

A Timeline of Events Relating to Iraq 1970-2011

1970-72

Iraq's oil industry nationalized.

1979

Iran's new Islamic government led by Ayatollah Khomeini sought to expand its religious and political influence across the Middle East, leading to tensions between Iraq and Iran, and between the Iraqi government and the Shi'a population.

1980 – 1988

More than one million Iranians and Iraqis died during the Iran-Iraq. The US government secretly assisted both Iraqis and Iranians, including arms shipped as part of the Iran-Contra Affair. During "the war of the cities" civilians living in the major cities of both countries were deliberately targeted. Several thousand Iraqis including more than 4,000 Kurds in Halabja were killed by their own government, allegedly for assisting Iran. By war's end, Iraq's debt was \$50 billion.

1990

Encouraged by Ambassador April Glaspie's comment that the US had "no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts," Iraq invaded Kuwait over oil and debt issues. The UN Security Council quickly imposed economic sanctions until Iraqi troops withdrew from Kuwait. (Resolution 661) Arab efforts to resolve the situation were consistently undermined by the Bush Administration.

1991

Despite heavy opposition from their constituents, the Senate voted to go to war, influenced by testimony that Iraqi soldiers took Kuwaiti babies out of incubators; it later emerged that this testimony was invented by Hill and Knowlton on behalf of their client, Citizens for a Free Kuwait. Using bribes and threats, the US forged a "coalition of the willing" to oust Iraqi troops from Kuwait. US peace activists act as "human shields" hoping to affect US military operations. In a war that lasted barely a month, only after a missile killed 408 in the Al Amiriyah air raid shelter in Baghdad was there substantial press coverage of the killing of civilians as part of Desert Storm. As Iraqi troops withdrew from Kuwait, Coalition pilots systematically bombed trucks, tanks and other vehicles like it was a "turkey shoot." War deaths included 100,000-

200,000 Iraqis and 300 Kuwaitis. 144 Americans died and 479 wounded. Gulf War Syndrome and other ailments caused substantially more deaths following the war.

1991

The uprising, or Intifada, started in southern Iraq and quickly spread to the Kurdish areas in the north. Once the government regained control, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to Turkey, Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The United Nations called on Baghdad to restore human rights for all Iraqi citizens. (Resolution 688)

1992-1995

While Iraq complied with many demands, such as providing information about its chemical and biological weapons programs to the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), it also refused UNSCOM entry to various sites believed to contain records or other evidence of its weapons program. Iraq began to question when the UN would provide relief from the most comprehensive economic sanctions program ever established by the UN; Secretary of State, Madeline Albright repeatedly stated it was US policy to continue the sanctions until Saddam Hussein was no longer President of Iraq. Voices in the Wilderness delegations continued to visit Iraq, bringing attention to the sanctions. Several American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) offices sponsored public education activities on sanctions.

1996

Security zones created by the US to protect displaced people in the north were expanded to the outskirts of Baghdad, with these “no fly zones” patrolled by US, UK, and French planes. Periodic bombings were responsible for numerous deaths.

1996

The Oil for Food Program was approved to address the mounting deaths as a result of the sanctions, including an estimated 500,000 children. After deductions for reparations to Kuwait, UNSCOM operations, and UN personnel overseeing the distribution of food and medicines, only 25 cents worth of goods reportedly reached each person every month. While helpful, these packets were not sufficient for either children or adults. The UN Sanctions Committee denied the sale of agricultural chemicals and medicines, reading glasses, pencils, dental equipment, and ambulances, as well as medical, scientific and literary journals. The Oil For Food Program continued until after the US invasion of Iraq.

