

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** IRQ34268  
**Country:** Iraq  
**Date:** 20 February 2009

Keywords: Iraq – Hilla – Babil – Insurgency – Baathists – Madhi Army – Badr Organisation

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**Questions**

- 1. Is there any evidence that former Ba’athists target Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**
- 2. Is there any evidence that the Madhi Army targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**
- 3. Is there any evidence that the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**
- 4. Is there any evidence that the Badr Brigade targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**

**RESPONSE**

**Executive Summary**

Hilla (also rendered as Hillah, or Al-Hilla, or Al-Hillah) is the principal municipality of the Babil governorate (also rendered as Babylon) and is found to the south of Baghdad. A *New York Times* article of November 2006 notes that: “Babil’s population of 1.6 million, like that of Arab Iraq in general, is mostly Shiite with a Sunni minority. The province borders not only the capital but also the Sunni heartland, Anbar Province, to the west and the Shiite holy places Najaf and Karbala to the south”. An October 2005 *Reuters* article refers to “Hilla, capital of Babil” as “one of Iraq’s sectarian fault lines, with a majority Shi’ite population living beside Sunni Arabs, some of whom were encouraged to settle there under Saddam Hussein”. According to the *Reuters* report: “Sunnis comprise up to 10 percent of the [Hilla] population” (for information on the demography of Babil, see: Bull. B.B. 2006, ‘Calm at the Center of the Storm’, *New York Times*, 2 May

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print) –

Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 3; ('Bomb-scarred people of Hilla wary before Iraq vote' 2005, Red Orbit website, source: *Reuters*, 14 October [http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred\\_people\\_of\\_hilla\\_wary\\_before\\_iraq\\_vote/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred_people_of_hilla_wary_before_iraq_vote/) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 56; see also: Hillas, K. 2008, 'Rebuilding Iraq: Babil Province', *Real Clear World*, 25 September [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil\\_province.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil_province.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 1; for a map of Iraq's governorates and districts (see district 22 for Hilla), in: 'Iraq Governorates and Districts' 2003, Humanitarian Information Centre for Iraq website, 1 June <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/103%20A4%20laminated%20map%20governorate%20and%20district.pdf> – Accessed 11 April 2005 – Attachment 8; for a thematic map of Iraq demonstrating the multiethnic demography in Iraq, see 'Iraq: Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups and Major Tribes' 2003, University of Texas website, Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, source: 'Iraq: Country Profile [map], CIA, January 2003' [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_ethno\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethno_2003.jpg) – Accessed 23 March 2005 – Attachment 9).

In October 2005 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identified the area of Hilla as one of the most concerning areas of Iraq in terms of security. The report observed that Hilla had "seen some of the most devastating attacks since the fall of the former regime, including the 30 May 2005 multiple suicide attack in Hilla killing at least 31 people and wounding 108", and "the mass casualty suicide attack in Hilla on 28 February 2005 that killed at least 122 people". UNHCR also noted at this time that: "travel between Hilla and Baghdad...is particularly dangerous". More recently it has been reported by two US sources (the head of Babil's US government funded Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) and a correspondent with *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*) that the level of security in Babil is much improved. Favourable accounts of the situation in Hilla voiced by US sources have also been reported by the *Reuters* news service. In March 2006 *Reuters* noted that "Hilla...is often held up by US officials as a model for the reconstruction effort in Iraq"; and in October 2008 *Reuters* reported that "US forces [had] declared an area once known as the 'triangle of death' safe enough for Iraqi troops to take charge on Thursday, handing over responsibility for security in Babil province to Iraqi forces". In March 2008 an Iraqi military commander in Hilla reportedly announced that successful "security operations [had] facilitated the return" of "40 families from al-Ubeidat tribe...to their houses in Shishbar region in al-Askandariya district, north of Hilla". It has also been reported that Hilla is remarkable in Iraq for being an area in which locally deployed US troops feel they have the support of the local populace (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2005, *UN Country of Origin Information, Iraq*, October – Attachment 4; for a US reports which claim that security is on the improve in Babil, see: Hillas, K. 2008, 'Rebuilding Iraq: Babil Province', *Real Clear World*, 25 September [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil\\_province.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil_province.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 1; and: 'Radio Free Iraq: Correspondents' "Neighborhood Watch" 2008 *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 1 July [http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraq\\_neighborhood\\_watch/1181071.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraq_neighborhood_watch/1181071.html) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 10; Olivari, N. 2006, 'Three years on, US troops say steadfast in Iraq', DOSE.CA website, source: *Reuters*, 20 March [http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s\\_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D](http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 31; Graff, P. 2008, 'US hands "triangle of death" to Iraqi troops', *Reuters*, 23 October <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE49M27920081023?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 30; for the March 2008 return of

40 families to a district north of Hilla, see: '40 displaced families return home to Hilla' 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 12 March [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/28445](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/28445) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 47; for a report detailing a US claim that Hilla is remarkable in terms of local support for US troops, see: Olivari, N. 2006, 'Three years on, US troops say steadfast in Iraq', DOSE.CA website, source: *Reuters*, 20 March [http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s\\_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D](http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 31).

A number of other news sources have also begun to refer to Hilla as one of Iraq's quieter locales; though it should be noted that reports of bombings and attacks in Hilla continue to appear with attacks conducted against police targets, Hilla militia forces, US forces and Shia civilians via bombs and gunmen. Little information could be located that would give an indication of the extent to which such attacks have been perpetrated by persons affiliated with the Baath movement though it may be of interest that in February 2005 *Reuters* reported that: "Hilla [had] become increasingly dangerous since Saddam's fall" as a consequence of the insurgent operations "of former members of Saddam's Baath party operat[ing] there". It may also be of interest that in March 2005 *BBC News* reported that: "Security officials believe that three-quarters of the attacks [in Iraq] are carried out by networks loyal to the former Baathist regime, though they do not claim responsibility in their own name". Even so, news sources reporting on specific attacks in the area of Hilla, as elsewhere in Iraq, are only rarely able to attribute an identity to the persons responsible for specific acts of violence with any certainty and are typically only able to relate the suspicions of local security forces and the local populace as to the identity of the persons or group responsible for the attacks in question. Some reports make reference to Sunni insurgents as the perpetrators though it is unclear in much of the reportage as to whether this is intended to refer to local Sunni insurgents (such as local Sunni tribesman, nationalist groups, and/or former Baathists) or to fighters affiliated with militant Islamist networks such as Al Qaeda in Iraq (also known as the Zarqawi network and previously as *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*). It may be of interest that a number of western news sources have attributed responsibility for the February 2005 Hilla bombing that killed over 100 persons to Al Qaeda in Iraq, relating that the Zarqawi network had subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack. Since this time the *Arab Press Services* publication, *APS Diplomat Redrawing the Islamic Map*, has reported that such reportage was in error and that Al Qaeda in Iraq had in fact claimed responsibility for "a separate attack on the same day aimed at American soldiers in southern Baghdad, not for the Hilla attack" (for the February *Reuters* report, see: Abbas. H. 2005, 'Iraq's worst suicide bomb rips through job queue', *Reuters*, 28 February – Attachment 14; for the March 2005 *BBC News* report, see: Muir, J. 2005, 'Iraq insurgents seize initiative', *BBC News*, 4 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4317103.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4317103.stm) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 15; for examples of reports which refer to Hilla as a relatively quieter area of Iraq while reporting on Hilla attacks, see: 'Suicide bomber kills 22 in Iraq' 2006, *ABC News*, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 19 November <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2006/11/19/1792198.htm> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 49; for examples of reports of attacks by unknown perpetrators on Hilla civilians, see: 'Civilian Kidnapped in Hilla' 2009, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 January [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/42997](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/42997) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 38; '6 wounded in blast near of Hilla' 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 9 October [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/37629](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/37629) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 52; 'Suicide bombing north of Hilla leaves casualties' 2008, *Iraq*

Updates, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 24 February  
[http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/27790](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/27790) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 40; and: ‘Policeman killed, four civilians wounded in Hilla attacks’ 2007, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 13 September  
[http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/21711](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/21711) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 39; for a report which claims that Hilla was, in October 2005, less affected by the Sunni insurgency than suburbs south of Baghdad but more affected than Iraq’s Shia south, see: Knickmeyer, E. & Finer, J. 2006, ‘Iraqi Colonel Who Bridged Sectarian Divide Is Killed’, *Washington Post*, 14 October [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752_pf.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 5; for the *Arab Press Services* report, see: ‘IRAQ – Resurgence In The Shiite World – Part 8 – The Internal Forces’ 2005, Find Articles website, *APS Diplomat Redrawing the Islamic Map*, 14 March  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb6511/is\\_3\\_49/ai\\_n29165092?tag=untagged](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6511/is_3_49/ai_n29165092?tag=untagged) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 13).

It may be of interest that it has been reported in recent years that a number of Babil’s Sunni tribes have formed an “anti-al-Qaeda” militia and have been working to force foreign fighters out of the area. It is unclear what the attitude of these anti-al-Qaeda Sunnis is towards the general Shiite populace of Al-Hillah. It may also be of interest that there have been reports of the arrest and also the killing of former Baath party members and associates in the area of Hilla since the overthrow of the Baath regime. Reports relate that the local Hilla populace harbour considerable antipathy towards Baathists as a consequence of alleged human rights abuses committed in the area under the rule of the former Baath regime (including an incident in which “3,000 Shia Muslims” were reportedly rounded up by Baath officials and “executed and buried in two mass graves”) (for reports of Sunni tribesman fighting against Al Qaeda in Babil, see: ‘Iraq tribal clashes leave 15 dead’ 2008, *BBC News*, 21 October  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7682511.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7682511.stm) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 41; ‘Two Iraqis killed, two wounded in attack in Hilla city’ 2009, *AK News*, 24 January <http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/18014> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 32; for the lingering antipathy between Hilla’s Shia population and Baathists, see: McCarthy, R. 2003, “‘Either the people who did this must be brought to court or we should ask for the authority to kill them’”, *The Guardian*, 20 June  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/jun/20/iraq.rorymccarthy1> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 57; and: Colvin, M. 2008, ‘Saddam’s victims left to suffer as henchmen prosper’, *Times Online*, 3 February  
[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article3295437.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article3295437.ece) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 58; for ongoing reports of the killing of former Baath party identities in Hillah, see: ‘Unknown gunmen assassinate senior Baath commander in Babel’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 May  
[http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/30712](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/30712) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 59; Salaheddin, S. 2007, ‘Car Bombings Kill 4 Iraqis in Baghdad’, Red Orbit website, source: *Associated Press*, 6 January  
[http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/790741/car\\_bombings\\_kill\\_4\\_iraqis\\_in\\_baghdad/index.html](http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/790741/car_bombings_kill_4_iraqis_in_baghdad/index.html) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 60; and: ‘Security developments in Iraq, Jan 3’ 2007, *Reuters*, 3 January  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSL0312827420070103> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 61).



