

CRS Report for Congress

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U.S. Military and Iraqi Casualty Statistics: Additional Numbers and Explanations

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Summary

This report provides several estimates of difficult-to-find casualty statistics from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Operation Enduring Freedom includes ongoing operations in Afghanistan, operations against terrorists in other countries, and operations supporting foreign efforts to defeat terrorists. Operation Iraqi Freedom includes the invasion of Iraq and all subsequent operations in Iraq.

The Department of Defense regularly updates total U.S. military deaths and wounded statistics from OIF and OEF. These updates are reflected in CRS Report RS21578, *Iraq: Summary of U.S. Casualties*. Daily updates can be found at [<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/>], while more detailed information can be found at [<http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmids/casualty/castop.htm>]. However, the Department of Defense does not publicly release numbers on Iraqi civilian deaths, Iraqi security forces deaths, or medical evacuations of U.S. military personnel outside of Iraq. Statistics on these topics are sometimes available through alternative sources, such as nonprofit organizations or the press.

Many of the statistics included in this report are incomplete or have been released by non-governmental sources. Readers should exercise caution when using these statistics and should look on them as guideposts rather than as statements of historical fact. This report will be updated as needed.

Iraqi Civilian Casualty Estimates

No source has yet released authoritative statistics on the total number of Iraqi civilians killed during OIF. However, in a discussion with a Reuters reporter, interim Iraq Human Rights Minister Bakhtiar Amen estimated that the insurgency has killed 6,000

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Iraqi civilians in the past two years and has wounded 16,000 more.¹ These figures do not include civilian deaths due to military actions taken by American forces. Amin added that about 5,000 cases of Iraqi civilian kidnappings have been recorded since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Before Amin's statement to the press, the most recent Iraqi government civilian casualty estimate came from the Iraqi Health Ministry, which released civilian casualty estimates for two time intervals: from April 5, 2004, to October 5, 2004, and from June 1, 2004, to January 1, 2005. The Ministry estimated that during the first six-month period, there were 3,853 civilian deaths due to both terrorist incidents and all military actions. It further estimated that 15,517 civilians were injured in the conflict during this time.²

The Iraqi Ministry of Health made its second statement concerning civilian casualties on January 28, 2005. In this release, it stated that between June 1, 2004, and January 1, 2005, 3,274 civilians had died as a result of all military conflict. Of this total, 1,233 casualties were a result of car bombs or other clearly terrorist activities, while the remaining 2,041 casualties resulted from all military action. In addition, 12,657 individuals had been injured in "conflict-related incidents." The Ministry noted that its numbers could include insurgents and some police who were treated in Ministry of Health hospitals, as well as civilians, and that the majority of casualties were male.³

The numbers released by the Iraqi Ministry of Health are some of the most authoritative available; however, they are incomplete. Because the two time periods — April through October 2004 and June through the end of December 2004 — overlap, it is impossible to compile a total casualty number for the period between April and the end of December 2004. Further, even if it were possible to develop a number for total civilian casualties during that nine-month period, the number would not include any civilian deaths that might have occurred in the first year of military conflict in Iraq, from March 2003 through March 2004.

The media have used a number of alternative sources for Iraqi casualty statistics. According to a news report, the Shaik Omar Clinic in Baghdad recorded 10,363 violent deaths in Baghdad and surrounding towns between the start of the war and September 8, 2004.⁴ No other clinics from other regions or other parts of Baghdad, however, have come forward with their own casualty estimates, making it impossible to extrapolate the Shaik Omar Clinic's numbers to the country as a whole.

¹ Luke Baker, "Iraqi Insurgency Has Killed 6,000 Civilians," *Reuters*, April 5, 2005, at <http://tinyurl.com/6nom4>. Accessed April 6, 2005.

² U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Iraqi Ministry of Health Statement on Iraqi Civilian Casualties] at http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/foi_iraqiMOHstatementcasualties.pdf. Accessed March 23, 2005.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bassem Mroue, "AP Enterprise: More Than 10,000 Iraqis Die Violently in Baghdad Region Alone," *Associated Press*, Sept. 8, 2004. Available online at Nexis.com.

The website of the non-profit organization Iraq Body Count (IBC) is another source for Iraqi casualty information. IBC bases its online casualty estimates on media reports of casualties. As of April 25, 2005, it estimated that between 21,218 and 24,082 civilians had died as a result of military action.⁵ While Iraq Body Count has become a popular source for the media, it has a definite antiwar stance. In a written statement to the House of Commons, U.K. Foreign Minister Jack Straw noted that he did not find Iraq Body Count's method of tracking casualties through media sources authoritative.⁶

Another controversial source for civilian casualty estimates is the paper "Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey," published in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*. Using a cluster sample survey of households in Iraq, the authors of the *Lancet* report compared the wartime mortality rate to the mortality rate in Iraq before the war. They then took the rise in casualties in the 33 areas they studied and applied it to Iraq as a whole to develop an estimate of 100,000 civilian casualties due to violent deaths since the start of the war.⁷ This report has come under attack for its methodology, and supporters of the war have argued that some of the casualties could have resulted from the long-term negative health effects of the Saddam Hussein era. Foreign Minister Straw wrote a formal Ministerial Response rejecting the findings of the *Lancet* report on the grounds that the data analyzed were inaccurate.⁸ While this report is often referred to in the media, its results are vigorously contested by some.