1998-2002

Inspector Scott Ritter resigned from UNSCOM to protest UN leniency towards Iraq; he later confirmed Iraqi accusations of cooperation between Israeli intelligence and the UN Commission. UNSCOM later received a large quantity of weapons-related papers whose veracity was confirmed after the US invasion. Following the attacks of 9/11, the Bush Administration began linking Iraq with Al Qaeda and building support for an invasion of Iraq. The American Friends Service Committee, Veterans for Peace, Nobel Laureates and others sponsored delegations to better understand the impact of a decade of sanctions on a health system that was once equal to US and British standards. They also found Iraq's educational system and high literacy rates had been deeply affected: an estimated 10,000 professors left the country and many children – especially girls – were no longer going to school. Vigils, demonstrations and lobbying campaigns opposed the impending invasion of Iraq.

2003

In spite of some opposition from countries such as France, Germany, and Russia, the US obtained United Nations' approval for war against Iraq. In A National Call for Nonviolent Resistance to the Continuing War in Iraq, peace activists across the US participated in acts of civil disobedience hoping to prevent the US war on Iraq. Then, in one of the first global protests organized via the Internet, candlelight vigils were held to demonstrate public opposition to the impending war. A new US-led coalition invaded Iraq, with officials declaring they knew where to find weapons of mass destruction. Looting broke out in Baghdad and other cities - while American soldiers looked on – resulting in tremendous losses to the nation's museums, archives, and government offices. Congress approved \$166 billion to cover costs of the war in Iraq. Tens of thousands of Iraqis and their families returned after spending decades in Iran as refugees. Their anger towards President Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath government contributed to increasing sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shi'a as well as the perception that Iran was influencing events inside Iraq. Shi'a leaders, including Sistani, Hakim and Sadr, gained new authority and powers inside the country. DeBaathification of government operations and the educational system, privatization of government industries, and the elimination of the Iraqi military put many people out of work and fueled opposition to the US occupation.

Not long after President Bush declared "mission accomplished" a new wave of violence targeted US military forces and UN headquarters. Threats, kidnapping and assassination of academics, especially scientists and doctors, began; by 2011, 459 academics were killed and 3,500 others were kidnapped or detained. Kidnappings of children for ransom also began, along with car jackings, prostitution and drug selling. Iraqis questioned why occupation forces failed

to stop these criminals who later formed powerful crime groups. Details emerged regarding the Bush Administration's manipulation of information to promote the war, its decision to ignore a State Department study which led to substantial errors in the early months of the occupation, and its failure to adequately plan for the war. The year ended with the capture of President Hussein.

2004

David Kay, head of the Iraq Survey Group, announced the US had been completely wrong about Iraq's WMD program; former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix declared the war against Iraq illegal. Jay Garner was dismissed as occupation administrator after calling for free elections and opposing Washington's plans to privatize Iraqi institutions. Violence grew, including the use of car bombings and IEDs - initiated by al-Qaida and increasing anger about actions by US military forces and the private contractor, Blackwater. Fallujah was heavily damaged and many civilians were killed during two sieges by US forces; a report by AFSC staff regarding the illegal use of phosphorus against civilians was deemed one of the 10 Most Censored stories of the year. US Labor Against War toured several Iraqi labor leaders in the US, to support their efforts to promote independent labor unions and oppose privatization of the oil sector. Sovereignty was returned to Iraq, just days after images of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison were made public. The toll of US soldiers reached 1,000 by September. Evidence continued to embarrass the Bush Administration: Iraq did not have WMD and "we never had enough troops on the ground." Between the bombing of the UN building and the kidnapping and death of aid worker, Margaret Hassan, many NGO staff were withdrawn, except agencies funded by USAID which received military protection. The year ended with a major US assault on Fallujah, in which massive quantities of white phosphorus were dropped, and with explosions in several of Iraq's holy cities as well. AFSC's "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit, with boots representing US military deaths, and shoes representing Iraqi civilian deaths, began touring the US, through 2007.