The most significant local security force operating in the immediate area of Hilla is a US trained and supported militia force referred to by the US military as Hilla-SWAT (and known to locals as the Scorpion Commando unit). In October 2006 *The Washington Post* reported that Hilla-SWAT was a force “of about 800 men, most of them Shiites from Hilla”. A number of sources claim that Hilla-SWAT has won a reputation for neutrality in its policing of the Hilla area and that, in addition to fighting Sunni insurgents, the Hilla militia force has worked to keep Iraq’s major Shiite partisan militia groupings out of Hilla. Hilla-SWAT has reportedly undertaken a number of actions against Muqtada al-Sadr’s *Jaish Al-Mahdi* (JAM; or the Mahdi Army) and Hilla-SWAT has reportedly also been offside with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI; formerly the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq or SCIRI party). While the ISCI have exerted considerable influence over Babil governance at governorate level in recent years (though it has reportedly lost ground to the Dawa Party in the recent January 2009 provincial elections) and while the ISCI, as one of the major governing parties, has reportedly exerted considerable influence over the Ministry of the Interior, a number of reports claim that ISCI militia forces, like the Badr Organisation (or Badr Brigade), have had relatively little influence in Hilla. The operations of Hilla-SWAT have reportedly been closely integrated with those of locally deployed US forces and a report published by *Z-Magazine* has even argued that Hilla-SWAT has been trained to fight as a proxy force of the US military rather than as a force for integration into the Iraqi security services. In 2006 it was reported that the commander of Hilla-SWAT, Colonel Salam al-Mamuri, had been assassinated in a bomb attack, and there was much speculation as to whether the ISCI, the Sadrists or Sunni insurgents were to blame. In December 2007 *The Washington Post* reported that the man chosen by the Interior Ministry and the provincial council to replace Mamuri would be Major General Fadhil Radam Kadim al-Sultani and that “hundreds of people in Babil province [had] staged a protest over the appointment of [the] new police chief for Hilla”, who was perceived by locals to be “affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq”. No reports could be located which reported on whether the alleged antipathy felt by ISCI and Sadrist forces towards Hilla-SWAT is also extended to Hilla’s Shia residents in general (for information on the influence of, and relationship between, the ISCI, the Sadrists and the Dawa party in the Babil provincial government, see: Bruno, G. 2009, ‘Iraq’s Political Landscape’, Council on Foreign Relations website, 5 February <http://www.cfr.org/publication/18411/> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 69; Brooks, W. ‘Iraq’s Provincial Elections Auger Well For Obama’s Troop Withdrawal Plan’, *Al Arabiya*, 10 February <http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/02/10/66127.html> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 70; Dagher, S. 2009, ‘Gunmen Kill Iraqi Cleric Campaigning for Council’, *New York Times*, 17 January [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/17/world/middleeast/17iraq.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/17/world/middleeast/17iraq.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print) – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 71; and: Rubin, A.J. 2009, ‘Prime Minister’s Party Wins in Iraqi Vote but Will Need to Form Coalitions’, *New York Times*, 6 February <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/06/world/middleeast/06iraq.html?fta=y&pagewanted=print> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 72; for Hilla-SWAT, see: Knickmeyer, E. & Finer, J. 2006, ‘Iraqi Colonel Who Bridged Sectarian Divide Is Killed’, *Washington Post*, 14 October [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752_pf.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 5; for information on the manner in which Hilla-SWAT have worked to keep the Badr and Mahdi militias out of Hilla, see: Bull. B.B. 2006, ‘Calm at the Center of the Storm’, *New York Times*, 2 May [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 3; see also: Visser, R. 2008, ‘Iraqi Shiite Factionalism and Iran’s Role in the Basra Fighting’, *Terrorism Focus*, 14 April, vol.5: no.14

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4841](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4841) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 42; for information on the opposition of both the Sadrist and the ISCI groups to Hilla-SWAT, see: and: Dagher, S. 2007, 'Iraqi police chief, a key US ally, assassinated by roadside bomb', *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 December <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1209/p99s01-wome.html> – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 6; for the ISCI's historical influence over the ministry of the interior and state security in Iraq post-2005, see: Perito, R.M. 2008, 'Iraq's Interior Ministry: Frustrating Reform', United States Institute of Peace website, May [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2008/0523\\_iraq\\_interior\\_ministry.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/0523_iraq_interior_ministry.html) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 43; for a report which relates the allegations of Hilla locals that Mamuri has been replaced by a figure partisan to the ISCI, see: Partlow, J. & Sarhan, S. 2007, 'Old Tactic Returns as Gunmen Seize 13 Iraqis from Bus', *Washington Post*, 25 December [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/24/AR2007122401830\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/24/AR2007122401830_pf.html) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 33; for a report which argues that the Hilla-SWAT unit is a proxy force of the US military, see: Gupta, A.K. 2006, 'Iraq: Militias and Civil War', US Labor Against the War website, source: *Z-Magazine*, December <http://www.uslaboragainstarwar.org/article.php?id=12417> – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 7).

While there is, as is noted above, a wide body of reportage available which relates that the ISCI's militia forces have had relatively little influence over Hilla it should also be noted regular news articles have appeared which report on the ongoing activities of the Sadrist and ISCI militias in the vicinity of Hilla. It may be of interest that it was reported in October 2008 that Badr militants had intimidated Babil police into releasing an ISCI affiliated Babil councillor who had been arrested on corruption charges. One report, appearing in February 2005 in the pro resistance publication, *Iraqi Resistance Report*, reports on an incident in which, according to the claims of the sources referred to in the report, Badr Organisation fighters had attacked Sunnis in a Sunni Hilla suburb while Hilla's local security forces remained indifferent to the Badr force's activities. The same *Iraqi Resistance Report* also relates that: "There are also reports that the son of the chief of the puppet police in al-Hillah, also a member of the Badr Brigade was also killed". Again, it should be noted that the *Iraqi Resistance Report's* allegations of Hilla-SWAT's indifference to the Badr militancy in Hilla would appear to be unique and were not located in other news sources (for reports of the ongoing activities of Sadrist and ISCI militias in the vicinity of Hilla, see: 'Civilian killed, unidentified body found north of Hilla' 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 September [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/36109](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/36109) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 46; ('More Tension between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Badr Brigades, This Time in Hilla' 2008, *Historiae.org* website, 29 September <http://historiae.org/notebook.asp> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 66; and: Hauslohner, A. 2008, 'Iraqi Troops: Asleep on the Job?', *Time Magazine*, 21 April <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1732617,00.html> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 67; for the Badr militant's intimidation of Babil police in October 2008, see: Cockburn, P. 2008, 'Corruption blamed as cholera rips through Iraq', *The Independent*, 10 October <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/corruption-blamed-as-cholera-rips-through-iraq-956701.html> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 73; for the *Iraqi Resistance Report* claims, see: 'Al-Hillah – Babil Province' 2005, *Iraqi Resistance Report*, 21 February [http://www.albasrah.net/moqawama/english/0205/iraqiresistancereport\\_210205.htm](http://www.albasrah.net/moqawama/english/0205/iraqiresistancereport_210205.htm) – Accessed 22 December 2009 – Attachment 44).

With reference to the broader situation in Iraq reports have appeared which relate that Iraqis perceived to be collaborating with the United States have been targeted by the range of actors broadly referred to as the Sunni insurgency. It has also been argued that attacks on Shia communities by the Sunni insurgency can be partly understood as a reaction to perceived collaboration with US forces and initiatives. In 2005 Human Rights Watch (HRW) argued that: “Attacks on Iraq’s religious and ethnic communities – Shi`a Muslims, Kurds and Christians – are collective punishment for perceived cooperation with foreign forces and, in the case of Shi`a Muslims and Kurds, their assertions of national power”. It may be of interest that, in the lead up to the December 2005 elections, *Reuters* reported that Hilla’s mayor, Imad Lefta, had said that: “the Shi’ite population of Hilla was intensely aware of the fact that they had been targeted before” during participation in previous polls (Human Rights Watch 2005, ‘Chapter III: Insurgent Groups in Iraq’, in: *A Face and a Name: Civilian Victims of Insurgent Groups in Iraq*, vol.17, no.9 (E), October <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/iraq1005/3.htm> – Accessed 19 February 2008 – Attachment 16; for information on the general targeting of perceived collaborators, see Question 1 of: RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response IRQ32999*, 29 February – Attachment 18, including: Berthelsen, C. 2007, ‘Chalabi returns to prominence and power’, *Los Angeles Times*, 13 November <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-chalabi13nov13,0,2576954.story?coll=la-home-world> – Accessed 19 February 2008 – Attachment 19, and: ‘Iraq’s insurgents wage bloody war on “collaborators”’, *The Telegraph* [UK], 6 August – Attachment 20; ‘Bomb-scarred people of Hilla wary before Iraq vote’ 2005, Red Orbit website, source: *Reuters*, 14 October [http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred\\_people\\_of\\_hilla\\_wary\\_before\\_iraq\\_vote/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred_people_of_hilla_wary_before_iraq_vote/) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 56).

The Shia forces loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr have also reportedly attacked and threatened Shiites thought to be collaborating with the “US occupation” and have reportedly also mistreated Shiites who have assumed western styles of dress and behavior (in the time available no reports of incidents of this kind, involving attacks on Hilla civilians in particular, could be located). Forces loyal to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (such as the Badr Organisation) are generally reported to be less hostile towards cooperation with the United States in certain regards and Badr Organisation forces have often worked with the support of, or in support of, the United States military and other coalition forces in the course of confronting Sunni groups and the rival Shiite forces of Muqtada al-Sadr. This said, it should also be noted that the relationship between the ISCI and western forces is a complicated one and that militants loyal to the ISCI have singled out for mistreatment Iraqis who have engaged in western behaviors or styles of dress deemed un-Islamic and that it has been reported that “Badr fighters have repeatedly clashed with British forces in Basra” (again, in the time available no reports of incidents of this kind could be located which involved attacks on Hilla civilians) (for the manner in which US forces have supported Badr Organisation operations against the Mahdi Army, see: Parker, N. 2008, “US is entangled in Shiite rivalry”, *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/30/world/fg-shiites30> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 74; for the targeting of perceived collaborators by Sadrists forces, see: Samuels, L. 2008, ‘Unsafe Haven’, *Newsweek*, 28 April <http://www.newsweek.com/id/134596/output/print> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 25; ‘US forces fight al-Sadr insurgents’ 2004, *CNN.com*, 30 May <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/05/30/iraq.main/index.html> – Accessed 19 February 2009– Attachment 26; McNaught, A. 2008, ‘Rebuilding Sadr City, One Claim at a Time’, *Fox News*, 26 June <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,372470,00.html> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 27; Crain, C. & Hauslohner, A. 2008, ‘Sadr Offers to End

Basra Fighting', *Time Magazine*, 29 March <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1726452,00.html> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 28; for information on the targeting of western styled Shia by forces loyal to Sadr as well as by forces loyal to the ISCI, see the information under Question 3 of: RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response IRQ32999*, 29 February – Attachment 18, including: McGeary, J. 2004, 'New Thugs On The Block', *Time Magazine*, 11 April <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,610071-3,00.html> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 21, Carroll, J. 2005, 'Sadr militia's new muscle in south', *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 September <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0921/p01s03-woiq.html> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 22, Ridolfo, K. 2005, 'Militiamen Push Their Version of Islam in the Absence of the Rule of Law', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, vol.8, no. 11, 28 March <http://www.rferl.org/reports/iraq-report/2005/03/11-280305.asp> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 23 and Naji, Z. 2006, 'Baghdad Militants' Reign of Terror', Institute for Peace & War Reporting website, *Iraq Crisis Report*, no.192, 1 September [http://iwpr.net/?p=icr&s=f&o=323569&apc\\_state=henpicr](http://iwpr.net/?p=icr&s=f&o=323569&apc_state=henpicr) – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 24; for the Badr clashes with coalition forces, see: Beehner, L. 2006, 'Iraq's Militia Groups', Council on Foreign Relations website, 26 October [http://www.cfr.org/publication/11824/iraqs\\_militia\\_groups.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11824/iraqs_militia_groups.html) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 29).

