disrupt Iraq's national elections because they could not counter heavy Coalition and Iraqi security measures throughout much of the country. Low turnout in some Sunni areas and the post-election resumption of insurgent attacks—many against Iraqi security forces—indicate that the insurgency achieved at least some of its election-day goals and remains a potent force.

[redacted]

Throughout much of the Sunni areas of Iraq in the weeks leading up to the election insurgents and jihadists increased violence and intimidation in an attempt to undermine the national elections:

- Prior to the election, insurgents throughout central Iraq attacked Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) workers and election centers and threatened prospective voters with flyers, posters, and word-of-mouth threats, [redacted]
- In a 26 January statement posted on a jihadist website, the Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi group Tanzim Qa'dat al-Jihad Fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) warned Iraqis to stay away from polling centers as "the wedding (procession) of martyrs is near." Ansar al-Sunnah (AS) issued a similar warning on 27 January.
- Total election-related attacks—on IECI officials, election workers, candidates, and election facilities and polling places—increased from 54 in December to 490 in January. [redacted]

Planned guerilla and terrorist attacks on Iraqi voting centers and security forces were part of an insurgent

strategy to taint the elections by frightening away large numbers of potential voters:

- [redacted] a string of car-bomb attacks was set to begin in the Baghdad area four to five days before the elections to frighten potential voters. [redacted] Zarqawi had given senior QJBR bombmaker Abu Umar al-Kurdi a list of 30-40 targets—mostly polling sites in Shia areas of Baghdad—and instructed him to make as many car-bombs as possible to hit these targets.

- [redacted] plans were in place as of mid-January 2005 to harass election workers and attack the Iraqi police to undermine any sense of government control.

- [redacted]

Attacks against Coalition and Iraqi security forces spiked on election day, but compared to some of the bloodiest terrorist and guerilla-style attacks since April of 2003, they did not inflict massive casualties and failed to intimidate voters in much of the country:

- [redacted] the majority of attacks on election day took place in the morning to set a tone of fear and intimidation, but ebbed as the day progressed.

- [redacted] the volume of small-arms and mortar and rocket attacks was high, but overall effectiveness was low. [redacted]

This report was prepared in the Office of Iraq Analysis and the Office of Terrorism Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, [redacted]

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- Vague QJBR election day statements seemingly claimed responsibility for the seven suicide bomber attacks against polling places in Baghdad and for various small-arms, mortar, and rocket attacks in Baghdad, Mosul, Tall Afar, Ar Ramadi, and Diyala Province. Low casualties reduced the overall impact of the attacks while a reported wave of car-bomb attacks never materialized. [redacted]

Insurgents Look to Rebound [redacted]

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Their failure to disrupt elections suggests limits to insurgents' ability to the mount widespread, coordinated attacks. Increased insurgent attacks following the lifting of the election security lockdown indicates that in a less stringent security environment they remain capable of using intimidation and coercion coupled with hit-and-run guerilla and high-profile terrorist attacks:

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Effective Security Measures (U)

Extremely tight security on election day, the high operational tempo of Coalition and Iraqi security forces in the weeks before, and a clampdown on vehicular traffic hampered insurgents:

- A wave of Coalition detentions of QJBR members—especially Abu Umar al-Kurdi—probably derailed some of Zarqawi's plans.
- A well-rehearsed election security plan, the gradually growing professionalism of some Iraqi security forces, and the ban on vehicular traffic thwarted insurgent attacks in urban centers such as Baghdad and Mosul, [redacted]

[redacted]

These measures were not enough to prevent low participation in Al Anbar, Diyala, Salah ad Din, and other Sunni Arab areas. In contrast to other areas in Iraq, in Al Anbar pre-election attacks on election centers, clashes with Coalition forces, and election day news broadcasts of early morning explosions throughout Iraq resulted in extremely low voter turnout [redacted]

- Attacks have decreased since the election day spike, [redacted]

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- QJBR has claimed responsibility for the 7 February suicide car-bomb attack against a police station in Baqubah that killed 15 and the suicide bomber attacks on 7-8 February against Iraqi security forces in Mosul and Baghdad that killed over 40.

- AS claimed responsibility for the 5 February execution of seven Iraqi National Guard members and the 7 February execution of an Iraqi translator working for the US military.

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- Several Iraqi governing officials and politicians have been killed since the election, including a Housing Ministry director and three members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Baghdad on 9 February. [redacted]

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In the aftermath of successful elections, insurgents will continue to conduct attacks designed to discredit the Coalition and the Iraqi government—especially the government's efforts to build a credible security force—and discourage Sunni Arab participation in the transitional process. Possible targets include:

- Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, including Iraqi police.

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- Sunni elites, professionals and everyday citizens—political and religious leaders, contractors, security officials and civic workers—who are willing to work with the Coalition and Iraqi Government.

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- Election participants and members of the transitional government, especially Shia, who are encouraging a multi-ethnic government.
- Iraqis who are more secular or Western leaning in ideology or appearance.
- Government centers and party headquarters.
- Members of the Shia religious establishment, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, and Shia places of congregation, such as mosques and community centers. [REDACTED]

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