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# Country Reports on Terrorism 2012 - Iraq

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**Overview:** Iraqi security forces made progress combating al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and other Sunni insurgent organizations in 2012. While there has been clear and measurable success against AQI over the years, the group still remains a dangerous threat to the Iraqi people. In 2012, there were no significant attacks on U.S. interests or U.S. fatalities. The Iraqi government succeeded in securing multiple large public religious gatherings and government events – most notably the Arab League Summit in late March and P5+1 talks in May in Baghdad – but terrorist bombings and other attacks continued to occur.

The Government of Iraq concentrated its counterterrorism efforts against AQI and other Sunni-affiliated terrorist organizations. AQI remained capable of large-scale coordinated attacks and conducted numerous high-profile suicide and car bombings on government and civilian targets, aiming to increase tensions among Iraqi sectarian groups and ethnic minorities, and undercut public perceptions of the government's capacity to provide security. Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al-Naqshabandiyah (JRTN), a Sunni nationalist insurgent group with links to the former Baath Party, also continued attacks during the year. JRTN largely targeted Iraqi and U.S. interests in northern Iraq. Shia militant groups Kata'ib Hizballah, Asa'ib Ahl Haqq, and the Sadrist Promised Day Brigades adhered to the cease-fire they declared in the latter half of 2011 and early 2012. Some former Shia militant leaders began engaging in the political process and competing for political influence.

Terrorist tactics and weapons remained largely unchanged from 2011, as AQI and other terrorists relied predominantly on suicide bombings and car and roadside bombs and to a lesser extent on gunmen using assault rifles or silenced weapons to assassinate government and security officials.

Iraq-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation remained strong, particularly in training, advisory, and intelligence-sharing programs.

The Iraqi Security Forces proved capable of working together to find, arrest, and charge terrorism suspects. In November, the Iraqi Police, Federal Police, and Iraqi Army – at times working together – arrested over 350 people on terrorism charges and seized several weapon and rocket caches, as part of a major counterterrorism operation. Iraq's Counterterrorism Services (CTS) also conducted approximately 1,600 terrorism related arrests in 2012.

**2012 Terrorist Incidents:** Terrorist groups conducted numerous attacks throughout the country. The deadliest attacks involved suicide bombings that targeted security forces, government buildings, and religious gatherings:

- On January 5, car bombs in Shia areas in Baghdad's Sadr City and Kadhimiyah District killed at least 25 civilians and wounded nearly 70. A suicide bomber also targeted Shia pilgrims celebrating Arbäeen near the city of Nassiriya, killing at least 40 people and wounding over 70.
- On February 23, a series of coordinated car bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and shootings orchestrated by AQI killed at least 55 people and wounded over 200 in Baghdad and 11 other cities.
- On March 20, over 30 car bombings, later claimed by AQI, killed at least 50 people and wounded over 200 in over 12 cities, including Baghdad.
- On April 19, over 20 roadside bombs and IEDs killed at least 36 people and wounded approximately 150 in Kirkuk City, Baghdad, and four other cities.
- On June 13, roadside and car bombs in 10 different cities, including Baghdad, killed over 60 people and wounded another 153. The casualties were predominantly Shia pilgrims.
- On July 23, a series of highly coordinated attacks targeting mostly Shia using car bombs, checkpoint ambushes, and assaults on a military base and police officers' homes, killed at least 107 people and wounded another 268 people throughout the country.
- On August 16, a wave of shootings and IEDs killed more than 80 people and wounded over 270 in Baghdad and Kirkuk City, as well as Salah-ad-din, Anbar, Wasit, and Diyala provinces during the month of Ramadan.
- On September 9, coordinated car bombings in a dozen Iraqi cities killed at least 100 people and wounded another 285, following news that an Iraqi court had sentenced Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi to death. September was also the deadliest month in Iraq in over two years with approximately 365 people killed and another 683 wounded.
- On December 17, a wave of bombings hit neighborhoods in the disputed areas and other parts of Iraq killing 25 people and wounding dozens. The bombs targeted civilians of Shabak ethnicity in al-Mouafaqiyah, a village north of Mosul, and Turkomen neighborhoods in the city of Tuz Khormato.

**Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security:** The Government of Iraq took several steps to improve border security. Iraq, with U.S. support, continued to install, repair, and improve inspection equipment at ports of entry. The government also expanded the number of ports of entry with biometric data capture, but continued to face challenges linking border security systems together. Iraq is also incorporating non-intrusive inspection equipment at its land border crossings to scan for contraband, is improving roads along the borders, and received three littoral patrol ships in March.

Iraq's major counterterrorism organizations made progress in investigating cases and arresting terrorists, but continued to suffer from a lack of interagency coordination and inadequate cooperation between investigators, prosecutors, and the judiciary. While the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency (FIIA) arrested a significant number of terrorist suspects in 2012, Iraqi federal law enforcement and intelligence entities continued to struggle with intelligence analysis and targeting efforts relating to terrorist organizations and often resorted to rounding up locals to elicit intelligence information. The Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF), a collaborative task force involving U.S. federal law enforcement officers and FIIA investigators, targeted counterterrorism,

organized crime, and government corruption cases from 2005 through late 2011. In 2012, the MCTF functioned as an Iraqi-only investigative element focusing on terrorist groups. However, like many other law enforcement entities, the MCTF operated independent of other Iraqi agencies working terrorism matters to include the Counterterrorism Organized Crime General Directorate.