A detailed consideration of the issues and source information attending this introduction follow below.

### **General security in Hilla – 2008 reports**

In September 2008 a report on security and development in Al-Hillah and the surrounding Babil Governorate appeared on the *Real Clear World* website. The report – authored by Ken Hillas, the head of the US Babil Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT), and supplied to *Real Clear World* by the US Department of State – claims that security in Babil is much improved including within the “northern part of the province” which “lies within the so-called ‘Triangle of Death,’ south of Baghdad”; according to Hillas this “Sunni area lying on the Sunni/Shia fault line” was a zone “in which active fighting was still taking place until early 2008”. The report also provides an overview of the various developmental projects which Hillas believes his PRT team has successfully implemented in the Babil area.

I arrived in Al-Hillah in the beginning of March 2008, and the changes since then have been notable. The gains in security during that time are reflected in an improved quality of life for the province's citizens. Babil – the most populous (1.6 million) province in the south central region – is the keystone for the south central region. The US maintains a Regional Embassy Office (REO) in Al-Hillah, one of four in Iraq (together with Basrah, Kirkuk and Erbil). Babil is largely located between the Tigris and Euphrates and has been Iraq's breadbasket as well as an industrial center. The northern part of the province lies within the so-called “Triangle of Death,” south of Baghdad. This was a Sunni area lying on the Sunni/Shia fault line and the stage in which active fighting was still taking place until early 2008. An embedded sister PRT is paired with US forces in northern Babil, where the changes of the last 10 months have probably been most starkly visible. A place like Jurf as Sakr, a Sunni majority town in northern Babil, was the scene of terrible destruction one year ago. I walked down the main street early this summer and was able to visit stores and talk to shopkeepers, escorted by only two soldiers at a distance.

The Al-Hillah REO supported three other PRTs, which for security reasons were not able to deploy to the provinces of Diwaniyah, Najaf and Karbala. This year all three of those PRTs



are now based in their respective provincial capitals working closely with the provincial authorities to build governance capacity, pursue reconstruction and promote political reconciliation.

#### SOME IRAQIS RETURNING TO BABIL

Just a few weeks after my arrival in Al-Hillah, the REO compound was shelled twice. The REO compound adjoins a US Army Forward Operating Base, where a battalion of the Third Infantry Division/Fourth Brigade is located. There were also several unsuccessful attempts to rocket our compound.

During the early weeks of spring, the Sadrist Militia, Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM), also known as Mahdi's Army, tried to destabilize the situation in southern Iraq with Iranian support and training. Militia groups attacked government and offices of the governing political parties, especially ISCI and Dawa. The Iraqi Security Forces responded forcefully and effectively, disrupting JAM's organizational structure and operational capabilities. It was at this time that Prime Minister Maliki decided to take back control of Basrah.

The fighting in Babil was not nearly as intense as in Basrah, and the ISF never lost complete control of any area of the province. Since that time, the incidence of IED and EFP attacks has dropped by several orders of magnitude. Stores remain open in the evening, and people no longer hustle home after dark. For the first time in several years, some women walk the streets of Hillah without headscarves. Numerous restaurants have opened and you now hear pop music in the streets that the Sadrist militia would prevent, preferring instead religious music. This year, 10 Iraqi expatriates returned to Hillah to take up faculty positions at Babil University, and several others have expressed an interest in doing the same. While we don't have good statistics on the rate of return, this is one indication that Iraq's intelligentsia, which had the ability and good reason to flee, are beginning to come home.

#### WITH IMPROVEMENT COMES NEW CHALLENGES

To be sure, there is a real revival of economic activity in the province. Construction projects are ubiquitous. Numerous housing projects have popped up this year around Al-Hillah like desert wildflowers after the late winter rains. This has been both a blessing and a curse. As the economy revives – with no small help from increased oil prices over the last two years – the demand for electricity has grown sharply in Babil. Although the supply of electricity has also grown consistently this last year, the rising demand has maintained the shortages that plague much of the rest of Iraq. Power was available this summer sometimes for no more than six hours a day.

The PRT has been active in helping Iraqis kickstart their economy. At the PRT's initiative, a contractor helped the Iraqi Society of Fish Producers to reenergize this key economic sector with a targeted grant. Fish farming traditionally was a big money maker in Iraq, and Babil has been at the centerpiece. As a result, over five million fingerlings found themselves distributed throughout the province and in neighboring ones too, providing gainful employment to many young males who could otherwise be tempted to work for AQI or JAM [*Researcher's note: presumably these acronyms refer to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Jaish al Mahdi (JAM; or the Mahdi Army)*].

Until recently, the PRT's work focused on capital projects, using US funding to build schools, roads, water treatment plants. That has changed. For a variety of reasons ranging from poor governance capacity to bureaucratic inertia, the provinces have not in the past succeeded in spending all of their budgets. We have now begun to use Iraqi funds to do this, while we provide the expertise for long-term planning, and operations and training in operations and maintenance of key infrastructure. This shift has not always been easy for the Iraqis or

Americans, accustomed to doing business in the past, but it reflects the new reality. Fortunately for Babil Province, it has one of the best records in executing its budget, spending nearly all the funds allocated to it (Hillas, K. 2008, 'Rebuilding Iraq: Babil Province', *Real Clear World*, 25 September

[http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil\\_province.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2008/09/babil_province.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 1; for reports on Ken Hillas as Badil PRT leader, see: Lopez, S.R. 2008, 'GOI Vows Support for Jurf as-Sakhr Farmers, Agriculture', Multi-National Force Iraq website, 31 October  
[http://www.cjtf7.army.mil/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=23373&Itemid=128](http://www.cjtf7.army.mil/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23373&Itemid=128) – Accessed 16 February 2009– Attachment 2).

In July 2008 the *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* reported positively of the security situation in Hilla and the surrounding area, relating that: "During the past days and weeks there has been no record of any terrorist crimes, prompting some officials to point out that the terrorist crime rate has fallen steeply". The relevant extract follows:

**Correspondent Ala'a Razzaq in Hilla, Babil Governorate:**

The situation is clearly tending toward stability, especially during the past two months, and this has been widely reflected on the streets of Hilla. During the past days and weeks there has been no record of any terrorist crimes, prompting some officials to point out that the terrorist crime rate has fallen steeply. There have been some crimes aimed at the wealthy and members of the medical profession, and officials are indicating that at least ten gangs responsible for such crimes have been neutralized.

Stability has been apparent in daily life on the streets of Hilla, particularly since the security agencies have relaxed the night-time curfew, and we now see vehicles on the streets through the late night hours. People are also showing their sense of security by stepping out to do their shopping, as evidenced particularly on certain streets within the governorate, where the music shops and the shops housing the bands that play at weddings are operating openly and using loudspeakers to advertise themselves. Celebrations after the national football team's wins have recently filled the streets with thousands of celebrating fans, something which was not seen prior to the implementation of the governorate's security plan. [Previously] when the Iraqi team won the Asian Nations Cup, and when young people took to the streets to celebrate, many of them were beaten by members of some of the extremist factions. There has also been an increase in the number of security personnel on the streets who have been provided with large numbers of specialized security vehicles. The security situation thus appears to be stable.

[Regarding the notoriously dangerous Baghdad-Hilla highway:] In the past, we have recorded a large number of incidents on this stretch of highway, which has been dealt with in an organized way. Citizens took over the positions that were considered terrorist hideouts, and a number of operations were carried out to root out the bases that housed the armed gangs. Fixed and mobile patrols were also used to secure the area completely. The area is now witnessing a reconstruction effort as a result of the governorate's decision to allocate one-third of its budget to the former "Death Triangle" [in Babil Governorate] ('Radio Free Iraq: Correspondents' "Neighborhood Watch" 2008 *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 1 July [http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraq\\_neighborhood\\_watch/1181071.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraq_neighborhood_watch/1181071.html) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 10).

In October 2008 *Reuters* reported that "US forces declared an area once known as the "triangle of death" safe enough for Iraqi troops to take charge on Thursday, handing over responsibility for security in Babil province to Iraqi forces" (Graff, P. 2008, 'US hands "triangle of death" to Iraqi troops', *Reuters*, 23 October

<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE49M27920081023?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 30).

In March 2006 *Reuters* reported as follows from Hilla noting that US troops are well received in the area and that “Hilla...is often held up by US officials as a model for the reconstruction effort in Iraq”. Pertinent extracts follow:

HILLA, Iraq (Reuters) – Three years to the day after they invaded Iraq, most American troops still believe in their mission but know that the general population has – at best – mixed feelings about their presence.

Many are as keen as most Iraqis to see US forces go home and, inspired by the sense they bring freedom and prosperity, regret the resentment they face among many local people.

“In one town they will thank the troops for what they are doing,” said Staff Sergeant Jim Mayhan, 40, a veteran of the 2003 invasion and now on his second rotation in Iraq, based at Hilla, 100 km (60 miles) south of Baghdad.

“Go to another town and you get ugly stares and cultural gestures showing their displeasure.”

Hilla, close to the site of Babylon and capital of the province named for the ancient city, is often held up by US officials as a model for the reconstruction effort in Iraq.

A mainly Shi’ite Muslim town surrounded by Sunni rural areas, it saw the bloodiest al Qaeda suicide bombing of the conflict a year ago, when 125 people were killed, and has since seen other sectarian attacks, including on its mosques.

...Soldiers at Charlie Base in Hilla, home to the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Division, point to tangible evidence of what the US military has accomplished – a new school, clinic, a bridge or road, and have figures showing a decline in rebel attacks (Olivari, N. 2006, ‘Three years on, US troops say steadfast in Iraq’, DOSE.CA website, source: *Reuters*, 20 March [http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s\\_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D](http://www.dose.ca/toronto/news/story.html?s_id=12HORTLJNx1B99LDZxKdWAAGK5iBzoeCzf0egc8ACkbpwf2vYg%2B0Mw%3D%3D) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 31).

The Special Inspector General for Iraq reconstruction provides quarterly reports to the US Congress on progress in the development of Iraq and these reports provide an estimate on the number of insurgent attacks experience each governorate over time. The statistics for the Babylon Governorate follow below sourced from the October 2008 report:

- **Security**

Total Attacks 4/1/2008–7/1/2008            81

Total Attacks 7/1/2008–9/30/2008        54

(Special Inspector General for Iraq 2008, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 30 October, p.129

[http://www.sigir.mil/reports/quarterlyreports/Oct08/pdf/Report\\_-\\_October\\_2008.pdf](http://www.sigir.mil/reports/quarterlyreports/Oct08/pdf/Report_-_October_2008.pdf)  
– Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 76).

Page 137 of the most recent quarterly report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq (January 2009) provides a graph representation of the oscillating rate of attacks which have affected the Babylon governorate from January 2004 to December 2009 (Special Inspector General for Iraq 2009, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 30 January

### **Hilla, Babil and the Hilla-SWAT Scorpion Commando unit**

A May 2006 *New York Times* report relates of Hilla's Babil Governorate that "Babil – apart from the so-called Death Triangle around the towns of Latifiya, Mahmudiya and Yusufiya in the Sunni north – is a safe place". According to this report: "In the December [2005] national elections, voter turnout in Babil was nearly 70 percent without a single serious incident of violence". The report also relates that: "What really makes Babil special is that it is a largely Shiite province in which the Shiite militias – the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigades – have almost no foothold". The report relates that both "the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigades" have attempted win influence in Hilla but have been kept at bay by "Babil's independent-minded provincial police chief, Gen. Qais Hamza al-Maamony". Pertinent extracts follow:

HERE in the hometown of Iraq's prime minister-designate, Nuri al-Maliki, people are understandably excited. And not just because a local boy has done well. Rather, they hope Mr. Maliki's ascension is a sign that Iraq as a whole may emulate their province's remarkable success in combating Iraq's two main security threats: Sunni Arab terrorism and the infiltration of Shiite militias into the state security forces.