2005

Exposes continued: The Downing Street memo revealed intelligence information was fixed to gain support for the war, and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) failed to maintain proper controls on \$8.8 billion given to Iraqi ministries. Colin Powell expressed regrets about his pre-war speech at the UN. In separate elections, Iraqis voted to form a Transitional National Assembly, ratified a new constitution, and elected members of the new Assembly. Cindy Sheehan and supporters set up camp outside President Bush's ranch in Texas, to witness against the war. After the Senate demanded regular reports on progress towards a phased pull-out, Rep. John Murtha, called for US troop withdrawal from

Iraq, saying our military is suffering and the future of our country is at risk. Several weeks after unveiling a National Strategy for Victory, President Bush admitted, “(M)uch of the intelligence turned out to be wrong.” Arrest of British soldiers dressed in Arab costume with bombs in their car, and subsequent rescue from a Basra jail lent credence to rumors that US and British forces were responsible for some bombings affecting civilians and strategic targets. It was later learned that a Blackwater helicopter in Iraq dropped CS gas, normally only used in very limited conditions, on a crowd at a Baghdad checkpoint. US troop deaths had exceeded 2,000; Iraqi deaths continued as well. Voices in the Wilderness was found guilty of violating US laws enforcing UN sanctions on Iraq for taking medicines in 2003; a new organization, Voices for Creative Nonviolence was formed to continue the group’s anti-war efforts.

2006

After the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, sectarian violence swept the country, resulting in the death of some 1,300 Iraqis. A security plan including checkpoints and block-by-block searches in Baghdad failed to stem growing violence. Residents of the Baghdad neighborhood Adhamiya engaged Iraqi and US forces in months- long bitter fighting, in an effort to prevent door-to-door searches and kidnapping/arrests of neighborhood residents. Iraq was pronounced most dangerous place to work by The Committee to Protect Journalists. Johns Hopkins reported 655,000 Iraqi deaths resulting from the US invasion. Former President Saddam Hussein was hung at the start of Eid Al-Adha, a time when prisoners are usually released. At year’s end, well-funded insurgents held a strong grip in Al Anbar and conducted military operations against occupation forces such as the attack on the US’ Camp Falcon which resulted in dramatic explosions seen across Baghdad. Baghdad homes and businesses received only 2.4 hours of electricity per day – down from 16-24 at the start of the occupation.

Both the US Vice President and Secretary of Defense attacked war critics at a time when large majorities of Iraqis (71%) and Americans (73%) supported the withdrawal of US troops. Iraq’s Vice President asked for a timeline for the withdrawal of all foreign troops; Japan announced of its troops would leave soon. US officials acknowledged troop rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan seriously affected operations, while a National Intelligence Estimate reported the occupation of Iraq substantially raised the terrorist threat. Details of US troop misconduct emerged, including a deadly rampage by Marines in Haditha, and the rape and murder of a young Iraqi girl and subsequent murder of her family. After several military publications called on Rumsfeld to step down, Robert Gates was named Secretary of Defense. More details emerge: President Bush was told Iraq did not possess WMD. Officials announced finding trailers or mobile WMD laboratories for Iraq’s WMD program; intelligence sources knew this was false.

2007

The year opened with the death of the 3,000th US soldier in Iraq and a Call to Conscience led in part by U.S. Army Lt. Ehren Watada, who refused to deploy for a second tour of duty. Despite strong opposition from Congress and the American public, Bush committed 28,500 additional troops and 12,000 National Guard members even though it lacked vehicles and equipment for them. Service extensions were announced, and some soldiers with serious injuries, remobilized. Terrible conditions at Walter Reed Hospital were the focus of a Washington Post expose. The death toll of military contractors topped 1,000, at a time when the number of military contractors exceeded US troops (162,000 by August). An FBI investigation and private lawsuit were initiated in response to civilian deaths and other misconduct by Blackwater contractors; the House passed legislation to hold contractors accountable for criminal acts. Amidst growing criticism by Republicans and Democrats, Bush vetoed a war spending bill because it included a call for withdrawing troops by October. By October, the cost of the war reached \$550 billion. British troops withdrew from Basra by year's end as part of a phased withdrawal. Also: A Pentagon study confirmed the former Iraqi government did not have any links to Al Qaeda, and criticized Douglas Feith for promoting the impression of such a link.

