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Question

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RESPONSE

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Introduction

On 30 June 2009 the United States withdrew its military forces from the city of Kirkuk as part of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The withdrawal would not appear to be total. Reporting on the various withdrawals which occurred at this time the *American Forces Press Service* reported that: “The departing American brigades and battalions leave behind a significantly smaller contingent of US trainers and advisors in the cities, where Iraqi forces now have primary authority”. The US also maintains a significant presence outside the city of Kirkuk, including the “1st Cavalry Division’s 2nd Heavy Brigade”, whose primary “objective in Kirkuk is to focus on developing ethnic interactions to enhance community relationships”. Even so, several commentators have expressed concern about the future of security in Kirkuk in the lead up to, and aftermath of, the US military’s withdrawal from the city. A number of major bomb attacks occurred in Kirkuk during the transition period and ongoing attacks upon US forces and Iraqi police were also reported. This noted, the primary concern of much of the commentary on the US withdrawal from Kirkuk has been not the insurgency but the build up in Kirkuk of Iraqi military personnel, on the one hand, and Kurdish militia (*peshmerga*)

forces, on the other, as both the Iraqi central government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) maneuver for control of the oil rich and ethnically mixed city. A number of stand-offs have already reportedly taken place (for information on the withdrawal and the SOFA agreement, see: Knights, M. 2009, 'Iraq Withdrawal Deadline: Subtle Shift in U.S. Mission', *Policy Watch*, Washington Institute website, no.1544, 26 June <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3082> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 7; for the ongoing US presence in the vicinity of Kirkuk, see: Kruzel, J.J. 2009, 'As U.S. Meets Withdrawal Deadline, Baghdad Declares Holiday', *Elites TV*, source: *American Forces Press Service*, 30 June <http://elitestv.com/pub/2009/06/as-u-s-meets-withdrawal-deadline-baghdad-declares-holiday> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 8; Carden, M.J. 2009, 'Kirkuk Progress is "Impressive," Mullen Says', US Department of Defense, *Defenselink* website, source: *American Forces Press Service*, 13 July <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=55105>. – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 9; for concerns and bomb attacks at the time of the US withdrawal, see: Rao, P. 2009, 'Kirkuk police chief wants US troops to stay', *Yahoo News*, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 10 August http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20090810/pl_afp/iraqunrestussecurity – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 10; 'Kirkuk bombed amid US pullout' 2009, *Al Jazeera*, 1 July <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/07/20097135313957256.html> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 11; 'Five Christians killed as Kirkuk archbishop questions US withdrawal' 2009, *Asia News*, 4 June <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?!=en&art=14922> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 12; for concerns about a possible clash between Iraqi government and Kurdish forces, see: International Crisis Group 2009, *Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble Along the Trigger Line*, Middle East Report no.88, 8 July – Attachment 1).

In terms of insurgent, or anti-US, networks operating in Kirkuk, a range of sources report that the city is affected by the activities of both Baathist nationalist fighters and Islamist militants. With regard to the latter type of group, news bulletins from Kirkuk have, in recent years, frequently reported on the arrest, capture or death of persons suspected of belonging to the Kurdish Islamist network known as *Ansar al-Islam* (sometimes also referenced as the *Kurdistan Brigades*; and formerly as *Ansar al-Sunnah*). *Ansar al-Islam* reportedly has the backing of the *Al Qaeda in Iraq* umbrella network. In reporting on major bomb attacks against public places (targeting civilians) in Kirkuk, some news articles have related local suspicions of an *Al Qaeda in Iraq* involvement. Very little information is available on the nature of the Baathist nationalist militants reported to be active in Kirkuk, though one report identifies the *1920 Revolution Brigades* as one such network. Some reports relate comments to the effect that Baathist nationalist insurgents are responsible for the majority of the attacks on security forces in Kirkuk (as opposed to attacks on civilian targets, which are alleged to be the work of Islamist militants). Typically, however, little information is available on the suspected identities of the perpetrators of the various security incidents which occur in Kirkuk on an almost daily basis. Such incidents involve, most regularly, attacks on police, but attacks on US troops, Iraqi troops and *peshmerga* militiamen also occur in Kirkuk, as do bomb attacks on civilian targets (for an overview of such suspicions and allegations, see: Danish Immigration Service, the Danish Refugee Council & Landinfo 2009, *Security and Human Rights Issues in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and South/Central Iraq (S/C Iraq) Report from the Danish Immigration Service's (DIS), the Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) and Landinfo's joint fact finding mission to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, KRI; and Amman, Jordan 6 to 23 March 2009*, July <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/5EAE4A3C-B13E-4D7F-99D6-8F62EA3B2888/0/Iraqreport09FINAL.pdf> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 2; and: Chulov, M. 2009, 'Kurds lay claim to oil riches as old hatreds flare', *The*