Hilla is the capital of Babil Province, 900 square miles just south of Baghdad that could well turn out to be the country's crucial province. Babil's population of 1.6 million, like that of Arab Iraq in general, is mostly Shiite with a Sunni minority. The province borders not only the capital but also the Sunni heartland, Anbar Province, to the west and the Shiite holy places Najaf and Karbala to the south. In the east, Babil's neighboring provinces stretch to Iran and feel its influence heavily.

...If everything goes to pieces in Iraq, we will not hear much more about Babil. In that case it will be Anbar, Basra, Kirkuk, Sadr City and the Green Zone in Baghdad that will symbolize pessimism and disaster. But if things go well, or at least better – if Iraq still exists five years from now, and continues to be more free than all of its neighbors except Turkey and less of a threat to them than it used to be – then Babil will have been a major reason for the success.

What Iraqis care about above all else these days is security, and Babil – apart from the so-called Death Triangle around the towns of Latifiya, Mahmudiya and Yusufiya in the Sunni north – is a safe place. In the December national elections, voter turnout in Babil was nearly 70 percent without a single serious incident of violence.

During the Shiite festival of Ashura this year, marked by 10 days of pilgrimage to Najaf and Karbala, some half a million pilgrims walked and drove through the province without reports of a single insurgent attack. Of the 81 civil reconstruction projects undertaken in Babil outside the Death Triangle in the last year – most related to water and electricity – not one has been attacked by Sunni insurgents or Shiite militias, according to the executive officer of the American troops here, the First Squadron of the 10th Cavalry. He told me that his troops had experienced only eight cases of hostile contact, and not a single casualty, since arriving in December. (They are vacating the base now and will not be replaced.)

Order here is not of the same magnitude as that in the Kurdish north, where 15 years of freedom have allowed the development of a highly efficient police state. Nor is it the false quiet of the south, where the allied forces' ceding of the streets to Shiites militias has masked a situation in which Basra is more frightening to liberal Iraqis and to foreigners than is Baghdad. Order in Babil is real order, not gangster order.



What really makes Babil special is that it is a largely Shiite province in which the Shiite militias – the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigades – have almost no foothold. But they are trying. All Iraq's police answer to the Interior Ministry, which is held by the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the main Iranian organ in the country. And the interior minister, Bayan Jabr, has repeatedly tried to replace Babil's independent-minded provincial police chief, Gen. Qais Hamza al-Maamony. Under heavy pressure from the Americans, however, the minister agreed in January to a moratorium on the replacement of senior police officers until after the formation of the new government.

Nonetheless, according to American officials in the province, General Maamony was recently forced to accept 700 candidates recommended by the ministry – that is, by the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution – for the incoming class of the provincial police academy. The police chief, I'm told, plans to spread these recruits as thinly as possible around the province upon their graduation to lessen their impact on the force.

General Maamony and his 8,000 men — especially the provincial SWAT teams, which supply the muscle that the relatively poorly trained and lightly armed regular police often cannot or will not provide — are understandably unpopular with the council and its military wing, the Badr Brigades. And they are equally feared by the Mahdi Army of the rebel Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr. A member of one local SWAT team often wears a baseball hat with “Mahdi Militia Killer” inscribed on it.

One Iraqi-American living here told me that he saw an operation in which the SWAT team drove up to a Mahdi checkpoint in civilian cars and clothes one night last year and killed 38 of the militiamen. While this number may be an exaggeration, unquestionably the local police forces are taking on the militias.

Of course, the Shiite militias are not the only danger. Up in the Sunni north, the province's police commandos mount 40-man daylight patrols in support of the overwhelmed local police officers, bouncing down rural byways, swerving around holes in the main roads created by homemade bombs, pointing out to me the places where in recent weeks they have fought in gun battles that often lasted several hours.

At night they conduct more focused missions, often in the company of American Special Forces operatives, to apprehend suspected insurgents. One Special Forces commander told me he had worked with local policemen in just about every hot spot around the world since 1980, and that the Iraqi commandos in Babil are “the best any of us have ever seen.”

They are also worried, as are their colleagues among the regular police. When the current moratorium on firing nonpartisan police officials expires with the formation of the new government (Mr. Maliki has about three weeks to finish that task), a momentous drama will break out inside the Interior Ministry in Baghdad. If the ministry stays in the hands of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution, then the people of Babil might find their streets and markets patrolled by men with greater allegiance to the council than to the legitimate Iraqi government and the country's best interests.

Should this happen, the assault commander of the provincial police commandos told me, he and his men might have to retire together to a rural compound where they would be out of jobs and out of uniform, but they could try to keep one another safe.

Can the new government prevent this success story at the heart of Arab Iraq from becoming yet another stronghold of theocrats, thugs and meddling neighbors? Handicapping Iraqi politics is a fool's game, of course, but if anyone can, it might well be Mr. Maliki. While he spent some years of his exile in Iran, he was the leader of the pro-Arab, rather than the pro-

Iranian, wing of his party, Dawa. He has a strongly Shiite identity, yet his acceptance in his new post by Kurdish and Sunni politicians has been on surprisingly warm terms.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Maliki is less of an Iranian stooge and a far more forceful character than his predecessor, Ibrahim al-Jaafari. He also has solid anti-insurgent credentials. As chairman of the Parliament's national security committee, he was the architect of the popular new law that, among other things, attacks the economic basis of domestic insurgent support by going after the property and wealth of those convicted of abetting terrorists.

The key for the incoming government will be to apply this law vigorously in the knowledge that nonsectarian and nonpartisan control of local security forces is the key to domestic order and, ultimately, reconstruction.

Babil shows that such a thing is possible. But if this province is to continue to provide an island of relative order in the heart of Arab Iraq, people like General Maamony need to keep their jobs. For now, in the blast-walled compounds of the Hilla police forces and commandos, the real sense of siege is not from the insurgents and militias they fight almost every day, but from the politicians in Baghdad (Bull. B.B. 2006, 'Calm at the Center of the Storm', *New York Times*, 2 May

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/opinion/02bull.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 3).

A *Washington Post* article of October 2006 reports on the assassination of the local Hilla–Swat commander, “Col. Salam al-Mamuri”, whose security force had won a reputation for neutrality. The report relates that Mamuri’s “comparative evenhandedness enforcing the law may have earned him an enemy within his own sect, the Shiites”. According to the report: “local forces of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr especially disliked Mamuri, more than ever after the Scorpions raided a Sadr office in mid-September”; and: “Shiite politicians and officials from the Shiite-run Interior Ministry frequently threatened to have Mamuri replaced”. Mamuri’s group is also said to have made an enemy of the Sunni insurgency and the Al Qaeda movement: “Because of its makeup [largely Shia] and the fact that it fought al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni-led insurgent groups”. More generally the report observes that: “Hilla, about 60 miles south of Baghdad, is markedly more peaceful than the towns on the capital’s southern outskirts that serve as strongholds for Sunni insurgents”. Nonetheless, the report also separates Hilla from “the almost entirely Shiite south, free of the brunt of Sunni insurgent attacks but the scene of growing clashes between militias and security forces loyal to rival Shiite religious parties”. Pertinent extracts follow:

Operating between the insurgent Sunni Arab suburbs of Baghdad and the Shiite militia-dominated south, Col. Salam al-Mamuri and his Scorpion commando team were a rarity among Iraqi security forces, American and Iraqi colleagues said: a police unit fighting on both sides of the country’s sectarian divide.

On Friday, a bomb blew apart Mamuri and an aide at the Scorpions’ headquarters in the southern city of Hilla. The attack ended the life of a broadly respected commander who had been one of the longest-serving and longest-surviving men in a cadre of Iraqi army veterans struggling to restore law and order after the 2003 US-led invasion.

Mamuri’s comparative evenhandedness enforcing the law may have earned him an enemy within his own sect, the Shiites. Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani in Baghdad called it a “possibility and a probability” that the assassination was at least in part an inside job, because the killer was able to gain access to Mamuri’s office to plant the bomb.

...Though the unit, whose commandos wore the emblem of a black arachnid, was known to locals as the Scorpions, successive deployments of US Special Operations members and Marines generally called it simply Hilla SWAT.

The Scorpions were made up of about 800 men, most of them Shiites from Hilla. The unit, which Bolani called “one of the most important and vital of the Ministry of Interior,” has remained relatively stable and cohesive since its early days, as other US efforts to build Iraqi security forces have collapsed.

...His expression of neutrality was indistinguishable from those issued up and down the ranks of Iraq’s predominantly Shiite police forces, many members of which are accused by Sunnis and Americans of a role in the country’s escalating Shiite-Sunni killings. The difference, many Americans and Iraqis said, was that Mamuri acted as if he meant it.

...Seven other officers were wounded by the bomb that killed Mamuri.

...Hilla, about 60 miles south of Baghdad, is markedly more peaceful than the towns on the capital’s southern outskirts that serve as strongholds for Sunni insurgents. Shiite schoolchildren today sing the Sunni towns’ names, such as Latifiyah, in chilling songs equating them with hell.

On the other side of Hilla is the almost entirely Shiite south, free of the brunt of Sunni insurgent attacks but the scene of growing clashes between militias and security forces loyal to rival Shiite religious parties.

Hilla residents said Friday that local forces of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr especially disliked Mamuri, more than ever after the Scorpions raided a Sadr office in mid-September. Sadr’s militia, known as the Mahdi Army, is one of the most powerful forces in Iraq.

Shiite politicians and officials from the Shiite-run Interior Ministry frequently threatened to have Mamuri replaced. Several attempts were made on his life, including a roadside bomb attack on his convoy in late April that was blamed on the Mahdi Army.

Because of its makeup and the fact that it fought al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni-led insurgent groups, Hilla SWAT swiftly earned a reputation as a feared anti-Sunni force. It was heavily involved in the operations around Yusufiyah in April and May that led to the capture of several top al-Qaeda lieutenants and, the military later said, the eventual killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

But the unit cracked down as fiercely on Shiite militias, which Mamuri blamed this spring for what by then amounted to at least a half-dozen attempts to assassinate him. He barred militia members from serving in his brigade, despite intense political pressure from the provincial governor, who Mamuri said repeatedly pressured him to accept more militia members into his ranks (Knickmeyer, E. & Finer, J. 2006, ‘Iraqi Colonel Who Bridged Sectarian Divide Is Killed’, *Washington Post*, 14 October [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/13/AR2006101301752_pf.html) – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 5).

Also reporting on the death of Mamouri, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that there were suspicions that the killing could have been the work of Al Qaeda or “a result of rivalry between the [Babil] governor, Saleh al-Muslimawi, a Shiite who belongs to the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq party”.

Babil provincial council member Hassan Watwet told the Associated Press that Al Qaeda is the primary suspect behind the attack on Mamouri but it could have also been Shiite militias.

A member of a major Shiite party told the Monitor that it may have been a result of rivalry between the governor, Saleh al-Muslimawi, a Shiite who belongs to the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq party, and the police chief, who was more of an independent (Dagher, S. 2007, 'Iraqi police chief, a key US ally, assassinated by roadside bomb', *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 December <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1209/p99s01-wome.html> – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 6).

