



IRAQ Status Report

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Iraq Policy & Operations Group

A BIWEEKLY REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

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Politics and Diplomacy

In A Visit to Kurdistan, Erdogan Takes Historic Steps: In a historic moment during his visit to Iraq, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan travelled to Erbil, the seat of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Erdogan's was the first visit by a Turkish Prime Minister to the Kurdish capital. While in Erbil, the Turkish leader met with KRG President Massoud Barzani and attended openings of the regional airport and the new Turkish Consulate. Standing in front of Turkish, Iraqi, and Kurdish flags, Erdogan emphasized Turkey's historical and cultural bonds with the Kurdistan region, and celebrated the deepening of the region's economic ties with Turkey. "We consider this to be a very historic moment," said Barzani. "We believe that this visit will build a very solid bridge in bilateral relations between Iraq and Turkey and between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey in particular." Erdogan also visited with his Iraqi counterpart Nuri al-Maliki in Baghdad and with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf. (NEA-I-IPOG)

Government of Iraq Responds to Calls for Stronger Protection of Journalists: Although enormous progress has been made in improving the security situation in Iraq, work remains to be done in protecting journalists. The majority of the violence against journalists can be attributed to extremist groups, which was the case with the two journalists who were slain in a suicide bombing attack on March 29. However, there have also been reports of detention and attacks on journalists by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) during recent protests. Seeking to address this issue, the Iraqi organization Journalistic Freedoms Observatory reached an agreement with Baghdad Operations Command on March 2 ensuring journalists' access to demonstrations and providing for their protection. On March 7, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad condemned the attacks on media institutions and reporters in Iraq, and urged the federal and Kurdistan governments to investigate the incidents and punish those responsible. On March 28, Iraq's Council of Representatives

conducted the first reading of the Protection of Journalists Law introduced by Culture and Information Committee Chair Ali al-Shlah. The bill seeks to ensure journalists' safety, facilitate their access to areas where they wish to report, and protect their families. For its part, the U.S. Government continues to stress that protecting freedom of the press is essential to a vibrant democracy. (NEA-I-IPOG)

Economic Activity

Foreign Investment in Iraq – 2010 and Beyond: Over \$40 billion in investment projects were announced in Iraq in 2010, including much-needed infrastructure and housing deals. Tax exemptions on items like furniture and building materials were granted to hotels, hospitals, and scientific and research organizations in an attempt to bolster tourism, healthcare, and science and technology sectors in Iraq. In another major development, the National Investment Law of 2006 was amended to allow foreign ownership of land for residential real estate projects, permitting foreign companies to take advantage of opportunities in Iraq's burgeoning housing market. Iraq boasted impressive price stability and low inflation. All of these successes came in spite of the fact that Iraq did not have a sitting government for much of last year.

Whereas in the past foreign investors cited security concerns as the main impediment to exploring business opportunities in Iraq, they are now more apt to mention a restrictive and challenging business climate as their chief deterrent. The Government of Iraq (GOI) continues to make governance improvements that encourage foreign investors' willingness to invest in Iraq, and thereby facilitate the gradual growth of Iraq's private sector.

To capitalize upon the progress it has already made, the GOI must continue to look forward and make necessary commercial reforms. Iraq continues to pursue trade relationships with international partners to strengthen its exports, to import needed goods like electricity and foodstuffs, and to help complete its reintegration into the world marketplace. Iraq has 35 bilateral arrangements with countries including Afghanistan, India, Japan, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Turkey. It also has an Investments Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) with its Arab League counterparts. Currently, the United States and Iraq do not have a bilateral trade agreement--although the two parties signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in 2005 that is awaiting Iraqi parliamentary ratification. (NEA-I-IPOG; U.S. Embassy Baghdad)