Observer, 14 June – Attachment 4; for background on the presence in Kirkuk of the Islamist *Ansar al-Islam* and the nationalist *1920 Revolution Brigades*, see: Khalil, L. 2007, ‘The Kurdistan Brigades: Al-Qaeda’s Kurdish Henchmen’, *Terrorism Focus*, vol.4: no.14, 18 May – Attachment 6; for raids on suspected members of *Ansar al-Islam*, see: Gamel, K. 2009, ‘Truck bomb kills over 70 at Iraq Shi’ite mosque’, *Washington Times*, source: *Associated Press*, 21 June <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/21/truck-bomb-at-shiite-mosque-kills-at-least-72/> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 19; Bakri, N. 2009, ‘Truck Bomb Kills Dozens in Northern Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 21 June http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/20/AR2009062000434_pf.html – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 20; for examples of raids upon, or the arrest of, suspected *Ansar al-Islam* militants, see: ‘US, Iraqi forces launch major operation in Kirkuk’ 2009, International News Safety Institute website, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 15 April http://www.newssafety.org/index.php?view=article&catid=84%3AIraq-security&id=12814%3Aus-iraqi-forces-launch-major-operation-in-kirkuk&option=com_content&Itemid=100378 – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 21; ‘Ten Iraqi Police Killed in Kirkuk Car Bomb’ 2009, Kurdish Institute of Paris, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 16 April <http://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/ten-iraqi-police-killed-in-kirkuk-car-bomb-1232550491.html> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 24; ‘Iraqi forces detain militants’ 2008, *United Press International*, 31 January http://www.upi.com/Emerging_Threats/2008/01/31/Iraqi-forces-detain-militants/UPI-15131201813510/ – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 22; ‘Attacks kill several in northern Iraq’ 2008, *United Press International*, 5 March http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2008/03/05/Attacks-kill-several-in-northern-Iraq/UPI-99141204724903/ – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 23; ‘Ten Iraqi Police Killed in Kirkuk Car Bomb’ 2009, Kurdish Institute of Paris, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 16 April <http://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/ten-iraqi-police-killed-in-kirkuk-car-bomb-1232550491.html> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 24; for examples of day-to-day attacks in Kirkuk, see: ‘Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, June 20’ 2009, *Reuters*, 20 June <http://www.reuters.com/article/featuredCrisis/idUSANS035939> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 5; ‘Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 4’ 2009, *Reuters*, 4 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSMOH445395> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 15; and: ‘Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 23’ 2009, *Reuters*, 23 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/middleeastCrisis/idUSL220947> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 16; and for suspicions of an *Al Qaeda in Iraq* hand in recent bomb attacks, see: Gamel, K. 2009, ‘Truck bomb kills over 70 at Iraq Shi’ite mosque’, *Washington Times*, source: *Associated Press*, 21 June <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/21/truck-bomb-at-shiite-mosque-kills-at-least-72/> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 19; Bakri, N. 2009, ‘Truck Bomb Kills Dozens in Northern Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 21 June http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/20/AR2009062000434_pf.html – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 20).

Source information overview

On 14 June 2009 *The Observer* published an extensive report on the evolving situation in Kirkuk authored by *The Guardian*’s Baghdad correspondent Martin Chulov. The report discusses the manner in which Kirkuk’s ethnic mix, the insurgency and the competing ambitions of Kurd and Arab political leaders, all currently shape a complex situation for Kirkuk’s inhabitants. With regard to the nature of insurgent groups in Kirkuk the article

reports that: “security officials, among them US officers, suggest Kirkuk’s militants have long had a Ba’athist flavour”. The report also relates the comments of a “local intelligence official, a Turkoman”, who observes that: “There was a strong al-Qaida presence and there are still sleeper cells, but the Ba’athists were stirring the pot more than anywhere else in Iraq except Tikrit”. Pertinent extracts follow:

Foreign companies have circled Kirkuk since the fall of Saddam. Earlier this month, Norwegian and Turkish companies helped one large crude oil field in Iraqi Kurdistan, Tawke, to come on stream for the first time in Iraq since 1972. Kurdish leaders cheered like football fans as live footage was beamed back to Irbil of tankers unloading at an export facility nearby, which will eventually pipe the oil north to Turkey.

...All sides have been watching the posturing with great interest. “What they do up there will be very instructive for us,” said Ahmed al-Othman, 71, a Kurdish native of Kirkuk. Othman goes round town in the traditional Kurdish shirwal (baggy trousers) and says his closest friends are Arabs. “I’ve never left and I have never thought to leave,” he said. “Until recently.

“Last year, my brother was killed by an explosion in the market and so were two shopkeepers I drank coffee with for years. Since then, things have not been the same. Arab eyes don’t always look at me now and the marketplace is not what it was. The greed surrounding all the oil may change this place.”

Marketplaces were for centuries the one place that locals of all sects would meet. Fruit, falafel and Iraqi bread are still sold alongside butchered lambs dripping blood on to rubbish-strewn pavements.

Locals still mix there, but so, too, do suicide bombers. Kirkuk until recently was a killing field of the Sunni insurgency. But security officials, among them US officers, suggest Kirkuk’s militants have long had a Ba’athist flavour. “This was a city that Saddam long tried to orientate towards his regime and to Arab Iraq,” said one local intelligence official, a Turkoman. “There was a strong al-Qaida presence and there are still sleeper cells, but the Ba’athists were stirring the pot more than anywhere else in Iraq except Tikrit.”

Major-General Jamal Bakr, the regional police chief, said security had improved about 80% since mid-2007. He confirmed that militants had regularly tried to blow up oil pipelines: “But what we have seen here is similar to the rest of Iraq. Al-Qaida trying to cause havoc, no more, no less.” Sunni extremists were foiled in their most recent terrorist attempt when a Syrian youth wearing a suicide vest was tackled trying to enter the Shia al-Hussein mosque.

...From his office in a heavily guarded compound at the centre of town, Kirkuk’s mayor, Abdul Rahman Fatah, conceded that oil was a major obstacle to progress in Kirkuk, but claimed it was secondary to the continuation of a central government-funded project that pays for Kurds to return to Kirkuk and offers Arabs money to leave. It is this law that funded the return of Simzad Saeed, who has since started work at the agency that paid for his return.

