

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION BULLETIN

IRAQ

IRAQ'S GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY AND THE DEATH OF ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

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1. Introduction

- 1.01 This Country of Origin Bulletin (COI Bulletin) has been produced by Research Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, to identify information about the Iraq Government of National Unity and the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- 1.02 This COI Bulletin has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum / human rights determination process.
- 1.03 The COI Bulletin is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.
- 1.04 This COI Bulletin is intended to cover major developments that have taken place in Iraq since publication of the Iraq COI Report in April 2006 and must be read in conjunction with that.
- 1.05 This COI Bulletin and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in the COI Bulletin are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the COI Bulletin is also included.
- 1.06 As noted above, the COI Bulletin is a collation of material produced by a number of reliable information sources. In compiling the COI Bulletin, no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties etc. Bulletins do not aim to bring consistency of spelling, but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the original source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text.
- 1.07 In producing this COI Bulletin, the Home Office has sought to provide an accurate, balanced summary of the available source material. Any comments regarding this COI Bulletin or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

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2. Iraq government of national unity

- 2.01 The first permanent government, since the overthrow of the Saddam regime in 2003, was sworn in on 20 May 2006. (Associated Press, 20 May 2006) [1a] (Associated Press, 20 May 2006) [1b] (Knight Ridder, 20 May 2006) [2a] (REF/RL, 21 May 2006) [3a] (RFE/RL, 20 May 2006) [3b] (RFE/RL, 20 May 2006) [3c] The Iraqi government of national unity was formed following the general election in December 2005 and subsequent negotiations between religious and ethnic groups in Iraq. (Associated Press, 20 May 2006) [1a] (RFE/RL, 20 May 2006) [3b]
- 2.02 Parliament met on 22 April 2006 to elect a president, two vice-presidents, a parliamentary speaker and two deputies. (IRIN, 23 April 2006) [5a] The Duluth News Tribune reported, on 22 April 2006, that "The top political parties agreed that Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, should remain president. Adil Abdel Mahdi, a Shiite, was nominated to remain one of the country's two vice presidents. The other vice president chosen was Sunni leader Tariq al-Hashimi." [6a]
- 2.03 IRIN news stated, on 23 April 2006, that "Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, a Sunni leader from the Iraqi Accord Front, the mainly Sunni Arab Islamist coalition and the major Sunni bloc in parliament, was named parliamentary speaker." [5a] The article added that "Shi'ite politician Adel Abdul Mehdi and Sunni politician Tariq al-Hashimi were also nominated for the posts of deputy presidents. Shi'ite religious leader Khalid al-Attayah and Kurdish politician Aref Tayfour, meanwhile, were named deputy speakers." [5a]
- 2.03 Nouri Kamel al-Maliki (also known as Jawad al-Maliki) was named prime minister-designate by President Jalal Talabani. (IRIN, 23 April 2006) [5a]
- 2.04 The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) stated in a report, 22 April 2006:
"The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), a Shiite political bloc that won the most votes in December, had been divided for months over the post of prime minister. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the embattled incumbent, originally won the nomination by a narrow vote in February, but after intense pressure from the United States, from Kurdish and Sunni Arab leaders, and from within the UIA, Jaafari decided on April 20 [2006] to abandon his bid for the premiership. [4a]
- 2.05 Al-Maliki, a Shi'a Muslim, is the deputy leader of the Islamic Daawa Party. In 1980, the Saddam regime sentenced al-Maliki to death for his activism in the Islamic Daawa party and he consequently fled the country. (*The Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 2006) [7a] (BBC, 22 April 2006) [8a] *The Daily Telegraph* reported that "Although he first went into exile in Iran, he soon moved to Syria after clashing with the regime in Teheran over his refusal to support them in the Iran-Iraq war." [7a]
- 2.06 Following his return to Iraq after the overthrow of the Saddam regime in April 2003, al-Maliki served on a de-Baathification committee. (CFR, 22 April 2006) [4a] (BBC, 22 April 2006) [8a] (Aljazeera, 22 April 2006) [9a] The CFR report, dated 22 April 2006, added that "He was also a hard-line negotiator during the constitution-drafting process, resisting U.S. attempts to get more Sunni Arabs involved." [4a] Al-Maliki was approved and inaugurated Prime Minister designate on 20 May 2006. [1b]

