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Introduction

After more than 15 months of planning, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) commenced in March 2003. Major combat operations in Iraq lasted approximately three weeks, but stabilization efforts in that country are, as of this writing, ongoing. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps are increasingly taxed by the demands of the continuing insurgency, with more than 100,000 troops expected to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future. How did Iraq get to this point? Why was the United States so unprepared for the challenges of postwar Iraq?

The evidence suggests that the United States had neither the people nor the plans in place to handle the situation that arose after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Looters took to the streets, damaging much of Iraq's infrastructure that had remained intact throughout major combat. Iraqi police and military units were nowhere to be found, having largely dispersed during combat. U.S. military forces in Baghdad and elsewhere in the country were not prepared to respond rapidly to the initial looting and subsequent large-scale public unrest. These conditions enabled the insurgency to take root, and the Army and Marine Corps have been battling the insurgents ever since.

It is *not* the case that no one planned for postwar Iraq. On the contrary, many agencies and organizations within the U.S. government *did* identify a range of possible postwar challenges in 2002 and early 2003, before major combat commenced, and suggested strategies for addressing them. Some of these ideas seem quite prescient in retrospect. Why, then, were they not incorporated into the planning process? As part of a larger study of OIF, RAND Arroyo Center examined prewar planning for postwar Iraq and the subsequent occupation, and drew lessons and recommendations from the Iraq experience.

U.S. civilian planning was driven by a particular set of assumptions, held by senior policymakers throughout the government, about the conditions that would emerge after major combat and what would be required thereafter. These assumptions—which included U.S. forces being greeted as liberators, the emergence of a stable security situation, and the continued functioning of the Iraqi government min-

istries—remained largely unchallenged. No contingency plans were developed in case these assumptions proved to be incorrect.

Furthermore, senior military commanders assumed that civilian authorities would be responsible for the postwar period. They focused the vast majority of their attention on preparations for and the execution of major combat operations, and assumed that their responsibilities largely ended there. They assumed, incorrectly as it turned out, that the war would have a clearly defined end and they would quickly transfer responsibility for Iraq to civilians. This overlooked the lack of a standing civilian organization capable of taking such responsibility, and the possible requirement that military forces provide basic law and order during any transition period. Furthermore, civilians did not participate in the highly classified war planning process, which would have made coordinated planning for the transition period extremely challenging even if such a standing authority had existed.

This report examines the range of U.S. government planning efforts for postwar Iraq, as well as the challenges that emerged for both military and civilian authorities during the occupation period. Chapters Two through Six examine prewar planning efforts for postwar Iraq. Chapter Two examines military planning, including the plans developed by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC). Chapter Three examines civilian planning, starting with an overview of the interagency process and examining the specific roles of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the National Security Council (NSC) staff. It also summarizes some of the reports and recommendations issued by think tanks and academic institutions that were published before the war. Chapter Four describes Task Force IV (TFIV), an organization created by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to fill some of the gaps in CENTCOM's postwar planning efforts. Chapter Five tells the story of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), the organization created within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) after it had been designated the official lead agency for postwar Iraq. Chapter Six focuses specifically on planning for humanitarian assistance. Such assistance is often considered to be part of reconstruction, but it warrants a separate discussion because humanitarian assistance planning proved to be far more coordinated and effective in this case than reconstruction planning.

Chapter Seven provides an overview of combat operations between the middle of April 2003 and August 2004. It examines the security situation in Iraq in the immediate aftermath of major combat operations, looks at the military organization in theater for Phase IV stability and support operations, describes the major types of attacks conducted by and against coalition forces, and analyzes events reported as significant. This analysis provides a snapshot of continuing combat operations in Iraq through the occupation period.

Chapters Eight through Twelve examine the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the organization established in May 2003 to oversee the reconstruction of Iraq. CPA possessed a much more robust mandate than ORHA, one that confirmed its role as an occupying authority. CPA's orders had the force of law throughout Iraq during its 14-month existence. Its goal was to create a democratic and free Iraq by the end of the occupation period. Chapter Eight starts by discussing the origins, goals, structure, and functions of CPA. The next four chapters examine each of CPA's four core "foundations": Chapter Nine focuses on building Iraq's new security forces; Chapter Ten addresses governance and political reconstruction; Chapter Eleven assesses economic policy; and Chapter Twelve examines the restoration of essential services in Iraq.

Chapter Thirteen concludes the report by analyzing why the United States failed to prepare adequately for the challenges and remained unprepared for the conditions that emerged in postwar Iraq. The chapter identifies some of the unchallenged assumptions and political constraints that limited the planning process, indicates some of their consequences, and concludes with recommendations for U.S. policy and for the U.S. Army.

The purpose of this analysis is to find out where problems occurred and to suggest possibilities to improve planning and operations in the future. The results of such analysis can seem therefore to be overly focused on the negative. This should not be taken to mean that no good was done. In fact, dedicated U.S. and coalition personnel, both military and civilian, engaged in many positive and constructive activities, individually and collectively. That this analysis does not highlight all those activities should not in any way detract from their value. Our focus, however, remains on finding ways to improve.

This volume draws on a wide range of sources, including government documents, press reports, numerous interviews with U.S. civilian and military officials, and, for Chapters Eight through Twelve, the personal experiences of several authors who worked for CPA. Most of those interviewed chose to remain anonymous, but their affiliations are noted so that their statements can be put into context. We have tried to corroborate their statements wherever possible, and we have noted when information was supported by multiple interviews or through published accounts.