

# THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR



## BACKGROUND #3

### Operation Phantom Thunder Factsheet

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- Phantom Thunder is the largest coordinated military operation in Iraq since the invasion
- Corps-level operation: the Multi-National Corps--Iraq is the highest level of command of coalition combat forces in Iraq. Its commander is Lieutenant General Ray Odierno
- This operation is the second phase of a multi-phase strategy to provide security to Baghdad and its immediate environs.
  - The first phase ran from 10 January to 15 June and comprised the deployment of the additional forces of the surge, their movement into areas of operation in and around Baghdad, and their development of intelligence and stable bases in those areas.
  - This phase began on 15 June and will likely last through the end of August. Its aim is to disrupt terrorist bases and networks by killing or capturing key terrorist leaders in all of their major bases in Iraq at once.
  - The next phase will probably focus on actually clearing and holding Baghdad and its immediate environs to establish stable and sustainable security there--the purpose of the new strategy.
- The current operation includes several sub-operations:
  - Operation Arrowhead Ripper focuses on clearing Baqubah and other areas of southwestern Diyala province of terrorist bases.
  - Operation Marne Torch is clearing al Qaeda bases to the southeast of Baghdad, including areas that have not seen coalition forces for several years.
  - Marine and Army units in Anbar are executing a sub-operation of Phantom Thunder in Fallujah and the area south of Lake Tharthar, which has long been an al Qaeda safe haven.
  - Iraqi Army and Police units with coalition support are continuing their efforts to combat Shi'a militias in the south, particularly the 8th Iraqi Army division in Diwaniyah and the 10th Iraqi Army division in Nasiriyah.
  - Around 18,000 Iraqi soldiers and 20,000 Iraqi Police, supported by a small number of American troops, are working to maintain order in Mosul and throughout Ninewah province.
  - U.S. and Iraqi Special Forces units are striking high-value targets, both al Qaeda and Shi'a militia, throughout Iraq in support of this effort.
  - U.S. Forces, Iraqi Army, and Iraqi Police forces are continuing operations within Baghdad to eliminate al Qaeda strongholds, attack Shi'a militias engaged in sectarian activities, and establish security in critical areas in the capital.

- The Coalition has never before attempted to disrupt terrorist networks and militias across the country all at once, thus denying them the opportunity to find new safe havens in areas where there are no coalition forces.
- The Iraqis are contributing tens of thousands of their own soldiers and police to the effort in Baghdad and around the country.
- Polish and Georgian forces are actively engaged in operations in the Shi'a south, working together with Iraqi and U.S. Forces in the area.
- Coalition forces are continuing to train Iraqi Army and Police units as this operation proceeds, and are adding thousands of Iraqi soldiers and police to the ranks every month.
- The Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior, working with the Coalition, are fielding new and improved equipment for their forces on a continuing and accelerating basis.
- Coalition military activities during Phantom Thunder are coordinated with reconstruction efforts spearheaded by Provincial Reconstruction Teams embedded with many of the combat brigades.
- Aggressive political efforts continue to see the hydrocarbons law and other key legislation through the Iraqi Parliament.
- The purpose of the initial deployment period (10 January to 15 June) was to make this operation possible. The purpose of this operation is to make the clearing and holding of Baghdad and its environs possible. Military operations on this scale must proceed in phases that are measured in months. The principal clearing-and-holding of Baghdad will probably not begin until August, and any report issued in September can only be preliminary.
- American casualties will increase in the short term as U.S. forces move into areas that the enemy has controlled and fortified in expectation of our attempts to clear them. If operations are successful, then American casualties should begin to drop again as these and subsequent operations proceed to their conclusion.
- This is not an operation to clear and hold all of Iraq, or even all of Central Iraq at once. Its aim is to set the conditions for establishing stable and sustainable security in and near Baghdad.