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## Iraq -U.S. (2003 - )

On March 20th 2003, US and British forces invaded Iraq, entering Baghdad in April and capturing Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in December. In May, US President George W. Bush claimed an end to the major war effort despite an increasingly fierce urban insurgency. Suicide and roadside bombings became frequent and intense fighting took place during a November coalition siege of the rebel stronghold of Fallujah. A study by American researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, published in *The Lancet* in 2004, estimated that 100,000 civilian war-related deaths occurred in the 18 months that followed the invasion. An October 2006 study by these researchers estimated the total civilian death toll at 650,000. The war has also claimed the lives of thousands of combatants, including more than 3,000 US troops.

Following the Gulf War (see Iraq-Kuwait war profile), a 1995 UN resolution ("oil-for-food") allowed the partial resumption of Iraq's oil exports so as to allow food and medicine to be purchased for the civilian population. Despite this, UN sanctions were blamed for the deaths of as many as half a million Iraqis. The sanctions were accompanied by the establishment of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), tasked with dismantling existing Iraqi weapons systems and weapons research facilities.

In November 1997 Iraq expelled the American members of UNSCOM on accusations of spying. This sparked an international crisis which resulted in 'Operation Desert Fox,' a four-night operation in December 1998 in which US and UK warplanes attempted to destroy Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons installations.

In November 2002 the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, insisting that Iraq must give complete freedom to weapons inspectors and comply with other UN resolutions on disarmament. When Iraq published a dossier of its weapons programs, Hans Blix, leader of the UN inspection team, said that the dossier revealed little that was new, and that inspectors had not found anything new on the ground.

In February 2003 US Secretary of State Colin Powell made the case for war to the UN, presenting intelligence in support of the claims that Iraq was not in compliance with its UN obligations and was also harboring terrorist groups. The latter claim was used to situate Iraq within the context of the global 'war on terror' in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon. France, Germany, China and Russia argued that UN inspection teams should be allowed 'as long as it takes' to finish their work, rather than face a deadline fixed by the USA and UK.

Eighteen months after the US-led invasion and the fall of Saddam, weapons inspectors concluded that the former Iraqi leader had no weapons of mass destruction stockpiles. A US congressional inquiry found there were no links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. In January 2005 Iraq held elections for a transitional national assembly in which Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani was sworn in as the interim president, a largely ceremonial position. Ibrahim Jaafari, from the Shia, Islamic Daawa Party, was named prime minister; he was replaced by another Shiite politician, Jawad al-Maliki, in April 2006.

Alongside the war between the US-led coalition and US-backed Iraqi government forces and their Iraqi and foreign opponent, sectarian violence amongst rival Iraqi groups - primarily between Shiites and Sunnis - has claimed many lives. Sectarian tensions escalated after the February 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

### *Print Resources*

George Packer (2005) *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Robert Fisk (2005) *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East*. New York: Knopf.

Nir Rosen (2006) *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq*. New York: Free Press.

L. Roberts, R. Lafta, R. Garfield, J. Khudhairi, G. Burnham (2004) 'Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey.' *The Lancet*, Volume 364, Issue 9448, pages 1857-1864.

G. Burnham, R. Lafta, S. Doocy, L. Roberts (2006) 'Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey.' *The Lancet*, Volume 368, pages 1421-1428.

### *Online Resources*

BBC News. *In Depth: Conflict with Iraq*.

Peace Pledge Union Online. *Iraq Conflict Profile*.

Ploughshares. *Armed Conflicts Report 2005: Iraq*

Human Rights Watch. *Background on the Crisis in Iraq*.

Think Progress. *Timeline of the Iraq War*.

### *Timeline*

2002 - UN passes resolution 1441, calls on Iraq to allow weapons inspectors back in.

2003 - Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses Security Council, makes case for existence of WMD in Iraq.

2003 - US missiles hit targets in Baghdad; US and British ground troops enter Iraq from the south; Saddam Hussein captured in Tikrit.

2004 - US hands sovereignty to interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi; Shia militias loyal to radical cleric Moqtada Sadr fight coalition forces; Major US-led offensive against insurgents in Fallujah.

2005 - An estimated eight million people vote in elections for a Transitional National Assembly; Shia United Iraqi Alliance wins majority of assembly seats, and Kurdish parties place second. Amid escalating violence, parliament selects Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president. Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shia, is named as prime minister.

2006 - Bombing of Golden Mosque in Samarra; Jawar al-Maliki replaces Jaafari as prime minister.