“The real conflict is between the politicians,” said Fatah. “It is not really a conflict between the ethnic groups and religions. The issues here are not new; they are historical and well known. Even the Arabs who came here as part of Arabisation were victims. They were sent here by the previous regime and most came from the south of Iraq. Kirkuk was a much better option for them.”

...To many Kurds, the divisions are indeed becoming more entrenched. “We don’t see this so much as Northern Ireland as a new Jerusalem,” said one senior member of the Kurdish

parliament. “This is a conflict with a history and we are prepared to play a long game on it. The oil is bringing things to a head rapidly and Baghdad feels it is starting to lose significant ground (Chulov, M. 2009, ‘Kurds lay claim to oil riches as old hatreds flare’, *The Observer*, 14 June – Attachment 4).

An older study, published by the Jamestown Foundation in May 2007, provides historical background on the manner in which both nationalist and Islamist insurgent forces have reportedly sought to conduct operations in Kirkuk, and their reasons for doing so. According to this study, the Al-Qaeda in Iraq group has sought to exert influence in Kirkuk by backing a Kurdish Islamist network calling itself the Kurdistan Brigades (reportedly made up “from remnants of Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunnah and other Kurdish Islamic movements”). The report also notes the presence in Kirkuk of the nationalist insurgent network known as the 1920 Revolution Brigades. Pertinent extracts follow:

...Kurdistan has been the only part of Iraq in which al-Qaeda has had troubling operating due to the region’s robust security forces. Yet, with the establishment of the Kurdistan Brigades from remnants of Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunnah and other Kurdish Islamic movements loyal to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the recent attacks show that al-Qaeda is stepping up its operations and is slowly trying to establish a foothold in the fortified Kurdish areas. The Kurdistan Brigades only recently declared itself in a video put out in March of this year and has already carried out a number of operations.

...In addition to confirming their allegiance to the ISI and its leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the Kurdistan Brigades also indicated that elements of the group were loyal to al-Qaeda before the establishment of the ISI. While al-Surani is the official spokesman and public face of the group, sources indicate that a man by the name of Dilshad Kalari, also known as Dilshad Garmyani, is the organization’s leader.

...Al-Qaeda, however, has been trying to establish a presence in the Kurdish areas for some time, therefore recent changes in the security situation elsewhere in the country are not the sole reason for the emergence of the Kurdistan Brigades. The upcoming referendum on Kirkuk is also another explanation for the increase in violence. Other insurgent groups, not just al-Qaeda, are interested in establishing a presence in the area to thwart any referendum that would bring Kirkuk under the administration of the KRG. This would explain the recent arrest of insurgent leaders tied to national insurgent groups like the 1920 Revolution Brigades, which is operating in and around Kirkuk.

Although the Kurdistan Brigades present a wholly different kind of threat to the Kurdish areas, Kurdish security forces are better positioned to deal with the al-Qaeda threat than are security forces in other parts of Iraq. Peshmerga security forces are better trained and more experienced fighters than the nascent Iraqi security forces. Despite an increasing segment of the population that is disgruntled and unhappy with the power monopoly of the KDP and PUK, the majority of the Kurdish population is not sympathetic to al-Qaeda regardless of their feelings toward the current regional government. Nevertheless, the demonstrated strength of the Kurdistan Brigades is a disturbing development. The Kurdish government should make sure that it manages the Kirkuk referendum, a key element in the KRG strategy for greater autonomy, with political finesse and increased security measures so that Kirkuk does not become a rallying point for the Kurdistan Brigades and other militant Islamist groups (Khalil, L. 2007, ‘The Kurdistan Brigades: Al-Qaeda’s Kurdish Henchmen’, *Terrorism Focus*, vol.4: no.14, 18 May – Attachment 6).

Attacks on security forces, government offices and civilian targets are reported regularly from Kirkuk, but claims of responsibility are rarely associated with such incidents. Examples

of the kinds of reports which have appeared in recent weeks follow below sourced from *Reuters*:

14 May 2009

KIRKUK – Gunmen killed a member of a Sunni anti al Qaeda militia and wounded three others when they were manning a checkpoint in al-Zab area, near Kirkuk, police said ('Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, May 14' 2009, *Reuters*, 14 May <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLE919659> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 13).

2 July 2009

KIRKUK – Gunmen shot dead an army major in a drive-by shooting near his house in the city of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said ('Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 2' 2009, *Reuters*, 2 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL2351156> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 14).

20 June 2009

KIRKUK – A suicide truck bomb killed at least 34 people and wounded about 150 others outside a mosque near Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police and hospital sources said. Dozens of homes in the area were flattened by the blast.

...KIRKUK – A roadside bomb targeting a police convoy wounded two civilians in northern Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

...KIRKUK – Attackers stabbed to death a policeman in central Kirkuk late on Friday, police said ('Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, June 20' 2009, *Reuters*, 20 June <http://www.reuters.com/article/featuredCrisis/idUSANS035939> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 5).

4 July 2009

KIRKUK – Gunmen killed off duty policeman in central Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

KIRKUK – Gunmen killed off duty Peshmerga soldier in northern Kirkuk, police said ('Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 4' 2009, *Reuters*, 4 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSMOH445395> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 15).

23 July 2009

KIRKUK – A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol in central Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, killed one civilian and wounded three others, police said.

...KIRKUK – An insurgent threw a hand grenade at a U.S.-Iraqi patrol in Kirkuk, wounding three U.S. soldiers, one Iraqi interpreter and one Iraqi civilian, the U.S. military said ('Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 23' 2009, *Reuters*, 23 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/middleeastCrisis/idUSLN220947> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 16).

