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**Iraq: Attacks Leveling Off in West, Rising North of Baghdad (C//NF)**

*The number of incidents appears to have leveled off in the past week, but the pattern of Iraqi-initiated violence against Coalition forces since early May reveals determined resistance by insurgents in several areas.* The recent plateau probably is attributable in part to more aggressive patrols and operations by the Coalition west of Baghdad. The capture of mid- and senior-level former Ba' thist officials and Fedayeen Saddam officers who formed the core of insurgent cells and restitution for injuries and destruction of Iraqi property also have contributed to the reduced violence.

- Attacks on Coalition forces throughout Iraq rose last month to more than 525 from 300 in June and about 160 in May. Most of the violence occurred in the Sunni Arab majority provinces—now governorates—of Baghdad, Salah ad Din, Al Anbar, Diyala, Ninawa, and Babil. These areas accounted for more than 90 percent of Iraqi-initiated attacks and all US fatalities since May, according to Coalition reporting and press reports.
- Whether the recent plateau in attacks is sustained will depend on continued success at capturing key insurgent personnel and cutting off arms and financial flows to the insurgents; we have seen two similar periods in the past three months. (S//NF)

*The greatest concentration of Iraqi-initiated attacks appears to have shifted from the western Al Fallujah-Al Qa'im corridor to the Balad-Tikrit-Mosul axis, where the perpetrators may have concluded they could find residual Ba' thist elements, more receptive locals, and more vulnerable targets.* Such a change in focus probably fueled the rise in incidents in Salah ad Din and Diyala provinces, as insurgent groups in Tikrit and Ba' qubah tapped into the former regime's multimillion-dollar war chests to fund recruiting and purchase weapons, according to our military.

- *Coalition forces probably prevented a sharper increase in violence in western Iraq, according to detainee interrogations and anecdotal military reporting.* They were able to detain insurgent fighters and to seize their arms, and [redacted] 1.4c [redacted] 1.4c obtained on the Coalition's networks. By shifting responsibility for policing to local Iraqis in selected municipalities, Coalition forces are avoiding becoming easy targets inside city limits.

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*Baghdad will remain the center of any long-term resistance because of its importance to the political, economic, and social recovery of Iraq and the large presence of Coalition administrative and military personnel located there.*

— Kirkuk and Al Basrah also could experience localized flare-ups prompted by internal rivalries or in retaliation for perceived Coalition slights such as raids on safehouses where relatives are detained or the appearance of favoring one tribal group over another. ~~(S/NF)~~

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