Insurgents continued to attack US and Iraqi forces, bringing down helicopters and using chlorine bombs; subsequent restrictions on chlorine led to the spread of cholera. On the fourth anniversary of the US invasion, supporters of Al Sadr protested the continuing occupation; he later declared a six month end to attacks by his Mehdi militia. A bombing in the Parliament building brought further attention to this struggling body; one month later a majority of Parliament members called for the removal of US troops and informed VP Cheney they did not want permanent bases. In June, the US armed Sunni "Awakening" groups pledging to fight Al Qaeda, which was responsible for some bombings and other violence in Iraq and reportedly raising funds in Iraq for use in other parts of the world.

Prime Minister Al Maliki was accused of increasing Sunni-Shi'a tensions by pursuing an extreme Shi'a agenda. The White House authorized US troops to kill or capture Iranians reportedly working with Shi'a militias. Death squads killed almost 600 in Baghdad alone that spring. The "surge" of US troops sought to reduce violence across the country. Facing life-threatening treks across the desert and the difficulties of refugee life, 1.5 million fled to Syria, and several million others to Jordan and other nearby countries; the US was criticized for forcing Iraqis to file applications for refugee status in Jordan and Syria. By mid-November, attacks fell to the lowest level since early 2006. After Sudan, Iraq had become the second worst "failed state." Some 24,000 civilian deaths were recorded by Iraq Body Count in 2007.

2008

US troops handed control over several provinces to the new Iraqi army, starting with Shi'a and Kurdish areas, and Anbar and Wasit provinces in the fall. Rocket attacks, bombings and other violence continued in mid and southern parts of the country, throughout the first half year. After the Mehdi Army issued demands of the government, heavy fighting with Iraqi and US forces went on for a week until Sadr reinstated a cease-fire. The role played by Iranian Brig. Gen. Qassem Suleimani in ending the fighting highlighted Iran's political power in the new Iraq. Clashes between Sadr supporters and the Iraqi and US forces continued for two months. By summer, Iraqi National Accord leaders returned to the cabinet for the first time in almost a year, saying many of their demands of the government had been met. Late in the year, bombings and the kidnapping and death of the Chaldean Catholic archbishop reflected tensions over oil rich areas in the north.

Kuwait and Syria appointed ambassadors to Iraq. King Abdullah of Jordan became the first head of state to visit since 2003; he was followed by Iranian president Ahmadinejad. A new oil contract with China was the first such agreement since 2003. Also: Turkish military forces conducted a weeklong offensive and several later air raids against PKK (Kurdish) forces, and a US raid into Syria reportedly killed a man helping foreign fighters enter Iraq. The US death toll reached 4,000 in March. Domestic pressures to draw down troops were strong throughout the spring and summer; some troops were pulled in the summer when the "surge" in troop presence was deemed no longer needed. Following lengthy negotiations, the US and Iraqis approved a status of forces agreement in which US troops were to be withdrawn by the end of 2011.

The Red Cross reported on the lack of access to clean water and health care for millions of Iraqis. The World Food Programme added: in 2006, two million children did not receive adequate nutrition, medicine and education. Breaking the Silence hearings on Iraq and Afghanistan by Iraq Vets Against the War, modeled after the Vietnam era Winter Soldier hearings. Families killed at checkpoints, torture, abuse, racism and sexism. Revelations continued: According to the Center for Public Integrity, Bush, Cheney, and six other officials lied at least 935 times in a "carefully orchestrated campaign" to build support for the Iraq war.