27 July 2009

KIRKUK – A roadside bomb wounded a policeman in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

KIRKUK – Police found the body of policeman who had been shot in the head and chest near Kirkuk, police said (‘Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, July 27’ 2009, *Reuters*, 27 July <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLR184970> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 17).

8 August 2009

KIRKUK – Gunmen in a speedy car wounded an off duty policeman in northern Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad on Friday, police said (‘Factbox-Security developments in Iraq, Aug 8’ 2009, *Reuters*, 8 August <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL8576674> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 18).

Reports on major bomb attacks will sometimes carry speculative comments as to the identity of the group responsible. For instance, following the 20 June 2009 incident in which a truck bomb exploded outside a Shiite mosque in Kirkuk, killing over 70 persons, *Associated Press* reported that: “Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack, but it bore the hallmark of al Qaeda in Iraq or other Sunni insurgents who remain active in northern Iraq despite security gains”. A *Washington Post* report related the comments of a local man who alleged that “Al-Qaeda attacked us to sabotage the American withdrawal”. Recent years have also seen regular reports of raids by security forces against alleged insurgent forces in the area of Kirkuk. Raids against persons suspected of belonging to the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam Islamist network have featured prominently within such reporting (Gamel, K. 2009, ‘Truck bomb kills over 70 at Iraq Shi’ite mosque’, *Washington Times*, source: *Associated Press*, 21 June <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/21/truck-bomb-at-shiite-mosque-kills-at-least-72/> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 19; Bakri, N. 2009, ‘Truck Bomb Kills Dozens in Northern Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 21 June http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/20/AR2009062000434_pf.html – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 20; for examples of raids upon, or the arrest of, suspected Ansar al-Islam militants, see: ‘US, Iraqi forces launch major operation in Kirkuk’ 2009, International News Safety Institute website, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 15 April http://www.newssafety.org/index.php?view=article&catid=84%3Airaq-security&id=12814%3Aus-iraqi-forces-launch-major-operation-in-kirkuk&option=com_content&Itemid=100378 – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 21; ‘Ten Iraqi Police Killed in Kirkuk Car Bomb’ 2009, Kurdish Institute of Paris, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 16 April <http://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/ten-iraqi-police-killed-in-kirkuk-car-bomb-1232550491.html> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 24; ‘Iraqi forces detain militants’ 2008, *United Press International*, 31 January http://www.upi.com/Emerging_Threats/2008/01/31/Iraqi-forces-detain-militants/UPI-15131201813510/ – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 22; ‘Attacks kill several in northern Iraq’ 2008, *United Press International*, 5 March http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2008/03/05/Attacks-kill-several-in-northern-Iraq/UPI-99141204724903/ – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 23; ‘Ten Iraqi Police Killed in Kirkuk Car Bomb’ 2009, Kurdish Institute of Paris, source: *Agence France-Presse*, 16 April <http://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/ten-iraqi-police-killed-in-kirkuk-car-bomb-1232550491.html> – Accessed 11 August 2009 – Attachment 24).

In March 2009 representatives of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Landinfo Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre undertook a joint fact finding mission to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) to gather information on “security and human rights issues” in “Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), South/Central Iraq (S/C Iraq) and the so-called disputed areas”. The advice accumulated from a variety of sources during this visit was subsequently published in July 2009. With regard to the situation in Kirkuk the report relates that “An international organisation (A) in Erbil” advised that Kirkuk is currently affected by the operations of both “insurgents” and “terrorists”. International organisation (A) in Erbil defined insurgents as groups whose “main aim is to fight the occupation” and who “try to minimize the number of civilian casualties” while primarily targeting “American troops; and the Iraqi troops as well as the police, because the latter cooperates with the Americans, and the UN”. Terrorists, on the other hand, are categorized by this interlocutor as “religiously driven” groups which “target all kinds of groups, civilians included”. A different interlocutor, international organisation (E) in Erbil, advised the mission that: “Muslim insurgent groups’ presence in certain areas would lead to a strong appliance of Islam in the south as well as in the outskirts of Mosul and Kirkuk”. Pertinent extracts follow:

An international organisation (A) in Erbil stressed the difference between insurgents and terrorists. The insurgents’ main aim is to fight the occupation. Therefore their main targets are American troops; and the Iraqi troops as well as the police, because the latter cooperates with the Americans, and the UN. The insurgents try to minimize the number of civilian casualties. The insurgent groups are mostly active in Mosul and Kirkuk. Both groups are represented in all front lines.

The terrorists, on the other hand, are mainly religiously driven. They organize and commit a lot of different violent activities that target all kinds of groups, civilians included.

In south of Kirkuk, both the insurgents and terrorists are active. Mosul is also a battle ground for both groups.

An international organisation (B) in Amman stated that militias and insurgent groups have been weakened all over Iraq, but that they are still active in parts of Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Diyala, and to some degree in the south. The Badr militia has mostly been incorporated into the police and security forces. Remaining elements of this militia are operating on their own and the current situation is volatile and can change depending on the political situation and the new power balance.

...7.6 Islamization and women in Iraq

The societal attitude towards women’s dress code in KRI is far more flexible than in S/C Iraq according to an international organisation (E) in Erbil. However, women that are IDPs or live in rural areas must conform to these local areas’ dress codes and other social norms. When asked if women would feel compelled to conform to the dress codes in Mosul and Kirkuk the international organisation (E) assumed this to be the case. However, if the city neighbourhood in general tolerates non-Islamic dress codes then women can dress more freely. It is assumed that in the cities (in general and not necessarily only in Mosul and Kirkuk) the dress code is more liberal than in city outskirts. Muslim insurgent groups’ presence in certain areas would lead to a strong appliance of Islam in the south as well as in the outskirts of Mosul and Kirkuk.

