



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT

UPDATE REPORT



17 October 2007 No. 2

IRAQ

Expected Council Action

The Council is scheduled to hold a public debate on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and on the Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq on 19 October. It is anticipated that Lynn Pascoe, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, will brief the Council on the latest UNAMI report. The US is expected to brief the Council on MNF activities. The main focus for most members is expected to be the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the implementation of UNAMI's recently expanded mandate. The Council is not expected to take any formal action.

Key Recent Developments

On 15 October, the latest Secretary-General's report on UNAMI was distributed to the Council. In it, the Secretary-General:

- said that the ongoing violence particularly in Baghdad and Kirkuk posed human rights challenges to the Iraqi government—although he noted a marked decline in civilian casualties;
- expressed concern about the plight of detainees;
- highlighted the lack of success by government officials in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons, despite pledges to devote financial resources to it;
- confirmed that the security situation continues to hamper UN operations in Iraq, and requested the provision of an aircraft for the UN's transportation needs; and
- suggested that there was a window of opportunity for an increased UN role in Iraq, particularly in provision of support for national reconciliation (an area where the UN has a comparative advantage) and that the UN “must be afforded the necessary political space and support to operate meaningfully with all parties concerned, and the ability of the United Nations to talk with all sides must be protected and respected”.

On 11 October, the UNAMI human rights report covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2007 was finally published. A major reason for its delay seems to be that it went through a long process of revision after comments from the Iraqi government and the MNF were received.

- It reported violent attacks in many cities, a precarious daily life for the population and a worsening of the refugee situation. The MNF reported a drop in casualties and car bomb attacks, UNAMI said it was unable to persuade the Iraqi government to release casualty data.
- The report called on the Iraqi government and judicial authorities to ensure prompt access for suspects held in pre-trial detention and to seriously address the issue of detainee abuse and impunity. It also urged the MNF to implement basic due process guarantees for detainees held in MNF custody.
- UNAMI urged that all credible allegations of unlawful killings by MNF forces be investigated, and also urged the US to investigate reports of deaths caused by privately hired contractors

and to hold them accountable. It endorsed the position of the International Committee of the Red Cross that relying on private military firms risked eroding the distinction between civilians and combatants.

On 22 September, on the margins of the General Assembly, a high-level meeting on Iraq took place in New York, involving Iraq and its neighbours, the P5, G8 members, Egypt, Bahrain, major donors, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the European Union. The aim was to promote a stronger partnership between the international community and Iraq. It seems that participants supported the UN's key role in national reconciliation. The Secretary-General said that the UN had a comparative advantage in political facilitation and socio-economic reconstruction, and he was planning a modest increase in UNAMI staff in Iraq as soon as facilities were ready to accommodate them safely. He also expressed concern about the refugee crisis and called for more humanitarian assistance. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki noted that there was still much common ground between Iraq and the US despite US criticism of the Iraqi government's performance in reconciliation.

On 16 September in Baghdad, the private US security firm Blackwater was involved in an incident in which it shot dead at least eight civilians and wounded many others. Blackwater claimed that there had been an attack on a diplomatic convoy it was escorting. The Iraqi government investigation produced no evidence of such an attack. The US has also launched an investigation. On 25 September, the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries—comprising five independent experts serving in their personal capacity—expressed concern over the incident and denounced the immunity of private security companies.

On 10 September, General David Petraeus, Commander of the MNF, and Ryan Crocker, US Ambassador to Iraq, presented testimony on the war and political developments in Iraq to the US Congress. General Petraeus stated that, although there had been setbacks, he could see distinct improvements in the security environment since the start of the surge of MNF offensive operations in June. In particular, he referred to a decline in sectarian deaths. He recommended a drawdown of US forces by the summer of 2008 to the levels that prevailed prior to the surge. It was premature, he added, to make recommendations on the pace of further reductions because Iraqi security forces were not ready.

Ambassador Crocker provided an overall positive assessment of political, economic and diplomatic developments in Iraq. He emphasised that at the provincial level, political gains had been more pronounced, due to security improvements—especially in Anbar province. He also acknowledged the expanding international and regional engagement with Iraq, although he noted that the role of Syria and Iran was problematic.

On 10 August, the Council adopted resolution 1770 extending UNAMI's mandate for one year and revising it for the first time since UNAMI was established in 2004. It included many tasks that UNAMI was already performing in practice. Important new roles that were added included:

- assisting the Iraqi government in facilitating regional dialogue;
- planning, funding and implementing reintegration programmes for former members of illegal armed groups; and
- and implementing the International Compact with Iraq.

It also strengthened UNAMI's role in constitutional process, development and economic reform, coordination of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction programmes and implementing programmes, to improve social services.

As anticipated, the resolution separated the UNAMI mandate from the MNF mandate, but it did recognise that the MNF provides support for UNAMI. The resolution also expressed concern for humanitarian issues. Finally, it requested a report by the Secretary-General within three months.

The recent UNAMI report was technically due by 10 November, but it was decided that it would be issued in October in order to avoid a five-month gap in the UNAMI reporting cycle. Also, in November, the Council is likely to be focusing on the MNF mandate renewal. Against this background, the US adjusted the MNF briefing to October so both reports could be available concurrently.