2009

In provincial elections, Prime Minister Maliki's Dawa Party and the Enforcement of Law slate won heavily in Baghdad and Shi'a dominated southern Iraq. During his first trip to Iraq President Obama thanked US service members for their service. Overall security improved, but bombings continued throughout the year, with some targeting US and Iraqi forces, and others

targeting Shi'a pilgrims, Sunni politicians and other civilians. There were also clashes involving Kurds and Sunnis in the northern area; between US forces and members of the Sons of Iraq and several Awakening Council members; and Iraqi forces with Iranian exiles living in Camp Ashraf. Some 4,000 British troops left Iraq; between 2003-09, 179 British soldiers were killed in Iraq. Although 130,000 US troops remained in Iraq, in June, combat troops withdrew from cities, handing over security to the Iraqis. AFSC's Countdown to Withdrawal monitored the US pledge to remove all combat troops and bases by 2011. During a visit to Baghdad, Vice President Biden encouraged leaders to settle political and oil-related disputes, warning US support could wane if sectarian violence continued. Iran also expressed concerns about instability inside Iraq.

In May, Oil Ministry and Kurdish leaders agreed on exporting oil from Kurdish areas. In June, a committee began investigating allegations of torture and other abuses in prisons. Human Rights Watch reported that militias were systematically killing gay men, and called on the government to end this "social cleansing". By year's end, agreements were reached and alliances built in anticipation of national elections early in the new year. Comments by former President Saddam Hussein were released, in which he told an FBI interrogator that he wanted the world to think he had WMD because of his fear of Iran; he confirmed he had not dealt with al Qaeda figures.

2010

Iraq was again listed as one of the most dangerous place to live in the world. The second Parliamentary elections since the 2003 invasion were held in March, in spite of heightened sectarian tensions and bombings. Fifteen political parties linked to the Baath Party and certain Sunni leaders were barred from running in these elections, removing more secular candidates and jeopardizing efforts to bring opposition figures into the governmental process, however the ban was overturned by a higher judicial panel. Although the group led by the more secular and anti-Iranian Allawi won by a slim margin, nine months later a new Shi'a bloc headed by Maliki gained control of the Prime Minister's office. Efforts were made to bring all parties into the new government. Delegations from some Shi'a dominated parties departed for talks in Iran.

The existence of a secret prison was revealed, holding hundreds of Sunni men imprisoned by the government. Following the killing of several top Al Qaeda in Iraq leaders, a wave of bombings seemed designed to demonstrate the group was still capable of operating. Some Awakening Council members were stripped of the police status, and later rejoined insurgents. A series of bombings in November and December targeted Christians, a prison in the north, and Shi'a pilgrims on Ashura. Attacks between Kurdish rebels and the Turkish army continued to

violate Iraq and Turkey's borders.

The weak government and large emigration dramatically changed life in many communities, with added pressures for more conservative cultural practices by groups as the Mehdi Army and Al Qaeda in Iraq; targets included alcohol consumption and co-ed schools. Refugees International called on the US government to assist more than 1.5 million displaced Iraqis, many of whom were living in dire conditions.

As part of preparations for the US military to withdraw 50,000 soldiers from Iraq, US promoted UN Security Council resolutions ending the Oil for Food program, restoring Iraqi control over its oil assets, permitting development of a civilian nuclear program, and lifting protections against post-invasion legal claims. A US judge dismissed charges against four Blackwater guards for the killing of 14 Iraqi civilians, criticizing the Justice Department's handling of the case, and upsetting Iraqis who wanted the guards to be held accountable for the deaths. Wikileaks released a videotape of US pilots discussing and later killing several Reuters employees.

President Obama declared an end to the combat mission in mid-August; the US death toll had reached 4,392 in mid-June. Testimony by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair before a panel investigating Britain's role in the run-up to the invasion was interrupted by angry shouts from family members of soldiers and civilians who had been killed; testimony from other officials questioned whether there had been sufficient evidence to warrant the invasion.

2011

After months of preparations, the US flag was lowered in Baghdad on December 15, officially ending the US war/military presence, from a high of 170,000 troops. The US embassy would retain more than 16,000 personnel, almost half of which are military contractors. Political tensions and violence erupted almost immediately after the last US soldiers left the country. While US officials claimed Iraq was a better country, Iraqis noted that access to electricity and water were still limited; security and corruption remained serious concerns for many Iraqis as well.

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