In December 2007 it was reported that Babil residents had protested against the appointment of Maj. Gen. Fadhil Radam Kadim al-Sultani as Mamouri's replacement, as Sultani was seen to be affiliated with the ISCI:

In a separate development Monday south of Baghdad, hundreds of people in Babil province staged a protest over the appointment of a new police chief for Hilla, the provincial capital. The demonstrators think the new chief, Maj. Gen. Fadhil Radam Kadim al-Sultani, is affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a leading Shiite political party, whose militia, the Badr Organization, is involved in a power struggle in southern Iraq with another pervasive militia, the Mahdi Army.

Protesters set up tents along the road to the governor's office in Hilla, chanted denunciations of Sultani and held signs calling for appointment of an independent police chief, said Capt. Muthanna Ahmed, a spokesman for the Babil police.

Officials close to Moqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Mahdi Army, called Sultani's appointment illegal.

Sultani, who served as Hilla police chief earlier in the war, denied in a statement that he was affiliated with any political party. He was chosen by the Interior Ministry and the provincial council, following the assassination of Maj. Gen. Qais al-Mamouri, this month, Ahmed said. U.S. military officials had praised Mamouri for resisting corruption by political and sectarian pressures (Partlow, J. & Sarhan, S. 2007, 'Old Tactic Returns as Gunmen Seize 13 Iraqis from Bus', *Washington Post*, 25 December [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/24/AR2007122401830\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/24/AR2007122401830_pf.html) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 33).

The following December 2006 report, which originally appeared in the left-wing *Z-Magazine*, provides further background on the Hillah SWAT unit noting its intimate association with US forces and its history of confrontation with Mahdi Army fighters and Sunni insurgents. The article speculates, pointing to the Hillah SWAT unit's high level of inter-operability with US forces (noting its capacity for airborne operations in particular), that Hillah SWAT has been trained as a force for use by the US military rather than for transference to an Iraqi government.

Since July 2006, police commandos and the overwhelmingly Shia Hillah SWAT team have aided US forces in large-scale battles against Mahdi Army fighters. Like the police commandos, SWAT team members were trained by Dyncorp, which means Pentagon-hired mercenaries helped form the sectarian militias now being used as the tip of the spear in the US war.

...The Hillah SWAT Team was established in the summer of 2004 in Babil province south of Baghdad in an area known as the "triangle of death." Reuters described the force as "Iraqi police commandos calling themselves the Black Scorpions" and placed their training as starting in July 2004 with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). National Review Online, also placed their training as beginning that July. Interestingly, a third account, in the



LA Times, stated the Marine-led training began in August as the Iraqis had already been “training in Hillah with private-sector security firms.”

...The SWAT team doesn't appear to be directly linked to the police commandos, but it was established as an elite police unit, as were the commandos. Both were formed at the same time and the SWAT team's current size, about 800 men, is about the same as a commando battalion. While it's referred to as a SWAT team (special weapons and tactics), the Hillah unit is also distinct from a separate US initiative to create 20 provincial SWAT teams of 27 men each. The Hillah SWAT team by itself is larger than the entire SWAT program. By January 2005, it already had 500 men under arms.

...The Hillah SWAT team is almost completely dependent on the Pentagon. The 24th Marines “handpicked” an initial “core of 12.” The Iraqis trained and operated “alongside the MEU's Force Reconnaissance platoon” and even wore the same uniforms. A Babil Reconstruction photo essay from March 2005 shows US Army Corps of Engineers officers overseeing the construction of the Hillah SWAT headquarters. Another photo essay shows the Hillah SWAT team boarding Marine Corps helicopters after conducting a joint raid.

Using helicopters for raids indicates that the units are being trained as a high-end force. Unable to pay or even feed army units, the Iraqi government is a long way from acquiring the technology, infrastructure, and skills to use helicopter assault teams. It raises the question: What are these SWAT team members being trained for? As they will be dependent on US forces for years to come, they aren't being groomed as replacements. The real purpose of the SWAT team and other militias is as a complementary force in the counter-insurgency war. They perform functions US troops can't, such as “raids on mosques and other sensitive sites that US forces are reluctant to breach.” Able to move effortlessly in Iraqi society, they are also an indigenous source of information. The Marines said the unit provides them with “95 percent of our intelligence.”

The SWAT team has been used extensively in counter-insurgency operations. In a period of 6 months, the 24th Marines conducted “58 joint raids” with the team, capturing “nearly 500 insurgents,” according to a Marine Corps News report. In one “citywide sweep of Lutafiyah,” Marines, Iraqi police and national guard rounded up “200 military-age men.” While noting that many “were eventually released,” the report's conclusion was that it sent a “clear message” to insurgents. There was no acknowledgement that similar fishing expeditions by US forces, cordoning off towns and arresting all “military-age males,” helped ignite the insurgency in the first place. Also, engaging in such indiscriminate arrests indicates that the intelligence appears to be suspect.

...The Hillah SWAT team was described as being “94 percent” Shia, “while most of the insurgents in the area are Sunnis.” The commander, “Col. Salaam Turrad Abdul Khadim, a former Iraqi special forces officer who recruited his team from the ranks of unemployed soldiers in Hillah,” mentioned proudly that in August 2004, while US forces were engaged in open warfare against al-Sadr's militia, his SWAT team members killed 42 Mahdi Army fighters “in Hillah in one day—all of them Shiite.”

Two years later, the Hillah SWAT team would be fighting the Mahdi Army once again. On July 22, 2006, in the town of Musayyib in Babil, US forces killed 15 Mahdi militia in a 3-hour firefight. It was “part of a systematic drive US forces had been ordered to carry out against the Mahdi Army of anti-American firebrand Moqtada al-Sadr.” An aide, Sheik Jalil al-Nouri, claimed that US and Iraqi forces initiated the attack against the Mahdi Army office in Mussayib. Also on the same day, “Local officials said the Americans conducted a similar raid on al-Sadr's office in Mahmoudiya.”

The US Central Command said that the SWAT team was among the Iraqi units that took part in the “day-long battle” that “killed 33 terrorists.” The SWAT team also searched a “Husaniyah Mosque in an attempt to capture terrorists who attacked the Coalition unit and fled into the mosque before continuing to fire on the Soldiers.”

The Hillah SWAT team commander, “Col. Salam al-Mamuri,” was killed by a bomb blast in his office on October 13, 2006. A Washington Post story stated that “Mamuri had founded the Scorpion brigade soon after Americans arrived and had led it ever since.” All the evidence indicates otherwise, however. The Marines trained, armed, and led the SWAT team, which wasn’t established for almost a year and a half after the original invasion. But the report does follow the Pentagon line of portraying the unit as an “Iraqi initiative.” One US Special Forces soldier said the SWAT team was “literally the only Iraqi unit under arms in the south that is completely independent of the political parties and the militias.” Independent of everyone except for US forces, of course, as the unit “cracked down...fiercely on Shiite militias,” namely, the Mahdi Army. This also fits with the Pentagon tendency to go after the Mahdi Army while sparing the Badr Corps.

This episode of one Shia militia attacking another could be dismissed as an aberration except weeks later police commandos, backed by US forces, clashed with Sadr’s followers in two separate instances in the southern city of Diwaniyah. In the first instance, on August 28, an all-out battle erupted between Sadrists and Iraqi troops “consisting largely of young rural, tribal Shiite men.” One analyst, Juan Cole, described it as a battle that began when the provincial governor ordered the arrest of a “local self-styled leader of the Mahdi Army.” The governor, Khalil Jalil Hamzah, represents the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which has engaged before in deadly battles in the South with Sadr’s followers. The difference this time is that the US military intervened on the side of SCIRI by dropping a 500-pound “satellite-guided bomb on an ‘enemy position’ while flying in support of Iraqi and coalition troops.” More ominous, according to Cole, is that the fighting was an example of “militia-on-militia violence” as SCIRI’s Badr Corps tangled with the Mahdi Army under the guise of police commando units in Diwaniyah.

Then in September a second clash occurred in Diwaniyah when “a joint Iraqi and American patrol raided one of Mr. Sadr’s offices at night, leading to a three-hour exchange of gunfire between militia forces and Iraqi police commandos.” Still another battle took place in Diwaniyah on October 8 between US forces and Sadr’s followers.

...These events represent the “fractalization” of the sectarian war. The national struggles between sects are being replicated on smaller and smaller levels in cities, towns, and villages. The US military and Iraqi government are throwing “official” militias into the mix because they have been given the equipment, arms, and ability to strike quickly anywhere.

...The United States is eager to crush Sadr’s movement, but has hesitated from launching an all-out assault because the ruling Shia coalition includes 30 members of the National Assembly allied with Sadr. But at the same time, “American officials have been increasing the pressure in recent weeks on Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a conservative Shiite, to rein in armed militias like the Mahdi Army.”

The Bush administration has apparently made a Faustian bargain, supporting SCIRI and its Badr Corps against rival forces among both Sunnis and Shia. In the process, it’s stoking another front in the sectarian war – Shia vs. Shia – that already includes Americans vs. Iraqis, Sunni vs. Shia, and Arabs vs. Kurds. The desperation of the Bush administration is so great that it is now backing the party that is the closest ally of Iran’s Islamic government—the regime that it most wants to topple.

Nonetheless, the use of US-backed militias in intra-Shia violence is overshadowed by their use against Sunni guerrillas. This is in addition to mainline forces set up along sectarian lines. These include an overwhelmingly Shia and Kurdish national army, as well as the 7,700-member public order brigades, which are “virtually all” Shia (Gupta, A.K. 2006, ‘Iraq: Militias and Civil War’, US Labor Against the War website, source: *Z-Magazine*, December <http://www.uslaboragainstar.org/article.php?id=12417> – Accessed 16 February 2009 – Attachment 7).

An October 2007 report by *Newsweek* presents the leader of the Hilla-SWAT unit as a warlord with a close allegiance to supporting US forces and a belligerence towards the Mahdi Army:

In other parts of Iraq, working closely with U.S. forces has clearer advantages. Consider Gen. Qais Hamza Aboud, the local police chief in the mostly Shiite city of Hillah, about 50 miles south of Baghdad. A former fighter pilot in Saddam’s Air Force, Qais is now probably the most powerful individual in Babil province—more influential than either the governor or local Iraqi Army commanders. He was working as a car salesman in 2003 when U.S. military officials helped him form an elite paramilitary police unit, now known as the Scorpion Battalion. Flush with American cash and weapons, Qais’s Scorpions have since swelled to roughly 800 troops. U.S. officers in Hillah refer to Qais simply as “the Godfather.” Asked about the nickname during a recent visit to a U.S. military base outside Hillah, General Qais stared down a NEWSWEEK reporter for 10 seconds or so, and then replied: “Yeah, that’s right.”

At a recent meeting attended by U.S. officers, diplomats and Iraqi security officials, Qais sat at the head of a horseshoe-shaped table facing a slide projector. The general, who looks somewhat like a plump Albert Einstein, listened as the Americans talked about the need to incorporate 200 or so of Babil’s own “concerned local citizens” into his police force. The “citizens” program, in Hillah as elsewhere, can be problematic. Legally, for instance, participating citizens are not supposed to carry weapons outside their homes, a ban that is often ignored, leading to clashes between the U.S.-supported guardians and other local armed groups. “What we’re seeing is the de facto establishment of a militia,” said a State Department official at the meeting, who declined to speak to NEWSWEEK on the record without embassy authorization. “We need to be very careful that we remain constitutionally correct.” Another U.S. officer at the meeting, Col. Michael Garrett, added: “We’ve never addressed the fact that we’re putting citizens outside what is now the current law.” Qais said he agreed. “We don’t want this group to become another militia,” he said quietly. After the meeting, one American diplomat, who was not authorized to speak on the record, referred to the project derisively as a “guns and whisky” strategy.