Cultural Heart Beats Again on Baghdad Bookseller Street: In another sign of the improving security conditions in Iraq, the Baghdad book market is once again thriving. In what is called a "cultural catharsis point" for Baghdad residents, students, intellectuals, and professionals gather along Mutanabi Street to buy and discuss books. "You are happy to see a writer from the newspaper. You buy his column. And you are happy to talk with him, to exchange ideas. Anything that's on your mind," said one book shop proprietor. He remarked that neither militiamen nor U.S. tanks line the street as they once did, allowing people to meet freely without worry. As for the book industry itself, publishing houses are back in operation, printing books by Iraqi and non-Iraqi authors on topics such as economics, human resources, development, history, and linguistics. A second shop proprietor commented that demand for religious texts

was sapped by the sectarian war, and that Marxism has become a popular topic among his customers. (NEA-I-IPOG; [Reuters](#))

U.S.-Iraqi Cooperation

Iraqi Air Force Flight Instruction Program Begins: On March 19, Iraq's Air Force reached a milestone when the first Iraqi flight instructor to be certified in post-Saddam Iraq took his first student into the skies. Colonel Hussein Hamid, who became a pilot in Iraq's air force in 1986, was re-trained by the U.S. Air Force's 52nd Expeditionary Flying Training Squadron at the Iraqi Air Force Academy in order to become a flight instructor for the T-6A Texan aircraft. Colonel Hamid hopes to train 30 additional flight instructors for the T-6 in the near future which will help bolster the Iraqi Air Force Academy's capacity to 1,500 students, and will make the Iraqi Air Force self-sustainable as U.S. forces transition out of Iraq. (NEA-I-IPOG, [USF-I](#), [UPI](#))

Provincial Highlights

U.S. and Iraq Work to Restore Iraq's Wetlands: Once the largest wetland ecosystem in Western Eurasia and renowned for the diversity of fish shoals and avifauna, the draining of the Iraqi marshes has been considered one of the world's ecological tragedies. Outside of the environmental impact, thousands of Iraqis were left without access to a major food and income source, and entire communities of Iraqi fishermen were displaced. Drained down to less than 10 percent of their original size, U.S. military and State Department staff have partnered with members of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to help the wetlands stage a comeback. The initiative, known as the Development and Spawning of Rare Fish project, is increasing the population of rare species of fish in the marshes and wetlands for aquaculture purposes. In a cooperative effort, 17 fishermen in the area have paired with three MoA officials to rebuild the marshes in south and central Iraq and introduce millions of carp fingerlings, once plentiful in the area and for which there is high demand, as the marshes begin to redevelop. "We want to assist the Iraqi MoA to re-energize this portion of their economy by rebuilding the marshes," said Col. Charles Heatherly, chief, civil-military operations, USF-I. Heatherly also emphasized the importance of building sustainable industries for Iraqis; fishing is crucial, as Iraq has an enormous potential to farm freshwater species once the wetlands are restored, and current efforts are to have the project be commercially self-sufficient by the end of the mission. Creating a local, sustainable business will not only revitalize the limnology in the region, but will allow displaced persons to return and resume their craft as well. (NEA-I-IPOG)

* Note: Updated April 5, New Minister of Planning



Government Organization Chart

Agriculture	Communications	Culture	Defense	Displacement & Migration	Education	Electricity
Izz al-Din al-Darwish	Muhammad Allawi	Sadun al-Dulaymi	Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (Achimé)	Dindar Najman Shafiq Doshi	Muhammad Khalaf Tamim al-Jaburi	Ra'ad Shallal al-Ari
Environment	Finance	Foreign Affairs	Health	Higher Education and Scientific Research	Minister of Housing & Construction	Human Rights
Sargon Izzar Sulaywal	Rafi al-Issawi	Hoshiyar Zebari	Majid Hamad Amin Jami	Ali al-Adh	Muhammad Sahb al-Daraji	Muhammad Shia al-Sudani
Industry & Minerals	Interior	Justice	Labor & Social Affairs	Municipalities & Public Works	Minister of Oil	Minister of Planning
Ahmad Nasir Dhi al-Karbali	Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (Achimé)	Hasan al-Shammari	Nasser al-Rubai	Adil Mhoubdir Rathi Mahoud al-Maliki	Abd al-Karim al-Luyobi	Ali Yousif Abd al-Nabi
Minister of Science & Technology	Minister of Trade	Minister of Transportation	Minister of Water Resources	Minister of Water Resources	Minister of Youth & Sports	
Abd al-Karim al-Samarrai	Khairallah Hassan Babikir	Hadi al-Amiri	Mohamed Sahman al-Sa'idi	Jasim Muhammad Jafar		