- 2.07 Al-Maliki named and the members of the National Assembly approved the 37-member cabinet on 20 May 2006. (RFE/RL, 20 May 2006) [3c] The new cabinet was composed of representatives from all groups in society including Shi'a, Sunnis and Kurds. (RFE/RL, 20 May 2006) [3c] (BBC, 22 May 2006) [98b] On 8 June 2006, the Iraqi parliament approved the three key security posts, nearly three weeks after the other posts in the cabinet were filled. During that time, the posts had been temporarily filled. (BBC, 8 June 2006) [8c] (*The Times*, 8 June 2006) [10a]
- 2.08 *The Times* stated that "The three posts are critical if Iraq is to combat the daily bloodshed: the defence minister will run the army, the interior minister will lead the national police and the national security minister will advise the prime minister on security issues." [10a] The report continued:
- "The new interior minister, Jawad al-Bolani, is also Shia but, as an independent member of the dominant Shia United Iraqi Alliance, is considered neutral. Previously unknown in political circles, he said he had worked as an engineer in the Iraqi air force until 1999.
- "The new defence minister, Iraqi Army General Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim al-Mifarji, is a Sunni who is not affiliated with any party. He said that he was forced out of the military and Saddam's Ba'ath party in 1991 after criticising the invasion of Kuwait and given a seven-year prison term.
- "The new national security minister, Sherwan al-Waili is also a Shia, but is considered neutral." [10a]
- 2.09 An article in Knight Ridder, dated 20 May 2006, reported that "Al-Maliki and his cabinet will serve for four years under Iraq's current constitution." [2a] ([See also Annex A for the Members of the cabinet](#))

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3. Death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

- 3.01 On 7 June 2006, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, head of Tandhim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers), was killed during an air raid while attending a meeting. [10b] Two US Air Force F16 jets dropped 500lb bombs on a farmhouse near Baqubah, north of Baghdad. [3d] [8d] [8e] [11a] It was reported that six others were killed of which three were men and three were women. (BBC, 9 June 2006) [8e]
- 3.02 *The Times* report, on 8 June 2006, that "For months a rift had been growing between al-Zarqawi's foreign fighters and Iraqi insurgents. The dissidents apparently believed that the tactics of the Jordanian, who kidnapped, beheaded and bombed at will, were too extreme, and wanted to join the political process." [10b]
- 3.03 *The Guardian* stated on, 9 June 2006, that:
- "The hunt for the Jordanian-born insurgency leader began more than three years ago, almost immediately after the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, but was marked by a series of near misses. At one point late last year Zarqawi's laptop was found, but he slipped though the net, and there were also reports that he had been captured, and freed again, by US troops who failed to recognise him." [11a]
- 3.04 The safehouse itself was watched by the joint US-Iraqi military task force for over six weeks before Zarqawi was observed entering the building. (BBC, 8 June 2006) [8e] The CFR report, dated 8 June 2006, stated that "The attack was the product of a prolonged intelligence effort to track down the terrorist leader, and was reportedly helped along by a tip from Jordan's intelligence service that Zarqawi planned to hold a meeting in nearby Baquba." [4b] Following the air raid the Iraqi police were first on the scene, closely followed by coalition forces. (BBC, 8 June 2006) [8d]
- 3.05 *The Times* reported, on 8 June 2006, that "The US military claimed success well beyond the death of al-Zarqawi. It said that it had mounted 17 raids on other suspected al-Qaeda hideouts in and around Baghdad, producing a 'treasure trove' of information." [10b]
- 3.06 Coalition forces confirmed that Zarqawi's body was identified by fingerprints, facial recognition, and known scars. (RFE/RL, 8 June 2006) [3d] (BBC, 8 June 2006) [8d]
- 3.07 *The Independent* reported, on 8 June 2006, that "It was a major victory in the US-led war in Iraq and the broader war on terror." [12a] AFP also noted, on 9 June 2006, that "... he [President Bush] warned that violence that has claimed the lives of nearly 2,500 US troops and left many more wounded will "carry on without him (Zarqawi)." [14a]
- 3.08 Following the death of al-Zarqawi and subsequent bombings, police imposed a curfew in Baghdad and the Diyala province. (BBC, 9 June 2006) [8f] (CNN, 9 June 2006) [13a] AFP added, on 9 June 2006, that "Vehicles were banned from the streets of Baghdad and nearby Baquba, close to where Zarqawi was killed,

from 11:00 am (0700 GMT) until 5:00 pm (1300 GMT), coinciding with Friday prayers." [14a]