As the meeting ended, Qais leaned over a tactical map with a smaller clutch of U.S. and Iraqi officers, making final preparations for a raid on a suspected Mahdi Army office. “We’re going to shut those f—ers down,” the general said, to titters from his U.S. military counterparts. American officers mostly consider his personal bravado endearing. Yet they also recognize that relying on charismatic individuals for security carries its own risks. Qais’s authority derives largely from “a personal allegiance to the general,” says Lt. Col. Thomas Roth, an American officer who works closely with the police chief. The Scorpion Battalion might fall apart completely if the chief were to be assassinated, as enemies have tried to do several times in recent years. U.S. officers also worry about the health of the general, who is significantly overweight. “Give him anything, he’ll drink it,” says Roth, adding that Qais’s brand of whisky is Jack Daniel’s. “He’ll smoke anything.” If the general fell ill, Roth says, the local security effort could be set back significantly. “He’s one-man deep,” says the American officer. “There’s nobody else.” (Peraino, K. 2007, ‘Strong Like Saddam’, *Newsweek*, 15 October <http://www.newsweek.com/id/42453/output/print> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 45).

While most reports relate that the Hilla-SWAT unit has worked to contain the influence of both the Mahdi Army and the the Badr Organisation in Hilla, one source was located which reported on an incident in which it is claimed that local Hilla security forces remained indifferent to the activities of Badr Organisation fighters when they became involved in a clash with Sunni “resistance” forces. The report was published in February 2005 in the pro-Iraqi resistance periodical: *Iraqi Resistance Report*. It was also related that that: “There are also reports that the son of the chief of the puppet police in al-Hillah, also a member of the Badr Brigade was also killed”. The relevant extracts follow:

The correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam in al-Hillah reported that a source in a Sunni mosque in the al-Jabawiyin neighborhood – the largest Sunni area in the city – claimed that the fighting broke out after Badr Brigade gunmen climbed atop the mosque known as the Grand Mosque of al-Hillah and tried to put black Shi’i flags and posters on the building that read “We are Husaynis not Muhammadis,” in a reference to al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali, the patron saint of Shi’i Islam. Another sign proclaimed that divine inspiration ceased after the killing of al-Husayn, as a sign of his supposed protection from error – another statement of specific Shi’i doctrines guaranteed to irritate the Sunni population.

The imam and keeper of the mosque, however prevented the Badr Brigade gunmen from putting up their sectarian signs, so three of the gunmen beat and bloodied them. The correspondent noted that the Sunni population took no action and made no attempt to retaliate for the incident after the Board of Guidance and Jurisconsultancy called on them to stay home and not go out because the pro-American Shi’i collaborators are “trying to draw you into sectarian discord.”

The situation only got worse, the correspondent reported, however, when Shi’i chauvinist thugs attacked the husband of a Sunni woman who refused to take what is called “the food of al-Husayn.” That incident produced a reaction that was made stronger when large numbers of Resistance forces moved into the city after hearing the news. The Resistance forces attacked the headquarters of the Badr Brigades, totally destroying it and killing 14 Badr Brigade gunmen, including the military commander of the local Brigade. There are also reports that the son of the chief of the puppet police in al-Hillah, also a member of the Badr Brigade was also killed.

Combat between the two sides broke out after the Resistance attack on the Badr Brigade headquarters, the correspondent reported. He said that Resistance fighters had been deployed surreptitiously around the city to await possible further developments. The Badr Brigade, however, has not made any response.

The correspondent noted that the Resistance distributed leaflets Sunday evening warning the Badr gang against any other attacks on the Sunni community in the city, threatening to wipe them off the face of the earth if they did so.

As to the local puppet police, the correspondent reported that the US and Polish occupation troops and also the puppet police of al-Hillah witnessed the violence in which 14 Badr Brigade gunmen were killed and nine others wounded – with one Resistance fighter also wounded – but they made no move and did not intervene (‘Al-Hillah – Babil Province’ 2005, *Iraqi Resistance Report*, 21 February [http://www.albasrah.net/moqawama/english/0205/iraqiresistancereport\\_210205.htm](http://www.albasrah.net/moqawama/english/0205/iraqiresistancereport_210205.htm) – Accessed 22 December 2009 – Attachment 44).



## **General security in Hilla – October 2005 UNHCR assessment**

In October 2005 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published its report, *UN Country of Origin Information, Iraq*, the report provides the following information noting that Hilla has “seen some of the most devastating attacks since the fall of the former regime, including the 30 May 2005 multiple suicide attack in Hilla killing at least 31 people and wounding 108,605”, and “the mass casualty suicide attack in Hilla on 28 February 2005 that killed at least 122 people”. The relevant extracts follow:

Hilla, Kerbala and Najaf have seen some of the most devastating attacks since the fall of the former regime, including the 30 May 2005 multiple suicide attack in Hilla killing at least 31 people and wounding 108, the mass casualty suicide attack in Hilla on 28 February 2005 that killed at least 122 people, the 19 December 2004 car bomb attack near religious shrines in Najaf and Kerbala that killed at least 64 people and wounded more than 140 others, the 2 March 2004 coordinated bomb attacks on Shiites in Kerbala (and Baghdad) that killed some 200 people and wounding more than 500 and the 29 August 2003 car bomb attack outside a mosque in Najaf that killed at least 95 (including leading Shiite politician Mohammed Bakr Al- Hakim) and wounded hundreds.

...All vehicular travel in Iraq is extremely dangerous and there have been numerous attacks on civilian vehicles as well as military convoys. Attacks occur throughout the day, but travel at night is exceptionally dangerous. Travel in or through Ramadi and Fallujah, travel between Hilla and Baghdad and between the International Zone and Baghdad International Airport is particularly dangerous, however, no major route into Iraq is to be considered safe.

...A report published by Iraq Body Count in July 2005 shows that Baghdad accounted for almost half of the persons killed, with significant numbers in Fallujah, Nassariyah, Kerbala, Najaf, Mosul, Basrah, Kirkuk, Hilla, Tikrit, Baqouba and Samarra (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2005, *UN Country of Origin Information, Iraq*, October – Attachment 4).

## **The Baath movement and insurgency in Iraq**

Before moving to discuss reports which may indicate that Baathist elements have targeted Shias in the area of Hilla it is first necessary to note that, as detailed in the introduction to this Research Response, it is very difficult to provide information on the identity of the persons perpetrating much of the violence occurring in Iraq. This is because reports of attacks can often only speculate as to the identity of insurgents through reference to the nature of the targets attacked and the suspicions of local security forces and residents.

The problem is made all the more complex by the fact that the Iraqi insurgency is made up of a complex array of actors – each working in collaboration and/or in competition with others – whose identities and network structures are the subject of much debate. The following extracts, for example, are sourced from an April 2007 report which notes reports of splintering networks and of friction between “Baathist elements of the insurgency” and the Al Qaeda in Iraq.

With so many actors in the Iraqi insurgent theater, it is hard to keep track of the various permutations of militant Islamic groups and their alliances. It is going to become all the more difficult given recent splits and conflicts between and within indigenous Iraqi groups and al-Qaeda affiliates. The violence in Iraq has not abated, but the cohesiveness of the insurgency is certainly challenged. Iraqi insurgents are concerned about this given the recent fissure of a prominent indigenous group, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and the fighting between al-Qaeda and their former allies within the Sunni Arab tribes. All militant groups within Iraq

have been frantically calling for unity and insisting that recent splits are amicable, while al-Qaeda has been aggressively and violently demanding allegiance from all involved. Despite their best efforts, the Iraqi insurgency continues to splinter.

...The elements of the 1920 Revolution Brigades that are now Hamas-Iraq are not the only ones to have quarreled with al-Qaeda's Islamic State of Iraq. The Islamic Army and Baathist elements within the insurgency, along with tribes making up the al-Anbar Salvation Council, have also conflicted with al-Qaeda (Terrorism Focus, March 28, 2006). The Islamic State of Iraq has come out so forcefully against those who have not submitted allegiance to its leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi that it has created a backlash within indigenous elements of the Iraqi insurgency who resent al-Qaeda co-opting their indigenous struggle for global Islamic goals in which they do not necessarily believe.

...Baathist elements of the insurgency have also come out against al-Qaeda in Iraq. On March 18, al-Jazeera carried an interview by Dr. Abu Mohamed, spokesman for the Baath Party in Iraq. On al-Jazeera, Mohamed denied any relationship with al-Qaeda, saying, "their doctrine, vision and strategy differ from those of the Baath Party and remaining national resistance factions." The Baath Party has quarreled publicly with the Mujahideen Army and the Islamic Army in Iraq, who resent the Baath Party inflating their role within the insurgency. Both groups have issued statements on their websites and on jihadi forums diminishing the role of the Baath Party and their relationship to it, prompting a rebuttal by Baath leaders (al-Basrah.net, March 24) (Khalil, L. 2007, 'Divisions Within the Iraqi Insurgency', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol.5: no.7, 12 April – Attachment 11).

For an extensive overview of the make up of the various groups involved in the insurgency in Iraq, see February 2006 International Crisis Group (ICG) report, *In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency*, which is supplied as Attachment 12 (International Crisis Group 2006, *In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency*, Middle East Report no.50, 15 February – Attachment 12).

### **1. Is there any evidence that former Ba'athists target Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**

The following articles, presented in reverse chronological order, give a sample of the kind of insurgent attacks, and other insurgent or counter-insurgent activities, which have been reported as occurring in the area of Hilla in recent years. Very few of the reports make mention of Baathist insurgent activity specifically though, as is noted above, one February 2005 *Reuters* report relates that: "Hilla has become increasingly dangerous since Saddam's fall. Insurgents have fired on foreigners travelling through the area and former members of Saddam's Baath party operate there". Also, as is noted above, it may also be of interest that in March 2005 *BBC News* reported that: "Security officials believe that three-quarters of the attacks [in Iraq] are carried out by networks loyal to the former Baathist regime, though they do not claim responsibility in their own name". Even so, news sources reporting on specific attacks in the area of Hilla, as elsewhere in Iraq, are only rarely able to attribute an identity to the persons responsible for specific acts of violence with any certainty and are typically only able to relate the suspicions of local security forces and the local populace as to the identity of the persons or group responsible for the attacks in question. Examples follow below (Abbas. H. 2005, 'Iraq's worst suicide bomb rips through job queue', *Reuters*, 28 February – Attachment 14; Muir, J. 2005, 'Iraq insurgents seize initiative', *BBC News*, 4 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4317103.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4317103.stm) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 15).

### Examples of 2009 insurgency related reports from Hilla

- On 25 January 2009 it was reported that: “Unknown gunmen on Saturday opened fire on the house of a provincial candidate in downtown Hilla city, but no casualties were reported, according to a security source” (‘House of Provincial Candidate Attacked in Hilla’ 2009, *Iraq Updates*, 25 January [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/44096](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/44096) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 35).
- On 24 January 2009 it was reported that an “[u]nknown gunman” had “kill[ed] two anti-Al Qaeda fighters north of Hilla” (‘Two Iraqis killed, two wounded in attack in Hilla city’ 2009, *AK News*, 24 January <http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/18014> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 32).
- On 22 January 2009 it was reported that: “Police forces on Wednesday arrested 13 suspected gunmen in Hilla after the explosion that killed a civilian earlier in the province, a media source said” (‘13 Suspected Gunmen Arrested in Hilla’ 2009, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 22 January [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/43883](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/43883) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 34).
- On 17 January 2009 it was reported that: “‘Unidentified gunmen opened a volley of fire at the vehicle of Haytham al-Husseini, the candidate for the provincial council elections in Babel for the area Ajrash, Jebbla district, (50 km) northeast of Hilla, killing him and wounding four of his bodyguards,’ the source told *Aswat al-Iraq* news agency” (‘Candidate on Maliki’s Hilla List Assassinated’ 2009, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 17 January [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/43580](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/43580) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 36).
- On 6 January 2009 it was reported that: “Unknown gunmen [had] kidnapped one civilian near his house in Hilla City, [according to] a source from Babel province’s police” (‘Civilian Kidnapped in Hilla’ 2009, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 January [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/42997](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/42997) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 38).

