

IRAQ

January–March 2005 Occupation Timeline

The first quarter of 2005 is dominated by the January elections. The historic event is covered in great detail by the Arab press, where commentators explore the reality of elections under foreign military occupation.

The city of Fallujah remains an occupied war zone with a small portion of the estimated 250,000 refugees able to return. Humanitarian workers, in spite of severe restrictions on access, report enormous physical damage, continued lack of electricity and water, and little rebuilding. In January, none of the 95 schools inside Fallujah are functioning. By the end of March, only forty families have received compensation payments, out of an estimated 25,000 families who suffered damages.

In March the U.S. military acknowledges it is holding approximately 10,500 prisoners, more than double the number in October. An estimated 100 prisoners are under the age of 18. Iraq Casualty Count, an acknowledged authority on the number of U.S. forces killed in Iraq, begins to also track the number of Iraqi civilians and security forces being killed. In these three months, 652 Iraqis lose their lives. March alone witnesses 240 civilian deaths.

People all over the world mark the two-year anniversary of the war's March 19 beginning, with the largest demonstrations in London, Turkey, and Rome. Governments of Hungary, Portugal, Holland, and the Ukraine all begin withdrawing their troops. Italy announces it will begin withdrawing its troops in September. The U.S. House of Representative passes another war funding bill making \$75 billion available for the occupation. Several bipartisan Senate delegations fly into Baghdad's "green zone" for one-day visits. The green zone is a heavily protected fortress where all U.S. administrators live and work. It is cut off from the realities of life in Baghdad and is an enormous palace complex left from the days of Saddam Hussein.



LINDA PANETTA

January 4 Ali al-Haidari, governor of Baghdad Province, is assassinated.

January 5 Florence Aubenas, 43, a senior reporter for the French daily paper *Libération*, and her Iraqi interpreter Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, are kidnapped.

January 7 U.S. Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz acknowledges that large parts of nearly 25 percent of Iraq's provinces are not secure enough for elections. Baghdad is one of the four provinces cited. *Editor & Publisher* reports that five journalists have been kicked out of embedded slots in the past three months for reporting secure information.

January 12 The White House announces that the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, one of the main justifications for the war, is officially over. No such weapons were found.

January 16 Charles Graner, Jr., a former prison guard from Pennsylvania, is sentenced to ten years in a military prison for his role in abusing detainees at Abu Ghraib prison. The charges are dereliction of duty for willfully

failing to protect detainees from abuse, cruelty and maltreatment; assault; committing indecent acts; and obstruction of justice.

January 26 Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) introduces a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives calling on President Bush to begin immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Twenty-four members of Congress cosponsor it.

January 27 Thirty-one U.S. Marines die in a helicopter crash, and five other U.S. soldiers are killed elsewhere in the country, making this the single deadliest day for American soldiers since the war began. The death toll for U.S. soldiers has now reached 1,408.

January 30 Iraq's elections take place to select a 275-seat National Assembly, with 8.5 million people voting. This represents 58 percent of Iraqis who are eligible to vote. The United Iraq Alliance, a coalition of Shiites, receives 48 percent of the vote; Kurdish parties receive 26 percent, and Sunnis just 2 percent because Sunni leaders



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called for a boycott. On election day, 260 attacks take place, the largest number since the war began.

January 30 The Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction reports that the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority, which ran Iraq until June 2004, is unable to account for \$8.8 billion in reconstruction funds. The money came from revenues in the United Nations' former oil-for-food program, oil sales, and seized assets — all Iraqi money. The audit does not examine use of U.S. funds.

February 4 Giuliana Sgrena, reporting for Rome-based Italian daily *Il Manifesto*, is kidnapped near Baghdad University.

February 7 The U.S. Department of Defense unveils its request for a 2006 budget of \$419.3 billion.

February 8 Portuguese Prime Minister Pedro Santana Lopes announces removal from Iraq of its 120-member military police contingent later this week.

February 11 CNN chief news executive Eason Jordan resigns after intense criticism over his remarks at the World Economic Forum, where he called attention to the alarming number of journalists killed in Iraq and the role of the U.S. military. He had worked at CNN for 23 years.

February 22 The United Iraqi Alliance selects Ibrahim al-Jaafari to be prime minister of Iraq. The 58-year-old doctor served as Iraq's interim vice president after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Jaafari is a popular politician who is seen as acceptable to the Sunnis and Kurds as well as the dominant Shiites.

February 25 Bipartisan delegations of senators visit Iraq and Afghanistan. They are Russ Feingold (D-WI), John McCain (R-AZ), Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Lindsay Graham (R-SC), and Susan Collins (R-ME). Senator Feingold alone pledges to look into the reconstruction failures.

February 28 In the deadliest attack yet, a suicide bomber blows up a car in Hilla, killing approximately 125 people who were seeking employment with the Iraqi police.

March 1 In Vermont, 52 towns approve resolutions opposing use of Vermont National Guard troops in Iraq. The resolution calls for Vermont's congressional delegation to work toward restoring state powers over Guard deployments in "wars of choice" and asks President Bush to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, citing international humanitarian law.

March 3 Ukraine announces phased withdrawal of its 1,650-strong contingent of forces between March 15 and October.

March 4 Giuliana Sgrena, an Italian journalist, is released after being held for one month. Her vehicle is fired upon by



LINDA PANETTA

U.S. troops at a makeshift checkpoint, wounding her and killing the Italian secret agent Nicola Calipari, who helped rescue her.

March 7 Holland announces phased withdrawal of the majority of its 1,400 troops between March 15–21, 2005.

March 15 Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announces the phased withdrawal of Italy's 3,000 troops from Iraq in September 2005.

March 16 The Iraq Parliament convenes for the first time since the January elections. The gathering is largely ceremonial amid the political stalemate between the Kurds and Shiites over power-sharing, oil revenue in Kirkuk, and the Kurdish militia. The U.S. House of Representatives passes a supplemental budget of \$81 billion for war funding by a vote of 388 to 43. The bill provides funds to support the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and will go to a vote in the U.S. Senate.

March 19-20 Vigils, prayer services, rallies, and community memorials take place in an estimated 1,000 communities across the United States to mark two years since the invasion and occupation of Iraq. There are actions around the world, with the largest ones in London, Turkey, and Italy.

March 22 Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) leads a second bipartisan Senate delegation to Iraq, leaving little doubt that the Senate will soon approve the \$81 billion supplemental bill for war spending. The delegation includes Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Robert Bennett (R-UT), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Patty Murray (D-WA), Lamar Alexander (R-TN) Ken Salazar (D-CO).

March 23 U.S. and Iraqi forces kill 85 during a raid on a guerrilla training camp fifty miles northwest of Baghdad. Seven Iraqi police officers are killed and six wounded.

March 31 The Iraqi government extends a state of emergency across the country for thirty days, excluding the northern Kurdish regions. Paul Wolfowitz, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense and architect of the Iraq war, is unanimously approved to become the next president of the World Bank.



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