

As the AP notes, even the [decline in violence in the Anbar province] had little to do with the troop surge: "In truth, the progress in Anbar was initiated by the Iraqis themselves, a point [Defense Secretary Robert] Gates himself made, saying the Sunni tribes decided to fight and retake control from al-Qaida many months before Bush decided to send an extra 4,000 Marines to Anbar as part of his troop buildup."

ACTIONS

1. Regard Gen. Petraeus' report to Congress with the highest skepticism
2. Write/call your elected representatives to say "not one more dime for war funding." Instead, ask them to vote for funding *only* to bring the troops home now.

You may contact any Senator or Representative by calling the Congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121. If you don't know their name, simply give the operator your zip code and s/he will connect you.

Sen. Durbin: <http://durbin.senate.gov/contact.cfm> (202)224-2152
Sen. Obama <http://www.obama.senate.gov/contact/> (202)224-2854

Local contact:

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We Remember

Tuesday, September 11 is the anniversary of the 1973, US-led overthrow of the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile which ushered in the 17 year reign of terror by General Pinochet and the death of more than 3,000 persons.

Tuesday, September 11 is also the anniversary of the 2001 attack against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon killing 3,000 persons resulting in the "War on Terror" which is expected to last, we are told, several generations and puts the US in a permanent state of war.

Tuesday, September 11 is the day General Petraeus is to give his Iraq progress report to Congress. (see the article below for another point of view) President Bush intends to use this report as justification for asking Congress for at least \$150 Billion more this year, beginning in October.

Thursday, September 13 begins the holy month of Ramadan which is considered the most venerated, blessed and spiritually-beneficial month of the Islamic year. Prayers, fasting, charity, and self-accountability are especially stressed at this time.

Thursday, September 13 is also the Jewish "new year" Rosh Hashanah which begins ten Days of Repentance and ends with the holiday Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year.

Iraq Body Count

Running at Double Pace

Steven R. Hurst, AP, 8/25/07

This year's U.S. troop buildup has succeeded in bringing violence in Baghdad down from peak levels, but the death toll from sectarian attacks around the country is running nearly double the pace from a year ago.

Some of the recent bloodshed appears the result of militant fighters drifting into parts of northern Iraq, where they have fled after U.S.-led offensives. Baghdad, however, still accounts for slightly more than half of all war-related killings - the same percentage as a year ago, according to figures compiled by The Associated Press.

The tallies and trends offer a sobering snapshot after an additional 30,000 U.S. troops began campaigns in February to regain control of the Baghdad area. It also highlights one of the major themes expected in [the Sept. 11] Iraq progress report to Congress: some military headway, but extremist factions are far from broken.

In street-level terms, it means life for average Iraqis appears to be even more perilous and unpredictable.

The AP tracking includes Iraqi civilians, government officials, police and security forces killed in attacks such as gunfights and bombings, which are frequently blamed on Sunni suicide strikes. It also includes execution-style killings - largely the work of Shiite death squads.

The figures are considered a minimum based on AP reporting. The actual numbers are likely higher, as many killings go unreported or uncounted. Insurgent deaths are not a part of the Iraqi count.

The findings include:

- Iraq is suffering about double the number of war-related deaths throughout the country compared with last year - an average daily toll of 33 in 2006, and 62 so far this year.
- Nearly 1,000 more people have been killed in violence across Iraq in the first eight months of this year than in all of 2006. So far this year, about 14,800 people have died in war-related attacks and sectarian murders. AP reporting accounted for 13,811 deaths in 2006. The United Nations and other sources placed the 2006 toll far higher.
- Baghdad has gone from representing 76 percent of all civilian and police war-related deaths in Iraq in January to 52 percent in July, bringing it back to the same spot it was roughly a year ago.

According to the Iraqi Red Crescent Organization, the number of displaced Iraqis has more than doubled since the start of the year, from 447,337 on Jan. 1 to 1.14 million on July 31.

(For the complete article see <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20070825/iraq-counting-the-dead/>)

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees believes that 1.7 million Iraqis are displaced inside Iraq, whose prewar population was 21 million.

The U.N. also reports that roughly 40 percent of Iraq's middle class is believed to have fled the country; this in the wake of violence that has cost the lives of at least 2,000 Iraqi doctors since the U.S. invasion in 2003. Their flight has undermined basic services such as water and sanitation and disrupted commerce, making it increasingly difficult for Iraqi society to function.

Neighboring countries are being overwhelmed by the influx of Iraqi refugees. Iraqi refugees now account for 10 percent of the population of Jordan, a nation of only 6 million persons - the equivalent of 30 million landing on U.S. shores. The U.S. has allowed only 466 Iraqis to immigrate under refugee status since 2003 and allocating only \$20 million for Iraqi refugee assistance.