

Iraq: Laying the Groundwork for Violence

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Throughout history, those who collaborate with the occupiers of their country tend to end up hung out to dry, or dead. The occupation of Iraq is no different – collaboration and the poison fruits that come of it are on full display for the history books once again. Only now, the rapidity with which this is happening is staggering.

On May 5, the Iraqi military killed Basim Mohammed and detained his brother. Mohammed was a member of the Sahwa, the 100,000-strong Sunni militia composed mostly of former resistance fighters that the US created in order to use them to battle al-Qaeda in Iraq, as well as paying them off to draw down the number of attacks against occupation forces.

The Sahwa, who were supposed to be given government jobs either in security or in civil services, have been betrayed. Instead of being given the promised jobs, they have been consistently targeted by the Iraqi military, and at times the US military, which has left them vulnerable as well to attacks from al-Qaeda. As a result, they are walking off their security jobs for lack of pay, and have largely ceased their military operations against al-Qaeda. The predictable result is what we have been witnessing over the last months – a slow but steady increase in the number of attacks against Iraqi and US forces and a dramatic rise in the spectacular car bomb attacks in largely Shia areas that kill scores at a time.

The obvious solution would be for the Obama administration to pressure its client government in Baghdad to fulfill promises to incorporate the Sahwa into its ranks, as well as applying pressure to Prime Minister Maliki to lay off targeting the Sahwa and its leadership.

Instead, Sahwa members like Mohammed are being killed and their family members detained, and the attacks continue. On May 3, Iraqi forces arrested Nadhim al-Jubouri, a Sahwa leader in the volatile Salahadin province. In March, Iraqi forces detained Adil al-Mashadani, head of another Sahwa group in the Fadhil neighborhood of central Baghdad – which ignited clashes between US, Iraqi and Sahwa forces that left three men dead and set the stage for more bloodletting.

Let us be clear – the US military knew, when the Sahwa were formed back in mid-2006, that most of the members were either former resistance fighters or members of al-Qaeda. Promises were made to these men that if they took the \$300 monthly paycheck and promised to stop their attacks against occupation forces, they would be granted amnesty from any Iraqi government reprisal. The latter was necessary because from the beginning of the Sahwa's creation, the Maliki government has opposed them, and spoke in bellicose terms that there would be measures taken to exact revenge on Sahwa members who had been in the Ba'ath Party, or who were former resistance fighters, which describes the vast majority of its members.

Sahwa leaders are complaining about this, to little or no avail. After his arrest on May 3, Sahwa leader Nadhim al-Jubouri, a former al-Qaeda militia leader, told reporters that his arrest by Iraqi police violated the amnesty deal he'd signed with the US military last year. Shame on al-Jubouri for putting any faith in the occupiers of his country. Clearly, he believes he lives outside of history. Jubouri told AFP, "We signed a cease-fire agreement with American forces, just as we signed an agreement to grant us immunity from the courts, even if we killed half the American army or shot down a plane."

Clearly, he believes the occupiers, and their client government in Baghdad, would hold true to their word. Jubouri must read about as much news as Sarah Palin, or he would have known better. In a classic good-cop/bad-cop routine, while the US military played good-cop and offered immunity and money to the Sahwa, the Maliki government promised there would be no immunity, and the attacks began. The US military issued a statement after Jubouri's arrest by the Iraqi government, saying, "Coalition forces had a very minor role in this as the warrants originated from the Iraqis." It's clear who has held true to their word.

Violence across the country continues unabated. On the same day the Iraqi military killed Basim Mohammed, nearly 40 Iraqis were killed, 31 of them "suspected militants" (read Sahwa members) killed by the Iraqi military in Diyala province.

In the last 72 hours, most of the violence is due to Iraqi government operations that are in full swing to take out as many Sahwa members as possible.

On May 4, at least 15 Iraqis were killed and 24 wounded. Four of the dead were policemen (read Sahwa) in the Dora area of Baghdad (security in Dora is run by the Sahwa) who were killed when someone threw a grenade at their checkpoint.

The day before this, the Times of London [reported](#) that a leading member of the Political Council of Iraqi Resistance, which represents six Sunni militant groups, said, "The resistance has now returned to the field and is intensifying its attacks against the enemy. The number of coalition forces killed is on the rise."

While the rhetoric is laden with hubris, there is a rising trend of US soldiers being killed in Iraq. At least 18 soldiers were killed last month – making it the deadliest month since September for US occupation forces. This, coupled with the large uptick in Iraqi deaths, prompted Richard Haass, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations, who returned from a visit to Iraq last week, to state, "It is obvious there are still multiple fault-lines in society. In my view, Iraq and the United States are going to have to adjust the timelines and leave a residual force of tens of thousands beyond 2011."

Sahwa groups around Baghdad and other areas of Iraq are now reporting that half their members are leaving their posts to rejoin the resistance. Others are reporting that 75 percent have already left.

On May 2 in Hilla, south of Baghdad, over 120 members of a Sahwa group abandoned their posts at dozens of checkpoints south of the capital city, on the grounds that they had not been paid their monthly salaries. "This strike is going to continue until we get our April salaries, and some of the Sahwas have not been paid for March either," Nazar al-Janabi, one of the militiamen, told AFP. This is becoming common.

I suspect it will take some time for new resistance groups being formed of disenfranchised

Sahwa members to reconstitute themselves. Sporadic, yet increasing, attacks against US forces will continue in the meantime, and the Iraqi people, who always bear the brunt of failed US policy in Iraq, continue to die in the hundreds with each passing week.

Visit Dahr Jamail's website <http://dahrjamailiraq.com>

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