- 3.09 On 12 June 2006, it was announced that Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir would succeed al-Zarqawi as leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. (Reuters, 13 June 2006) [15a] The organisation also vowed to carry on his holy war against US-led forces. (*The Times*, 13 June 2006) [10c] The report stated that "President Bush said that al-Muhajir would have a bounty on his head, like his predecessor. There was a \$25 million (£13.5 million) bounty on al-Zarqawi's head." [10c]

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Annex A: Members of the cabinet

Nouri Kamel al-Maliki (also known as Jawad al-Maliki) (Shi'a) Prime Minister [8b]

Barham Salih (Kurd) Deputy Prime Minister [8b]

Salam Zaubai (Sunni) Deputy Prime Minister [8b]

Jawad al-Bolani (Shi'a) Interior Minister [10a]

Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim al-Mifarji (Sunni) Defence Minister [10a]

Sherwan al-Waili (Shi'a) National Security Minister [10a]

Hussain al-Shahristani (Shi'a) Oil Minister [8b]

Hoshiyar Zebari (Kurd) Foreign Minister [8b]

Hashim al-Shebli (Sunni) Justice Minister [8b]

Ali al-Shemari (Shi'a) Health Minister [8b]

Khudayer al-Khuzai (Shi'a) Education Minister [8b]

Bayan Jabr (Shi'a) Finance Minister [8b]

Abed Falah al-Sudani (Shi'a) Trade Minister [8b]

Karim Waheed (Shi'a) Electricity Minister [8b]

Fawzi I-Hariri (Kurd) Industry Minister [8b]

Latif Rashid (Kurd) Water Resources Minister [8b]

Bayan Dazee (Kurd) Housing and Construction Minister [8b]

Yarrub Nazim (Shi'a) Agriculture Minister [8b]

Abed Theyab (Sunni) Higher Education Minister [8b]

Karim Madhi (Shi'a) Transport Minister [8b]

Abdul-Samad Rahman (Shi'a) Migration Minister [8b]

Adel al-Assadi (Shi'a) Minister of State for Civil Society Affairs [8b]

Safa al-Safi (Shi'a) Minister of State for House of Representatives' Affairs [8b]

Jassim Mohammed Jaafar (Shi'a) Youth and Sports Minister [8b]

Liwa Semeism (Shi'a) Minister of State for Tourism and Archaeology Affairs [8b]

Ali Bahan (Sunni) Planning and Development Cooperation Minister [8b]

Mohammed Twafiq (Shi'a) Communications Minister [8b]

Mahmoud Mohammed al-Radhi (Shi'a) Labour and Social Affairs Minister [8b]

Riyad Gharib (Shi'a) Municipalities and Public Works Minister [8b]

Narmin Othman (Kurd) Environment Minister [8b]

Assad Kamal Mohammed (Kurd) Culture Minister [8b]

Fatin Abdel-Rahman (Sunni) Minister of State for Women's Affairs [8b]

Saad Tahir Abid (Sunni) Minister of State for Provincial Affairs [8b]

Raed Fahmi (Sunni) Science and Technology Minister [8b]

Wijdan Mikaeil (Christian) Human Right Minister [8b]

Rafaa al-Esawi (Sunni) Minister of State for Foreign Affairs [8b]

Akram al-Hakim (Shi'a) Minister of National Dialogue [8b]

Mohammed Abbas Auraibi (Shi'a) Minister of State [8b]

Ali Mohammed Ahmed (Kurd) Minister of State [8b]

Hassan Rhadi Khazim (Shi'a) Minister of State [8b]

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Annex B: List of source material

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 - b Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, 8 June 2006
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- 8 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)**
- a Maliki endorsed as new Iraqi PM, 22 April 2006
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 - d Zarqawi killed in Iraq air raid, 8 June 2006
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 - e How Zarqawi was found and killed, 9 June 2006
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 - f Baghdad curfew after Zarqawi raid, 9 June 2006
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