...9 Freedom of expression in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

Concerning freedom of expression a human rights NGO in Erbil explained that two journalists were assassinated in Kirkuk last year. The journalists had each published an article concerning human trafficking and President Barzani's connections to Israel. The article on trafficking stated that the Asayish as well as the military [Peshmerga] had been involved in human trafficking. The two journalists were assassinated shortly after the publication of their articles in early 2008 (Danish Immigration Service, the Danish Refugee Council & Landinfo 2009, *Security and Human Rights Issues in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and South/Central Iraq (S/C Iraq) Report from the Danish Immigration Service's (DIS), the Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) and Landinfo's joint fact finding mission to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, KRI; and Amman, Jordan 6 to 23 March 2009*, July <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/5EAE4A3C-B13E-4D7F-99D6-8F62EA3B2888/0/Iraqreport09FINAL.pdf> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 2).

In addressing the situation in “disputed areas” like Kirkuk, the July 2009 report on the March 2009 fact finding mission also provides information on the various security forces currently operating in such areas, including: Iraqi police (the Governor of Sulaymaniyah advised that: “In the urban areas of Kirkuk, the head of police is Kurdish, but most police officers in Kirkuk are Arab”); PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) and KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) Asayish security police (KRG officials have advised that: “that there are Christians, Turkmen and Kurds in the Asayish, but no Arabs”; and estimate that there are: “3,500 Asayish officers in Kirkuk”); KDP and PUK Kurdish militia (peshmerga) troops; and Iraqi military forces (“in February this year, Iraqi forces sent a brigade to Kirkuk which created a conflict between GoI and KRG”). The report relates that: “An international organisation (A) in Erbil informed that the southern part of Kirkuk is under the control of [the central Government of Iraq (GoI)]. The centre of town, which has a mixed population of Turkmen and Kurds, is under both [Multi National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I)] and Peshmerga control. In the north of the city the Peshmerga troops are in control”. The report also comments on the manner in which the Iraqi Central Government and the Iraqi Kurdistan Authorities are currently competing for control of these areas and the manner in which this affects the behavior of the various security forces operating in the area and security for Kirkuk's various communities. Pertinent extracts follow:

...1.4 Overall security in the disputed areas

Tameem (Kirkuk, Hawiga), Ninewa (Mosul), Salah Al-Din and Diyala (Khanaqin, Ba'quba) Governorates

An international organisation (A) in Erbil informed that although its security section officially only has jurisdiction within the area of KRI, it also, unofficially, monitors the security in Mosul and Kirkuk. As the international organisation (A) does not want to “step on anyone's toes”, it is not officially dealing with Mosul and Kirkuk. However, the international organisation (A) still asks its security section to assess the situation in those areas.

Referring to a UNAMI Human Rights Office report from June 2008 the international organisation (A) explained that some attacks that had occurred in the Ninewa plains were reported to be tolerated by the authorities. There had been incidents of intimidation and attacks on religious groups, including kidnapping, forced conversion and rape, especially in Mosul, Ninewa plains, Kirkuk and Hawiga. Some of these incidents could have been tolerated by KRG. More detailed information on the situation of minorities is to be found in Section 5.

ICRC Erbil sub-delegation sees an increased vulnerability for civilians living in the disputed areas. This is due to lack of security still prevailing locally (e.g. Mosul, Kirkuk and north

Diyala Governorate), which affects the capacity of the population to live a normal life. Also, the very “disputed” status of these areas by the Iraqi Central Government [GoI] and the Iraqi Kurdistan Authorities [KRG] affect the smooth running of, and appropriate support to the essential services operating locally (water, health, education, electricity, etc), which in turn reduce the access of the population to quality basic services. For this reason, the population in these areas remains vulnerable. Furthermore inter-ethnic tension seems to have increased in the disputed areas over the past months and analysts predict a possible worsening of the situation.

The ICRC Erbil sub-delegation considered Mosul to be one of the most dangerous areas in Iraq at present time. ICRC has no base in Kirkuk and Mosul but have access through local staff.

According to an international organisation (A), the Kurds are not really interested in Mosul and therefore will not make trouble there.

According to an international organisation (A) in Erbil, the road between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah is safe for Kurds. The road from Mosul to Dahuk is easy and safe for Kurds, but difficult and unsafe for Arabs. [M. Kaiwan, Responsible for KRG checkpoints, Agency of Kurdistan Protection [and] Security, Ministry of Interior] stated that the roads from Erbil to the Kurdish areas in Kirkuk are safe.

...According to an international organisation (D) in Erbil, there are Peshmerga troops in the disputed areas. Lately, in February this year, Iraqi forces sent a brigade to Kirkuk which created a conflict between GoI and KRG. While KRG called it an illegal act, GoI defended itself by saying the area is part of Iraq and therefore GoI’s responsibility. SSI [UN Security Section Iraq], Amman expected that the problems of Kirkuk would continue.

SSI, Amman was convinced that all Kurdish forces either employed in Peshmerga or in the ISF, are more loyal to KRG than to GoI. GoI does not trust any Kurdish forces if it comes to confrontation with KRG.

Izmat Argoshy, General Director, KRG security forces (Asayish) in Erbil stated that in Mosul there are many terrorists that want to commit terror actions in KRI. To prevent this there is cooperation between KRG and American forces in terms of gathering information. According to Argoshy there are no Asayish forces in Mosul but they are present in some other disputed areas. Argoshy informed that Asayish prefer to cooperate with the American forces compared to the Iraqi security forces, whom they do not trust.

