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## The San Diego Union-Tribune.

SECURITY IMPACTS

# U.S. policy in Iraq repeatedly faulted in recent studies

By Charles J. Hanley

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**The blood of Fallujah, the thunder of Baghdad and the daily struggles of life have been distilled in columns of numbers and pages of dry prose. The experts have taken a hard look at Iraq, and they don't like what they see.**

**Recent in-depth studies – by official auditors and unofficial watchdogs, by economists and lawyers, by pollsters, political scientists and ex-Pentagon aides – find a few good economic signs and some cause for hope in January's planned elections. Even more, however, they find dashed expectations and rising fears, missed deadlines, mismanaged money and grand schemes lost in the smoke of car bombs and airstrikes.**

**With Iraq so unstable, "there are questions about what options and contingency plans are being developed to address these ongoing and future challenges," the Government Accountability Office observes in a report to Congress.**

**Anthony Cordesman, a former Pentagon official and aide to Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., is more blunt. In many ways the U. S. occupation has been "a dismal failure," the veteran national security analyst says.**

**His colleagues at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies – in a separate, 102-page analysis – note that "failure" and "success" are sensitive words as the presidential election nears. Nonetheless, they conclude, Iraq "will not be a 'success' for a long time."**

**The Associated Press reviewed a dozen such status reports against the backdrop of nonstop violence in Baghdad and sharpening rhetoric in Washington. The studies were conducted by U.S. government agencies and private international and U.S. research organizations, in some cases drawn from months of work and hundreds of interviews**

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## **inside Iraq.**

**Again and again, their focus falls on what the authoritative International Crisis Group calls Iraq's "vicious circle."**

**"Lack of security leads to lack of reconstruction, which leads to lack of jobs, which leads back to lack of security," the European-based ICG finds.**

**Perhaps 60 percent of Iraq doesn't have work. With no jobs, more Iraqis turn to armed resistance, out of resentment of the occupiers and sometimes for money. Insurgents will pay a man up to \$100 to attack a U.S. patrol, the CSIS says.**

**Security has spiraled downward since the U.S.-British invasion of March 2003. Iraqis see and hear it around them – in the car bombings, kidnappings and highway banditry, and in the unrelenting mortar, rocket and roadside-bomb attacks on the U.S. military. From a handful a day in mid-2003, those anti-U.S. assaults have multiplied drastically – to more than 70 on average every day last month.**

**The GAO report, "Rebuilding Iraq," describes what happened:**

**"The insurgents' targets expanded. . . . The group of insurgents grew. . . . The areas of instability expanded" – from Fallujah and the Iraqi heartland to Mosul in the north and to Najaf and Basra in the south.**

**Along the way, the total of U.S. military dead rose to 1,086, and of wounded above 7,100. Last month, U.S. deaths averaged three a day. More and more, Iraq's U.S.-supported interim government is also a target. An estimated 750 Iraqi policemen have been killed.**

**Iraqi civilians have suffered the most. Washington's Brookings Institution notes that unofficial estimates range from 13,000 to 30,000 civilians killed by acts of war since the invasion, by both U.S. coalition forces and anti-U.S. fighters and terrorists. No reliable count exists for insurgents killed.**

**The studies, issued between June and September, repeatedly suggest that two steps taken by the Bush administration last year fed the uprising: the disbanding of Iraq's 400,000-man military and the stripping of government and other jobs from 30,000 members of the old regime's Baath Party.**

**"Abruptly terminating the livelihoods of these men created a vast pool of humiliated, antagonized and politicized men," says Faleh Jabar of the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington. "Serious policy blunders," concludes Carl Conetta of the Cambridge, Mass.-based Project on Defense Alternatives.**

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