### Examples of 2008 insurgency related reports from Hilla

- On 21 October 2008 *BBC News* reported that ‘ahead of a transfer of security in the province from US to Iraqi troops’ there had been “[c]lashes between militants and Sunni tribesmen in Babil province in central Iraq” along the border between Babil and Anbar leaving “at least 15 people dead”. According to *BBC News* “militants fought members of two Sunni tribes who had formed an anti-al-Qaeda militia last year”; and that: “the anti-al-Qaeda militia formed by the al-Osan and al-Ojan tribes had helped bring some stability” (‘Iraq tribal clashes leave 15 dead’ 2008, *BBC News*, 21 October [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7682511.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7682511.stm) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 41).
- On 18 October 2008 it was reported that “unidentified gunmen driving a vehicle opened fire on the leader of Jarf al-Sakhr Sahwa council, Abdelhadi Ali Makki, while he was inside his car on a street near Jarf al-Sakhr, killing him on the spot” (‘Sahwa council leader killed near Hilla’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 18

October [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/38218](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/38218) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 50).

- On 9 October 2008 it was reported that: “Six persons, including three women, were wounded on Wednesday when an improvised explosive device went off on a main road northwest of Hilla city” (‘6 wounded in blast near of Hilla’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 9 October [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/37629](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/37629) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 52).
- 6 September 2008 it was reported that: “A civilian man was shot when unknown gunmen opened random fire and one unidentified body was found in two separate incidents north of Hilla city”. The report relates that security has been particularly bad in Babil’s “rural Sunni Arab areas...along the Euphrates south of Baghdad, which US forces dubbed the ‘triangle of death’ in years after the 2003 invasion” (‘Civilian killed, unidentified body found north of Hilla’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 September [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/36109](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/36109) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 46).
- On 20 February 2008 it was reported that two anti Al Qaeda fighters had come under attack: an “Awakening Council fighter was killed and another one was injured...when an improvised explosive device struck their vehicle north of the city of Hilla” (‘2 anti-Qaeda fighters killed, injured in Hilla’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 19 March [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/28762](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/28762) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 51).
- On 24 February 2008 it was reported that: “A suicide blast north of Hilla [had] killed an unidentified number of civilian casualties on Sunday, a Babel police source said” (‘Suicide bombing north of Hilla leaves casualties’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 24 February [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/27790](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/27790) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 40).

### **Examples of 2007 insurgency related reports from Hilla**

- On 6 October 2007 it was reported that: “A roadside bomb went off near al-Latifayah bridge, 60 km north of Hilla, wounding three civilians who were onboard a car” (‘Blast leaves three civilians wounded near Hilla’ 2007, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 October [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/22577](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/22577) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 53).
- On 13 September 2007 it was reported that: “A source from Babel police said on Wednesday that unknown gunmen shot dead a policeman, while four civilians were wounded in a mortar attack in Hilla city” (‘Policeman killed, four civilians wounded in Hilla attacks’ 2007, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 13 September [http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/21711](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/21711) – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 39).
- On 21 August 2009 it was reported that: “Two civilians were wounded on Monday during clashes between armed groups north of Hilla city, while a body of another civilian was found in the Euphrates River”. No details were provided as to the identities of the gunmen or of whether the civilians were killed deliberately or by

stray gunfire ('Two civilians wounded, body found near Hilla' 2007, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 21 August [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/20867](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/20867) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 54).

- In July 2007 *Agence France-Presse* reported that “Hilla, about 95km south of Baghdad, has been the site of some of the deadliest bombings in the country, including a double suicide attack on 6 March that killed 120 people”. The article appeared in the context of reporting on incident in which “26 people [had] been killed and 69 others wounded by a suicide lorry bombing at a market packed with shoppers in the centre of Iraq’s southern city of Hilla”. The report related that one “of the suspects was a foreign fighter” but provided no further details as to the identity of the attacker ('Dozens killed in Iraq Hilla blast' 2007, *Al Jazeera*, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 24 July <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2007/07/2008525122822557681.html> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 48).
- On 6 March 2007 *BBC News* reported that: “At least 90 Shia pilgrims have been killed and more than 150 wounded in a double suicide bombing in the central Iraqi town of Hilla” ('Scores of Iraqi pilgrims killed' 2007, *BBC News*, 6 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6423633.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6423633.stm) – Accessed 19 February 2008 – Attachment 17).

#### **Examples of 2006 insurgency related reports from Hilla**

- On 19 November 2006 *Agence France-Presse* reported that: “a suicide car bomber has blown himself up among a crowd of construction labourers in Iraq, killing at least 22 and wounding 44 in Hilla”. The report also related of Hilla that: “Hilla, 120 kilometres south of Baghdad, is a relatively peaceful area in the violent central and western regions of Iraq” ('Suicide bomber kills 22 in Iraq' 2006, *ABC News*, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 19 November <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2006/11/19/1792198.htm> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 49).
- On June 2006 *Agence France Presse* reported that: “At least seven people were killed and 56 others wounded Monday by a roadside bomb explosion in the mainly Shiite city of Hilla, south of Baghdad”. The report also observed that the “[c]apital of the confessionally mixed province of Babil, Hilla has been a repeated target of attack by Sunni Arab insurgents” referencing the February 2005 attack as a bombing “claimed by Al-Qaeda in Iraq’s slain leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi” ('At least seven killed in explosion in Iraq’s Hilla' 2006, *Agence France Presse*, 27 June –Attachment 55).

#### **Examples of 2005 insurgency related reports from Hilla**

- An October 2005 *Reuters* article reports on the mood in Hilla following an attack in which “a suicide car bomber demolished a mosque...killing 25 people”. The report refers to “Hilla, capital of Babil” as “one of Iraq’s sectarian fault lines, with a majority Shi’ite population living beside Sunni Arabs, some of whom were encouraged to settle there under Saddam Hussein”. The report also relates that: “Hilla, where Sunnis comprise up to 10 percent of the population, has seen some of the bloodiest attacks on Shi’ites by Sunni Islamist insurgents”; and that Hilla’s mayor,



Imad Lefta, had said that local residents were eager to vote in the then upcoming elections in spite of the fact that “the Shi’ite population of Hilla was intensely aware of the fact that they had been targeted before” (‘Bomb-scarred people of Hilla wary before Iraq vote’ 2005, Red Orbit website, source: *Reuters*, 14 October [http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred\\_people\\_of\\_hilla\\_wary\\_before\\_iraq\\_vote/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/272134/bombscarred_people_of_hilla_wary_before_iraq_vote/) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 56).

- In March 2005 a *BBC News* article reported the view that “Security officials believe that three-quarters of the attacks [in Iraq] are carried out by networks loyal to the former Baathist regime, though they do not claim responsibility in their own name”. The report also related that: “most of the suicide bomb attacks – including the most deadly ever, at Hilla on 28 February – are the work of the radical Islamic strand of the insurgency, often carried out by non-Iraqi Arab militants” (Muir, J. 2005, ‘Iraq insurgents seize initiative’, *BBC News*, 4 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4317103.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4317103.stm) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 15).
- It should be noted, however, that an article appearing in *APS Diplomat Redrawing the Islamic Map* (published by the *Arab Press Services*) reports that attribution of the February 2005 bombing in Hilla to Al Qaeda in Iraq may be the result of a misunderstanding in much of the available reportage. According to this article such reports confused the claim of the Zarqawi network for responsibility for a separate event (“a separate attack on the same day aimed at American soldiers in southern Baghdad”) with responsibility for the Hilla attack. The relevant extract follows:

Zarqawi’s group is also making efforts to cast itself as a defender of Muslim lives. After a March 9 attack on a hotel in central Baghdad, the group quickly released an Internet statement taking responsibility. It noted: “As for the time, the deadly attack should always be before the start of the working day so that it won’t harm Muslims who are passing by”. In the previous week, the Zarqawi group quickly denied news reports that it was responsible for a suicide car bomb in the Shiite town of Hilla, south of Baghdad, which killed 136 people. The attack was aimed at police and army recruits gathering outside a clinic, but many civilians, including women and children, were also killed. Residents of Hilla staged large and angry demonstrations against the violence which was featured on Arabic TV and Websites. The Zarqawi group’s denial noted, correctly, that it had taken responsibility for a separate attack on the same day aimed at American soldiers in southern Baghdad, not for the Hilla attack (‘IRAQ – Resurgence In The Shiite World – Part 8 – The Internal Forces’ 2005, Fin Articles website, *APS Diplomat Redrawing the Islamic Map*, 14 March [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb6511/is\\_3\\_49/ai\\_n29165092?tag=untagged](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6511/is_3_49/ai_n29165092?tag=untagged) – Accessed 17 February 2009 – Attachment 13).

- On 28 February 2005 *Reuters* reported that “Hilla has become increasingly dangerous since Saddam’s fall. Insurgents have fired on foreigners travelling through the area and former members of Saddam’s Baath party operate there” (Abbas. H. 2005, ‘Iraq’s worst suicide bomb rips through job queue’, *Reuters*, 28 February – Attachment 14).
- UNHCR’s October 2005 report, *UN Country of Origin Information, Iraq*, references the following attacks on the Hilla populace:

...**Annex I: Attacks aiming at sparking religious unrest**

...28 March 2005: A suicide car bomber blew up his vehicle near a crowd of Shiite Muslim pilgrims on the road between Hilla and Kerbala, which killed at least seven people and wounding nine.

...30 May 2005: Two separate suicide bomb attacks on Iraqi policemen in Hilla killed 27 and wounded more than 100. Al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attacks.

...28 May 2005: Two suicide car bombs exploded outside a joint US-Iraqi military base near the Northern town of Sinjar, killing six people and wounding at least 58. Outside Hilla, unknown gunmen stopped a car carrying five Iraqi soldiers and opened fire, killing four of them and seriously wounding one.

...28 February 2005: An attack on police recruits in Hilla killed more than 120 and wounded many more.

### **Annex III: Major attacks on civilians**

...6 July 2005: Thirteen people were killed and 30 wounded in a double car bomb attack in the town of Jbeila near Hilla. Police said the first bomb was followed minutes later by a second, hitting many civilians gathered nearby.

...30 May 2005: Two separate suicide bomb attacks on Iraqi policemen in Hilla killed at least 30 and wounded up to 120. Al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attacks.

...28 February 2005: A suicide car bomb attack on a crowd of people who were applying for work in the security services in Hilla killed at least 122 and wounded 170.

...5 January 2005: A suicide car bomb attack on a police academy in Hilla killed at least 15 people (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2005, *UN Country of Origin Information, Iraq*, October – Attachment 4).