Ministries of State

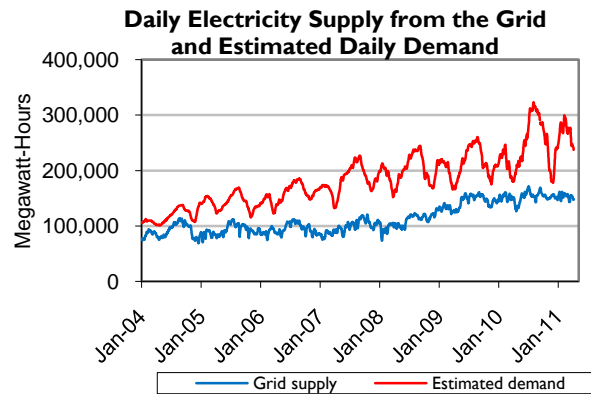
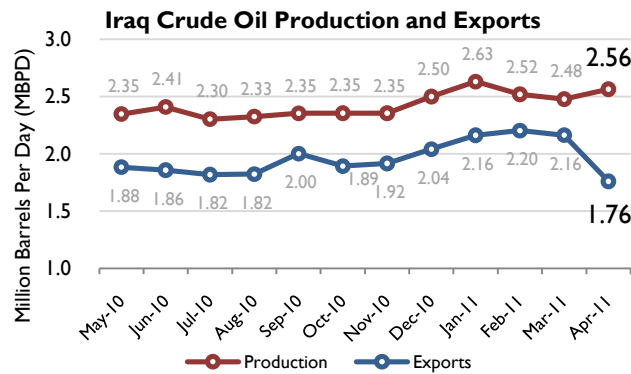
Civil Society Affairs	Foreign Affairs	Government Spokesman	National Reconciliation	National Security	Parliamentary Affairs	Coalition
Dahhael Qasim Hassoun	Ali al-Sajri	Ali al-Dabbagh	Amir al-Khuzai	Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (Achimé)	Safa' al-Din al-Safi	State of Law
Provincial Affairs	Tribal Affairs	Tourism and Antiquities	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Iraqi National Alliance
Turhan Muwdir al-Muthi	Jamal Abd al-Mahdi al-Banishi	Livva al-Sumaysm	Salah Muzahim Darwish	Bushra Husayn Salih Ali Zayran (F)	Diyaa Najim al-Asadi	Kurdish Alliance
Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Without Portfolio	Other
Abd al-Mahdi Hassan Mutayiri	Yasin Hassan Muhammad	Hasan al-Sari	Abd al-Salih Qahraman	Women's Affairs	Ethnal al-Zaidi	

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Current Economic Indicators

Crude Oil Average Closing Prices (March 28-March April 8)

Basrah Light \$115.16/bbl || Dated Brent \$119.52/bbl || WTI Cushing \$107.74/bbl || Oman/Dubai \$112.03/bbl



2010 Oil Revenue: \$51.4 Billion (est)
 2011 Oil Revenue: \$20.7 Billion (est)

March supply of electricity from the grid was 1% below 2010 and met 58% of estimated demand compared with 80% for the year-earlier period.

Source: Department of State, NEA/I Economics Section, NEA-I-ECON-DL@state.gov

Notable Headlines

Parliament Approves Appointing New Planning Minister (April 4, [Aswat al-Iraq](#))

For additional information, please see:

- **Department of State, Iraq Status Reports**
<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/c28010.htm>
- **Department of State, Section 1227 Report on Iraq**
<http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/>
- **Department of Defense, Section 9010 Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq**
http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/Iraq_Reports/index.html
- **Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook**
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

Please forward all questions and/or comments to:
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