Iraq continued to face significant challenges investigating and moving criminal cases from arrest to trial due to resource limitations, inadequate training, poor interagency coordination, and at times, limited political will. Prosecution of sectarian crimes carries a significant political risk. Separately, many among Iraq's Sunni community believed that the government used terrorism laws to unfairly target the Sunni population. Iraqi law enforcement officials, with U.S. training support, continued to improve investigative skills such as forensic evidence collection.

In 2011, the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCCI) convicted a former Iraqi Army sergeant and suspected AQI member of the murder of two U.S. soldiers in 2007 and sentenced him to life in prison. In the spring of 2012, however, the Federal Court of Cassation (FCC) overturned this decision on appeal and dismissed the charges. Even though substantial evidence was presented, the FCC determined that critical forensic evidence was of limited reliability and probative value. The U.S. government requested that the FCC correct and reverse this decision, but this request was formally denied on October 8. Subsequent to the spring 2012 FCC decision dismissing the charges in the above case, a companion case against the same defendant before the CCCI for other soldiers wounded in the attack resulted in the dismissal of similar terrorism charges on similar evidentiary grounds. On October 21, the CCCI convicted a suspected Shia Jaysh al-Mahdi member on terrorism charges stemming from an attack that killed one U.S. soldier and wounded three others, and sentenced him to 15 years in prison. It is anticipated that this case will be subject to review on appeal by the FCC.

On November 16, citing a lack of a legal basis to continue holding him, Iraq also released Lebanese Hizballah member Ali Musa Daqduq, who was accused of involvement in a 2007 attack that killed five U.S. soldiers. The CCCI had dismissed the charges against Daqduq in May citing insufficient reliable evidence, a decision that was upheld on appeal in June by the FCC.

Judicial security continued to be a challenge. Judges investigating and adjudicating terrorism cases continued to face threats to their personal safety and that of their families:

- In April, terrorists targeted the Chief Judge of Karkh Appellate Court (Najim Abdallah Ahamd al-Mashhadani) with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at an intersection about 50 meters from the judge's vehicle.
- In June, terrorists again targeted Judge Najim, this time by a suicide bomber on a bicycle. The explosion killed one bystander.
- In October, terrorists assassinated Dr. Talib Al Shraa' of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice (MOJ). Dr. Talib was MOJ's liaison to the National Center for State Courts, a U.S.-partner assisting the MOJ in its strategic planning and budgeting.

At year's end, the Security and Defense Committee of the Council of Representatives was still working on draft legislation to codify the mission and authorities of the CTS. This effort has remained stalled since 2009.

Iraq remained an important partner nation in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program, which focused on helping the Government of Iraq build capacity in law enforcement investigations, critical incident management, and border security.

**Countering Terrorist Finance:** In 2012, the Iraqi government underwent its first-ever mutual evaluation to review compliance with international anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) standards by the Middle East and North Africa Financial

Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. This important step affirmed Iraq's commitment to interrupt terrorist finance domestically. Although Iraq's Mutual Evaluation Report found the country to be non-compliant in most areas, the engagement of the Iraqi government, including at the MENAFATF plenary in November, served as an indicator of Iraq's commitment to address the AML/CFT challenges it faces. The United States provided subject matter expertise to assist Iraq in preparing for the mutual evaluation, post-evaluation follow-up, and in drafting a new AML/CFT statute.

The Prime Minister has approved the formation of a committee, or task force, to coordinate cases involving asset recovery, including the recovery of assets illegally taken outside of Iraq by members of the former regime, and tracing funds used to support terrorism. The committee will include representatives from the Ministry of Interior Economic Crimes Section, the Federal Investigation Information, and the Commission of Integrity. The Prime Minister's legal advisor announced the formation of the task force the week of October 21.

The Acting Governor of the Central Bank has agreed to move the Iraqi Financial Intelligence Unit (formerly the Money Laundering Reporting Office, now referred to as the Anti-Money Laundering Unit, or AMLU) into a secure space with dependable utilities, to facilitate the work of the unit.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, we refer you to the *2013 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

**Regional and International Cooperation:** Iraq is increasingly engaging with its neighbors through the Arab League. Iraq hosted the Arab League Summit in March of this year. Iraq, Turkey, and the United States continued a trilateral security dialogue as part of ongoing efforts to counter the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

The U.S.-supported NATO Transition Cell in Iraq assisted over 70 Iraqi officials in receiving NATO training abroad on various topics, including counterterrorism. CTS also partnered with Jordan, sending nearly 40 of its soldiers to the Jordanian Counterterrorism Academy for training. In April, CTS sent observers to a U.S.-Jordanian joint counterterrorism exercise.

**Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism:** Iraqi leaders routinely denounced terrorism and countered terrorist propaganda in public statements. The Iraqi government took steps to bring certain violent violent extremist groups into the political process, and made limited attempts to foster broader reconciliation between sectarian groups.

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