Key Issues

Because there are no issues requiring formal decision by the Council, the main focus of the October debate is likely to be the humanitarian situation in the country as described in the report of the Secretary-General. The plight of refugees (in particular, the increasing burden on neighbouring countries) is likely to be raised. There is likely to be interest in how UNAMI is coordinating the work of humanitarian agencies and local organisations. The recent appointment of a new Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer, as humanitarian coordinator, is an important development. Council members are also likely to focus on what the Iraqi government is doing to allow aid to reach those in need. Another major issue likely to come up is UNAMI's new political role in national reconciliation and regional cooperation. Council members will be aware of initial Iraqi hesitation about an increased UN role in national reconciliation when resolution 1770 was being negotiated. They will also be conscious of the comments in the Secretary-General's report about the need for political space for the UN. It remains to be seen whether political space will be provided to the UN to perform its role. The humanitarian implications of the role of private security companies may also be mentioned by some delegations.

It is possible that, in light of the political and security tensions on the northern border between Turkey and Iraq, the role of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, will be raised. He is scheduled to attend the next meeting of Iraq's neighbouring countries in Istanbul on 2 and 3 November to review the work of the three working groups previously established (on border security, refugees and oil). A regular follow-up mechanism is likely to be on the agenda.

Finally, whether and how UNAMI is planning to increase its presence in Iraq, given the security situation and opposition from the UN staff association, may be addressed as well.

The MNF briefing will be an update on the latest activities in Iraq. It is possible that this will precipitate responses by Council members on MNF issues including renewal—the mandate is expiring in December but it seems that the US and the UK are hoping to hold the debate on this in November. So it is likely that most Council members will prefer to wait until then before commenting.

Council Dynamics

There seems to be a broad consensus that the UN should play a greater role in Iraq, particularly in promoting cooperation with regional countries. All Council members seem pleased with the expanded UNAMI mandate. However, many are concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis and about security risks for additional UN personnel.

Some Council members, such as France, Belgium, Italy, Panama and South Africa, seem to be particularly interested in addressing the refugee crisis. They had pushed for stronger language on the humanitarian crisis during negotiations on the 1770 resolution. South Africa in particular considers that the UN should provide more assistance to Iraq's neighbouring countries receiving the flow of

refugees and that the MNF contributing countries have a responsibility in tackling this issue.

Underlying Problems

Recent media reports said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees considered that more Iraqi provinces (at least 11 out of 18) were restricting access to internally displaced persons (about 2.2 million) because of a lack of resources. In addition to creating a “pressure cooker”, this problem would also be conducive to more territorial fragmentation and add to the difficulty of reaching national reconciliation.

On 17 October, Turkey's parliament gave permission for the government to launch military operations into Iraq to fight Kurdish rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) with bases in Iraqi Kurdistan. The PKK is a militant group with Marxist-Leninist roots, formed in the late 1970s, which has been conducting an armed struggle against the Turkish government since 1984, calling for an independent Kurdish state. Turkey argues the PKK is a terrorist organisation responsible for the deaths of several Turkish soldiers in the past two weeks, and denounced the fact that it enjoys freedom of movement in northern Iraq. About 200,000 Turkish soldiers have already been deployed along the border in special security zones. Iraq warned against a military incursion into its territory. Both Iraq and the US are anxious this could destabilise the region and prompt other neighbouring states to step in.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1770 (10 August 2007) renewed UNAMI for one year and revised its mandate.
- S/RES/1723 (28 November 2006) extended the MNF's mandate until 31 December 2007 and expanded the UNAMI mandate.
- S/RES/1700 (10 August 2006) extended the UNAMI mandate for a year.
- S/RES/1546 (8 June 2004) endorsed the formation of the interim government and the holding of elections by January 2005, welcomed the end of the occupation by 30 June 2004, endorsed the proposed timetable for the political transition, requested quarterly reports, detailed the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, and authorised the MNF.

Latest Security Council Presidential Statement

- S/PRST/2007/36 (8 October 2007) condemned the 3 October attack in Baghdad against the Polish Ambassador to Iraq, which resulted in the wounding of the ambassador and the killing of one member of his personal security detachment team and one Iraqi civilian.

Latest Secretary-General's Report

- S/2007/608 (15 October 2007) was the latest UNAMI report.

Selected Letters

- S/2007/481 (9 August 2007) was a letter from Iraq to the Secretary-General expressing the desire to have the UNAMI mandate extended for one more year.

Other Relevant Facts

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq

Staffan de Mistura (Sweden)

Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs

Michael Von Der Schulenburg (Germany)

Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian, Reconstruction and Development Affairs

David Shearer (New Zealand)

Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the International Compact with Iraq

Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria)

Useful Additional Sources

- Latest UNAMI human rights report covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2007 is available at: <http://www.uniraq.org/FileLib/misc/HR%20Report%20Apr%20Jun%202007%20EN.pdf>
- International Compact 2007 mid-year progress report is available at: http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/iraq/mid_year_progress_rpt.pdf

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Security Council Report is published with the support of the Governments of Canada, Greece, Liechtenstein, and Norway, The Rockefeller Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. It is incorporated as a not for profit Organisation and operates in affiliation with the Center on International Organization in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York.

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