### **Attacks on former Baath party members and associates in the area of Hilla**

As is noted in the introduction to this response, there have been reports of the arrest and also the killing of former Baath party members and associates in the area of Hilla since the overthrow of the Baath regime. Reports relate that the local Hilla populace harbours considerable resentment towards Baathists as a consequence of human rights abuses allegedly committed in the area under the rule of the former Baath regime (including an incident in which “3,000 Shia Muslims” were reportedly rounded up by Baath officials and “executed and buried in two mass graves”) (for the lingering antipathy between Hilla’s Shia population and Baathists, see: McCarthy, R. 2003, “Either the people who did this must be brought to court or we should ask for the authority to kill them”’, *The Guardian*, 20 June <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/jun/20/iraq.rorymccarthy1> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 57; and: Colvin, M. 2008, ‘Saddam’s victims left to suffer as henchmen prosper’, *Times Online*, 3 February [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article3295437.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article3295437.ece) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 58; for ongoing reports of the killing of former Baath party identities in Hillah, see: ‘Unknown gunmen assassinate senior Baath commander in Babel’ 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 May [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/30712](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/30712) – Accessed 20 February 2009 –

Attachment 59; Salaheddin, S. 2007, 'Car Bombings Kill 4 Iraqis in Baghdad', Red Orbit website, source: *Associated Press*, 6 January  
[http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/790741/car\\_bombings\\_kill\\_4\\_iraqis\\_in\\_baghdad/index.html](http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/790741/car_bombings_kill_4_iraqis_in_baghdad/index.html) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 60; and: 'Security developments in Iraq, Jan 3' 2007, *Reuters*, 3 January  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSL0312827420070103> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 61).

## **2. Is there any evidence that the Madhi Army targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**

As is noted in the introduction to this Research Response there is extensive reportage available on the fractious relationship between Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the local Hilla security force known as Hilla-SWAT. Nonetheless, in the short time in which this research was undertaken no reports could be located to indicate that the Mahdi Army has been responsible for targeting pro-US Shia residents of Hilla more generally, though the Mahdi Army has reportedly targeted pro-US Shiites elsewhere in Iraq. The following source information may, nevertheless, be of interest.

### **Examples of reports relating to Sadrist activity in Hilla**

- On 6 September 2008 it was reported that: "Babil's cities [had] seen uprisings by followers of anti-American Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr as recently as April this year. But they have been far quieter in recent months as Sadr's followers have held to a ceasefire" ('Civilian killed, unidentified body found north of Hilla' 2008, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 September  
[http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/36109](http://admin.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/36109) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 46).
- In March 2008 it was reported that: "Al-Sadr has responded with a call for nationwide acts of civil disobedience, and senior leaders within his group have issued veiled threats that continued targeting of Sadrists will lead to a 'civil revolt'; and that: "The violence in Al-Basrah has also spread northward to the towns of Al-Kut and Al-Hillah, well as to the Baghdad slum of Al-Sadr City" (Senanayake, S. 2008, 'Al-Basrah Clashes Could Prove Ominous, 2008 *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 28 March <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1347771.html> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 62).
- In March 2007: "The Hillah SWAT team captured "the suspected leader of a rogue Jaysh Al-Mahdi militia cell" who "allegedly controls an improvised explosive device cell responsible for attacks against Iraqi civilians and Coalition Forces"" (Roggio, B. 2007, 'Daily Iraq Report for March 3, 2007', *Weekly Standard*, 3 March  
[http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/03/daily\\_iraq\\_report\\_for\\_march\\_3.asp](http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/03/daily_iraq_report_for_march_3.asp) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 63).
- In July 2006 it was reported that a "joint swoop near the town of al-Hillah early today, when US and Iraqi forces picked up Adnan al-Unaybi, the commander of the al-Mehdi army south of Baghdad" (Booth, J. 2006, 'Arrest of Shia militia leaders marks shift of focus in Iraq', *Times Online*, 7 July

**3. Is there any evidence that the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**

**4. Is there any evidence that the Badr Brigade targets Shias and/or those they see as collaborating with the USA and with the current Iraqi authorities in and around Hilla?**

As is noted in the introduction to this Research Response a number of reports have claimed that Hilla's local security force, Hillah-SWAT, have kept Hilla free of the influence of the ISCI's own militia, the Badr Organisation in recent years. Other reports, however, note the ongoing presence of Badr forces in Hilla and one source claims to report on an incident in which local Hilla security remained indifferent to the activities of the Badr Organisation in an incident in which Badr militants clashed with Sunni fighters in a Sunni Hilla suburb. In the short time in which this research was undertaken no reports could be located to indicate that the Badr Organisation has been responsible for targeting pro-US Shia residents of Hilla. The following source information may, nevertheless, be of interest.

#### **Examples of reports relating to ISCI activity in Hilla**

- In October 2008 it was reported that Badr militants had intimidated Babil police into releasing an ISCI affiliated Babil councillor who had been arrested on corruption charges.

A deadly outbreak of cholera in Iraq is being blamed on a scandal involving corrupt officials who failed to sterilise the local drinking water because they were bribed to buy chlorine from Iran that was long past its expiration date.

The centre of the epidemic is in Babil province, south of Baghdad, in the marshy lands east of the Euphrates river, not far from the ruins of ancient Babylon. In Baghdad, where half the six million population has no access to clean drinking water, people are now drinking only bottled or boiled water.

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, has appointed a commission of inquiry to find out why ineffective chlorine was being used. He is also refusing to release three officials under arrest despite demands from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) to which they are linked. In the town of al-Madhatiya, in southern Babil, a councillor involved in buying the chlorine was reportedly released after militiamen connected to ISCI intimidated police into freeing him.

The scandal over the contract is becoming a test case of the Maliki government's willingness to tackle the pervasive corruption in Iraq where officials see their jobs primarily as a way of enriching themselves through bribes. It is also a test of his ability to exercise central control over ISCI and parties which have been hitherto dominant outside Baghdad.

...The power base of ISCI, the most powerful Shia religious party, is the Shia provinces of southern Iraq between Baghdad and Basra. Political parties are expected to protect their members from arrest. This explains what happened next. The officials arrested in Babil belonged to the Badr Organisation, the militia wing of ISCI. Leaders

of the party demanded their release but Mr Maliki refused. Badr militants then turned up at a police station in al-Madhatiya and forced the police to release a councillor apparently involved in purchasing the chlorine.

But the grand Shia coalition which won more than half the seats in the Iraqi parliament in the last election in December 2005 has broken up. Mr Maliki is trying to build up his own Dawa party, using the resources of the state.

He has deepening differences with ISCI which won most of the southern Iraqi provinces. They accuse him of trying to create a power base in what was previously their territory by paying the tribes who belong to government-sponsored “support councils” in southern Iraq. His aim is to get his own candidates elected in the provincial and parliamentary elections next year. “These will be crucial in deciding who will hold power in Iraq in future,” said one senior Iraqi official (Cockburn, P. 2008, ‘Corruption blamed as cholera rips through Iraq’, *The Independent*, 10 October <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/corruption-blamed-as-cholera-rips-through-iraq-956701.html> – Accessed 23 February 2009 – Attachment 73).

- A September 2008 refers to a police action undertaken by Hilla-SWAT against the Badr Organisation in Hilla:

29 September: More Tension between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Badr Brigades, This Time in Hilla

Contrary to the standard image of the Iraqi security forces as lightly camouflaged members of the Badr brigades, tension between those forces and Badr actually seems to be on the increase. In a recent episode in Hilla, Iraqi security forces carried out a surprise search of the headquarters of the Badr brigades, and according to some reports confiscated both rockets and explosives. The ISCI governor of Babel claimed that only Kalashnikovs were taken and that these were for the “personal use” of the Badr members.

Assuming that the reports are genuine and that this was not a staged event of some kind, the episode is interesting because it seems to add to a more general trend. Earlier this year in Maysan, posters of Hakim were torn down during operations carried out by the security forces. Some months ago, ISCI protested strongly against the interior ministry’s appointment of a new police chief in Nasiriyya. Some reports claim that the notorious “Scorpions” of the Iraqi security forces took part in the recent Hilla operation, even in cooperation with US forces. Earlier, the late police chief in Babel, Qays al-Mamuri, had fought Badr with determination.

Moreover, the incident throws into question the true degree of demilitarisation as regards the Badr forces and other pro-ISCI elements. It is worth recalling that as late as 2007, the leader of “Hizbollah in Iraq”, an integral part of ISCI, made a public request to Maliki to have his “30,000 militiamen” integrated into the Iraqi security forces and complained that no action had been taken.

In other news, Wifaq and al-Hiwar al-Watani have decided to contest the local elections on a joint ticket, with Hiwar’s leadership specifically rejecting an alliance with (Sunni-dominated) Tawafuq on the grounds that they found it “too sectarian”. That’s a step in the right direction, but where are Fadila, Jaafari’s Islah, the UIA independents and the tribal leaders? (‘More Tension between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Badr Brigades, This Time in Hilla’ 2008, *Historiae.org* website, 29



September <http://historiae.org/notebook.asp> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 66).

- An April 2008 *Time Magazine* report refers to “Brigadier General Abdul Amir’s Badr-dominated forces in Hilla [who] were ‘chomping at the bit to go after [the Mahdi Army]’ during the week of heavy fighting” in March of that year. The relevant extracts follow:

But for many American troops, the picture of Iraqi troop performance is not quite as rosy. In Hilla, the largest town in the central Iraqi province of Babil, soldiers and residents say the violence was fiercest on March 25. And at least one American soldier said he was angry that the role of Iraqi troops was exaggerated after the battle. “A gunfight broke out and we were fighting [the Mahdi Army] for about four hours,” the soldier told TIME. “The army article made it sound like we were just there supporting the Iraqi Army, but we did all the work. We just had four humvees out there with some Iraqi [troops].”

...Lack of professionalism is only one of the problems plaguing Iraq’s floundering forces. More troublesome is their heavily sectarian composition. Throughout southern Iraq, members of the police and army are pulled largely from the Badr Brigade – a militia tied to a Shi’ite political party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, which is the chief rival of Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army. A number of MPs in Baghdad even suspect that Maliki’s Basra assault was a poorly disguised government campaign to wipe out Sadr’s base of popularity before local elections in October. That’s why it was no surprise, said Lieutenant Ryan Lawson, who is based in Hilla, that Brigadier General Abdul Amir’s Badr-dominated forces in Hilla were “chomping at the bit to go after [the Mahdi Army]” during the week of heavy fighting (Hauslohner, A. 2008, ‘Iraqi Troops: Asleep on the Job?’, *Time Magazine*, 21 April <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1732617,00.html> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 67).

- In October 2007 Juan Cole noted the claims of the Sadr movement that the Badr Brigade was had assassinated “4 prominent Sadrists leaders...in Hilla Province”. The extract follows

The Sadr movement on Friday accused the Badr Organization of assassinating Sadr leaders. Sadrists MP Ahmad al-Masoudi accused the Badr Organization of having organized militias to assassinate prominent Sadrists leaders. He said that 4 prominent Sadrists leaders have been assassinated in Hilla Province in recent weeks. Three suspects are in custody, and Masoudi maintained that documents tied them to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (Cole, J. 2007, ‘Sadrists Accuse Badr of Assassinations’, Informed Comment website, 6 October <http://www.juancole.com/2007/10/sadrists-accuse-badr-of-assassinations.html> – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 65).

- In September 2007 it was reported of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (or SIIC) that “several SIIC offices had been burnt down in Hilla” (‘Fearing Shia chaos in Iraq’ 2007, *Iraq Updates*, source: *Voices of Iraq*, 6 September [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/21484](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/21484) – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 68).

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## List of Attachments

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