The Brookings Institution has compiled an index of statistics on Iraq, including casualty statistics.⁹ This compilation gathers together a number of statistics from different sources, some of which have been included in this report. The Brookings Institution does not, however, prepare casualty estimates of its own.

Iraqi Security Forces Casualty Statistics

As with the civilian casualty statistics, casualty statistics on Iraqi security forces are rough estimates at best. Many come from anonymous comments to the press. The following selected statistics represent the estimates of the most senior U.S. and Iraqi officials on Iraqi security forces casualty numbers.

⁵ Iraq Body Count at [<http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>]. Accessed March 23, 2005. Iraq Body Count is a non-governmental organization managed by researchers and volunteers.

⁶ Jack Straw, House of Commons Hansard Written Ministerial Statements for Nov. 17, 2004, at [<http://tinyurl.com/58226>]. Accessed March 23, 2005.

⁷ Les Roberts, Ridyah Lafta, Richard Garfield, et al., "Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey," *The Lancet*, Oct. 29, 2004, 364 (9448): 1857-64.

⁸ Jack Straw, Written U.K. Ministerial Statement Responding to a Lancet Study on Iraqi Casualty Numbers, Nov. 16, 2004, at [<http://tinyurl.com/3hv8j>]. Accessed on March 25, 2003.

⁹ Brookings Institution, "Iraq Index: Tracking Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," at [<http://www.brookings.edu/iraqindex>]. Accessed on March 23, 2005.

Iraq Police Killed

Anonymous senior official's estimate of number of Iraqi police killed, January 1, 2004 - September 1, 2004	750 ¹⁰
Iraq Ministry of the Interior's estimate of number of Iraqi police killed, September 1, 2004 - December 31, 2004	1,300 ¹¹
Then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz's estimate of Iraqi police officers <i>and</i> soldiers killed, March 2003-February 3, 2005	1,342 ¹²

Iraqi Security Forces Personnel Killed

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's estimate of security forces deaths, May 1, 2003 - September 23, 2004	721 ¹³
<i>Wall Street Journal's</i> estimate of security forces deaths as of October 26, 2004	1,500 ¹⁴
Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Richard Myers' estimate of security forces deaths, July 1, 2004 - March 10, 2005	1,000 ¹⁵

¹⁰ Walter Pincus, "U.S. Says More Police Are Needed as Attacks Continue," *Washington Post*, Sept. 28, 2004, Final Edition, p. A23.

¹¹ Peter Spiegel, "Fresh Attacks Cast Doubt on Drive to Build Potent Security Forces," *Financial Times*, Jan. 8, 2005, London Edition, p. 8.

¹² U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, *U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq*. Hearing, 109th Congress, 1st Session, Feb. 3, 2005 (Washington, FDCH Political Transcripts, 2005). Available online at Nexis.com.

¹³ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee. *Global Posture Review*. Hearing. 108th Congress, Second Session. Sept. 23, 2004 (Washington, FDCH Political Transcripts, 2004). Available online at Nexis.com.

¹⁴ Yochi J. Dreazen, "'Lack of Security' is Plaguing Iraq," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 26, 2004, p. A6.

¹⁵ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *FY2006 Budget*, 109th Congress, 1st Session, March 10, 2005 (Washington, FDCH Political Transcripts, 2005). Available online at Nexis.com.

Medical Evacuation Statistics

All U.S. military personnel evacuation statistics are provided to CRS by the Department of Defense's Deployment Health Support Directorate (DHSD). The numbers listed in this report are taken from the DOD's October 18, 2004, and February 8, 2005, updates.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), a total of 17,222 individuals were medically evacuated from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) from March 19, 2003, to September 30, 2004. Another 2,721 individuals were medically evacuated during the following three months, for a total of 19,943 individuals who were medically evacuated between March 19, 2003, and December 31, 2004. Over the course of OIF, an average of 216 individuals were evacuated per week.

Medical Reasons for Evacuations

	As of September 30, 2004	As of December 31, 2004
Battle Injuries	17%	19%
Non-Battle Injuries	21%	22%
Disease	63%	59%

Distribution of Evacuations Among the Services

	As of September 30, 2004	As of December 31, 2004
Army	83%	83%
Marines	8%	10%
Air Force	3%	5%
Navy	2%	2%

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), a total of 2,277 individuals were medically evacuated from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) from March 19, 2003 to September 30, 2004. Another 1,621 individuals were medically evacuated during the next three months, for a total of 3,898 individuals who were medically evacuated between March 19, 2003, and December 31, 2004. Over the course of OEF, an average of 32 individuals were evacuated per week.

Medical Reasons for Evacuation

	As of September 30, 2004	As of December 31, 2004
Battle Injuries	8%	9%
Non-Battle Injuries	28%	27%
Disease	64%	64%

Distribution of Evacuations Among the Services

	As of September 30, 2004	As of December 31, 2004
Army	69%	84%
Marines	11%	8%
Air Force	15%	7%
Navy	4%	1%

Amputation Statistics for American Forces

All amputation statistics are provided to the CRS by the Department of Defense's Deployment Health Support Directorate (DHSD). As of March 31, 2005, the DOD reported a total of 428 amputations during OIF.