...1.5.2 Power structures at the checkpoints and roads in the disputed areas

An international organisation (A) in Erbil explained that there are Peshmerga troops in the disputed areas, both those belonging to KDP and to PUK.

An international organisation (A) in Erbil informed that the southern part of Kirkuk is under the control of GoI. The centre of town, which has a mixed population of Turkmen and Kurds, is under both MNF-I and Peshmerga control. In the north of the city the Peshmerga troops are in control.

Kaiwan explained that KRG is not responsible for the checkpoints in the disputed areas. Since Kirkuk is not a part of KRI, the security of Kirkuk is the responsibility of the Iraqi Government. However, the security police, Asayish, are present in Kirkuk. There are 3,500 Asayish officers in Kirkuk.

Kaiwan also said that although all the checkpoints outside KRI are run by Iraqi police, the checkpoints near Kirkuk are Kurdish manned. According to Kaiwan, the officers at the checkpoints are still employed by GoI and not by KRG.

Kaiwan stated that no one is allowed to carry arms or weapons in KRI except assigned people within the police and the security forces.

...4.7.2 Defence forces (Peshmerga) in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the disputed areas

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah explained that the [KRG defence force called] Peshmerga sort under the Ministry of Peshmerga (Defence). In spite of the recent unification of KRG there are still two Peshmerga ministries. The Ministry of Peshmerga is the same as the Ministry of Defence. They have kept the old name Peshmerga, as the force was called before the autonomy and while it still was a paramilitary force, because it is like a holy word for the Kurds.

An international organisation (A) in Erbil explained that the Peshmerga used to be a Kurdish militia, but was legalized in 2003. The force has never been under the command of GoI. It only follows orders from KRG authorities. The Minister of Defence (Peshmerga) only reports to Baghdad if he deems it necessary.

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah explained that in 2003 the Peshmerga was authorised by the MNF-I to protect the disputed areas. However, in reality the Peshmerga protected this area even before 2003. The Governor of Sulaymaniyah stated that “we had autonomy even before 2003”.

When Iraq established a new police and military force, all Kurdish police withdrew from the disputed areas, the Governor of Sulaymaniyah informed. Now there is only Iraqi national police in the disputed areas. One exception is Kirkuk, where KRG has soldiers and police under its command.

In the urban areas of Kirkuk, the head of police is Kurdish, but most police officers in Kirkuk are Arab.

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah explained that the largest Peshmerga force is deployed in Baghdad, and this force is under ISF command.

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah added that the local police in Khanaqin consists of Kurds, because the local population there is Kurdish. However, the local police are part of the Iraqi national police; their wages are paid by GoI and therefore they are loyal to the GoI.

...4.7.3 Security forces (Asayish) in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the disputed areas

According to Argoshy the area of jurisdiction of Asayish is the three Northern Governorates Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dahuk. The Asayish works as two separate forces, one linked to PUK in Sulaymaniyah and one to the KDP in Erbil and Dahuk. There are ongoing efforts to unite the two forces.

Regarding the disputed areas, Argoshy informed that Asayish is not present in Mosul, while 3,500 Asayish forces are present in Kirkuk, including 300 in Khanaqin. These forces

represent both PUK and KDP. The Asayish operates in these areas in order to protect KRG against terrorism and drugs.

The Asayish has no right to make arrests in the disputed areas, and therefore they cooperate with the local police and US forces.

Regarding the two Asayish forces Argoshy elaborated that these forces do cooperate in matters of security of KRI, both in the form of regular meetings between the leaders and in the form of practical cooperation. The leader in Sulaymaniyah was informed to be Khader Hamajan, who recently succeeded the former leader Seif Aldin Ali.

Asked about the total number of Asayish employees, Argoshy refused to deliver this information. But a number of secret employees were confirmed to exist.

According to Argoshy Asayish in general enjoyed the trust of the people, and claimed that the population had more faith in the Asayish than the police. It was added that the people helped the Asayish. Cooperation between Asayish and the police does exist.

When recruiting staff to the Asayish Argoshy explained that the word of available posts is spread through informal channels. The Asayish never announce available positions. Argoshy explained that if they need 100 persons, maybe 300 to 400 persons apply. Applicants fill out an application form. First there is a medical committee examining the applicants. Next there is another committee checking the applicants' backgrounds. There are some certain requirements. The applicant cannot be shorter than 160 cm, and not older than 30 years of age. Nine years of schooling is required as a minimum, and for higher ranks additional education is required. Officers must have a college degree. After the selection, the list of selected candidates is sent to the police to check their records. Accepted applicants are trained, e.g. in handling of weapon. The new recruits are finally distributed according to their qualifications and specialities. Argoshy informed that there are Christians, Turkmen and Kurds in the Asayish, but no Arabs.

Argoshy informed that the monthly wage for the lowest ranking employee in the Asayish is approximately 1,400 to 1,500 US\$. The wage of an Asayish officer is approximately 1,600 – 1,800 US\$.

A human rights NGO in Erbil stated that the Asayish are controlled by each of the two main political parties in KRI and not by KRG. There are no independent staff members in the Asayish.

Kamal Rauf, Editor in Chief; Kajaw Jamal, Deputy Editor; and Safeen Muhammed, Administration, Hawlati newspaper, Sulaymaniyah, explained that legally the Asayish does not belong to the Government. The Asayish work for the parties and do not care about the law.

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah explained that the Asayish is responsible for collecting information on issues related to terror threats, security, and drug crimes. The Governor added that he used to be head of the Asayish in Diyala before he became Governor of Sulaymaniyah (Danish Immigration Service, the Danish Refugee Council & Landinfo 2009, *Security and Human Rights Issues in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and South/Central Iraq (S/C Iraq) Report from the Danish Immigration Service's (DIS), the Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) and Landinfo's joint fact finding mission to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, KRI; and Amman, Jordan 6 to 23 March 2009*, July <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/5EAE4A3C-B13E-4D7F-99D6-8F62EA3B2888/0/Iraqreport09FINAL.pdf> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 2).

In July 2009 the International Crisis Group produced an extensive study of the situation in Kirkuk. The study does not consider the issue of insurgent forces in Kirkuk but instead may be of interest in terms of the information it provides on the various security forces currently deployed in the Kirkuk governorate, including: Iraq's police; KDP and PUK Asaesh agents (security police); KDP and PUK Kurdish militia (peshmerga) forces (numbering around 3,000); Iraqi military forces (including the 12th division numbering around 9,500); and US military forces (including the 2nd brigade of the 1st cavalry division, strength not noted). The study also provides varying estimates on the ethnic composition of Iraq's 3,500 strong 12th division (according to the ICG: "A Kurdish leader in Kirkuk [had] alleged...that the 12th division consists mostly of Shiite Arabs and has only 10 per cent Kurds"; "Other sources report that the 12th division is 75 per cent Arab"). The ICG also notes the presence of "the 5th brigade of the [Iraq] army's 2nd division, a former Kurdish peshmerga unit that was absorbed into the federal army". The report notes the build up of forces in the area with concern and warns that the Baghdad national government and the Kurdistan regional government in Erbil risk the possibility of clashes between their respective forces over control of Kirkuk if the situation is allowed to degenerate. Extracts follow in detail:

The legal and rhetorical battle is complicated by movement on the ground. As noted, in August 2008 Iraqi forces pushed into three mixed-population sub-districts of Khanaqin (Jalawla, Saadiya and Qara Tepe) in Diyala governorate, forcing out the peshmergas and putting pressure on Khanaqin itself, which is a majority- Kurdish town. Two months later, the army began deploying its 12th division in Kirkuk governorate, a process that is still underway; in June 2009 it had some 9,500 troops there. Its commander, Gen. Abdal- Amir Ridha al-Zaydi, said his dual mission was to protect the oil infrastructure and fight terrorism in non-urban areas, tasks he said he was empowered to carry out by law: "We treat all citizens equally: we are against all who think they are above the law and terrorists, regardless of who they are. This is a federal army, established according to the constitution. Our only reference is the ministry of defence, not any party or ethnic group or governor". (p.12)

...He [12th Division commander General Abd-al-Amir Ridha al-Zaydi] also said that his division comprised men of different ethnic backgrounds: "We are unique in having officers and soldiers from all over Iraq. They are Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Christian, Sunnis and Shiites, totally mixed. There are no problems between them. This is the Iraqi army". Gen. al-Zaydi's two deputies are a Turkoman and a Kurd, Gen. Khurshid. A Kurdish leader in Kirkuk alleged, however, that the 12th division consists mostly of Shiite Arabs and has only 10 per cent Kurds. Crisis Group interview, Rizgar Ali, provincial council chairman (PUK), Kirkuk, 20 May 2009. Other sources report that the 12th division is 75 per cent Arab. The Los Angeles Times, 26 March 2009. (p.12, n.70)

...These are...worrisome developments for the KRG, which seeks to hold on to areas it wants to bring into the region. Its peshmergas minister said, "the 12th division's real objective is to control Kirkuk. This is part of a process of kicking out the Kurds. They have failed only because we haven't left our places [in the disputed areas]. Their interest is in war, not in peace". (p.13)

...At this stage, the 12th division's level of skills, capability and commitment is lower than that of the PUK fighters. Crisis Group email communication, independent military expert, 7 June 2009. (p.13, n.77)

...From the government's perspective, however, it is reasserting state sovereignty in all parts of Iraq after an absence due to weakness.

The peshmerga units, operating as the Kurdistan regional guard but in effect responding to their respective PUK and KDP commanders, are entrenched in positions they intend to defend until the end along a so-called trigger line. In Kirkuk governorate, the peshmergas operate as part of the 10th regional guard brigade under command of the PUK's Gen. Sherko; their headquarters is in Qara Hanjir on the Kirkuk-Suleimaniya road, and they number 3,000. North of Kirkuk city, the trigger line runs across a ridge adjacent to the Avana Dome installations, part of the Kirkuk supergiant oil field, along the Kirkuk-Dibs road. Units of the 12th division have taken up positions on the field; Kurdish forces are east, across the ridge. As incidents in Kirkuk and Ninewa earlier this year (and in Khanaqin in 2008) have shown, the tense face-off could inadvertently spark broader conflict in the absence of swift and accurate communication and strong political leadership.

In January 2009, army patrols began to venture onto roads in majority-Kurdish areas with the sole apparent purpose of showing their presence. For example, they proceeded as far as the checkpoint at the entrance to Chamchamal, the main town on the Kirkuk-Suleimaniya road. Whatever the objective, to the Kurds this was alarming *déjà vu*: it was at this Green Line checkpoint that Saddam's army had dug itself in from 1991 until 2003, mining the surrounding area, humiliating those crossing the barrier and routinely sniping at Kurdish civilians.

On 31 January, the day of provincial elections, a small army patrol drove into Altun Kupri, a town on the Kirkuk-Erbil road with a mixed Turkoman-Kurdish population but firmly under Kurdish control, declaring it wanted to secure polling stations. Kurdish police at the site protested vigorously and local people joined in, nearly starting a riot. The US military intervened by brokering a meeting between the adversaries, and the Iraqi battalion commander averted violence by ignoring orders to fire; he subsequently was removed from his post and investigated for cowardice.

Perhaps with this in mind, Ninewa's newly elected governor, Athil al-Nujayfi, made good on his election campaign pledge to seek to restore government authority to all parts of the governorate. On 8 May, escorted by a caravan of heavily armed four-by-fours, he tried to enter Bashiqa, a mixed town of Chaldo-Assyrian Christians and Yazidi Kurds north east of Mosul. However, he was blocked at the first checkpoint outside Mosul by Kurdish peshmergas with apparent shoot-to-kill orders and forced to return. A similar incident occurred a few days later involving the Ninewa police chief in the Makhmour area. (pp.13-14)

...The Khurmala dome (qubbat Khurmala) is, along with Avana and Baba, one of the supergiant Kirkuk field's three domes – typical oil-bearing geological structures. The entire field (haql Kirkuk) stretches northeast from Kirkuk city to Dibs in Kirkuk governorate and, with the Khurmala dome, extends into Makhmour district of Erbil governorate. ...The area is policed by the 5th brigade of the army's 2nd division, a former Kurdish peshmerga unit that was absorbed into the federal army. Moreover, KDP peshmergas guard the ridge separating the Khurmala dome from the Erbil plain, and KRG security personnel man checkpoints on the roads. (p.20)

...Apart from armed forces, the Kurdish parties have Asaesh agents (security police) on the streets in the disputed territories, an issue that deeply rankles some of the other ethnic groups. These groups' leaders have accused the Asaesh of abusive practices, including the arrest of suspected armed elements and their transfer to prisons in the Kurdistan region. (p.14)

...If the incident involving the Ninewa governor was a reality check for the Kurds, it was a wake-up call for the US. The US army had started ramping up its presence in Kirkuk once it observed the start of the 12th division's deployment in October 2008. In January, the

Americans deployed the 2nd brigade, 1st cavalry division, replacing the battalion that had previously been there. They saw one of their roles as “managing tensions, urging all sides to be transparent about peshmerga, police or ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] operations and enabling dialogue between all sides”.

To this purpose, the US military set up Joint Coordination Centres (JCC) in urban areas in Kirkuk governorate to promote communication, dialogue and coordination between the police and emergency services, with an army and peshmerga liaison officer present at a central coordinating JCC in Kirkuk city. However, once the interior ministry in Baghdad discovered that the Kurds had appointed a peshmerga officer as liaison, it ordered him removed two weeks after his arrival. The US military says it is now trying to create similar military-focused coordination centres at both the US and Iraqi bases on Kirkuk city’s outskirts that would have both peshmerga and police liaisons and cover the governorate’s non-urban areas. (p.14)

...Because Kirkuk has been relatively calm compared to Mosul and Baaquba, the police have primacy over the army, and the army is not even allowed to enter the city. By contrast, the army has conducted operations inside Mosul and Baaquba, which have been racked by violence. Whether these operations have been effective is another question. In Kirkuk’s case, this suggests a dual approach: town-based coordination led by the police, and rural-based coordination led by the Iraqi military. (p.14, n.89)

...The former head of the PUK’s security agency warned, “Maliki is waiting for the Americans to leave. At that point, he will try to retake the areas that the army held until 2003, and only then will he sit down to negotiate with the Kurds”. Conversely, Kirkuk’s deputy governor said, following a visit to the Kurdish president in January 2009, “I told Masoud Barzani that once the US leaves and the Kurds try to fill the vacuum in Kirkuk, we will ask Baghdad to intervene. Then it could get very ugly for ordinary Kirkukis”. (p.15)
(International Crisis Group 2009, *Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble Along the Trigger Line*, Middle East Report no.88, 8 July – Attachment 1).

In March 2009 the UN Inter-Agency Information & Analysis Unit (IAU) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) published an overview of the situation in Kirkuk. The report provides background on the manner in which “Kirkuk’s administrative status is under dispute between the Iraqi national government and the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government”, and observes that: “Outbreaks of violence in Kirkuk since 2003 have frequently been linked to tensions around the governorate’s indeterminate status”. The report provides a statistical graph of security incident related deaths in Kirkuk over the final half of 2008 (and this can be viewed in Attachment 3). The report also provides extensive data on Kirkuk’s demography along with a number of thematic maps should such information be of interest. An extract follows:

Situated in northern Iraq, Kirkuk (formerly known as Tameem) produces a significant amount of Iraq’s oil exports. Saddam Hussein pursued a policy of “Arabization” in the governorate, expelling much of its Kurdish and Turkmen population and replacing them with Arabs (mostly Shi’a) from the south. After 2003, many of those displaced returned to reclaim their homes.

Kirkuk’s administrative status is under dispute between the Iraqi national government and the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution gives Kirkuk the right to self-determination through a governorate-wide referendum, following normalization and a national census. Outbreaks of violence in Kirkuk since 2003 have frequently been linked to tensions around the governorate’s indeterminate status. Security improvements in the second half of 2008 were eroded by a sharp increase in violence in

December, which saw 104 civilians killed. Over half of the deaths occurred in a single attack on a restaurant in Kirkuk city (UN Inter-Agency Information & Analysis Unit & UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2009, 'Kirkuk Governorate Profile', UN Inter-Agency Information & Analysis Unit website <http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Kirkuk.pdf> – Accessed 10 August 2009 – Attachment 3).

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