

READING PACKET #1

Iraq

Iraq, «*ih RAHK or ih RAK*», is an Arab country at the head of the Persian Gulf in southwestern Asia. The country is bordered by Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. Baghdad is Iraq's capital and largest city.



Map Iraq

The world's first known civilization and other early cultures developed along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq. The ancient Greeks called part of Iraq and the surrounding region *Mesopotamia* (between rivers) because it lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. For thousands of years, civilizations in the region have depended on controlling flooding from the two rivers and on using their waters for irrigation.

Iraq became part of the Arab empire in the A.D. 600's and absorbed Arab Muslim culture. Today, about 75 percent of Iraq's people are Arabs. Iraq also has a large Kurdish population that has struggled on and off for self-government for many years.

Iraq's economy depends heavily on oil exports. From the 1950's through the 1970's, income from the oil industry improved living conditions for Iraq's people.

Between 1980 and 2003, Iraq—under the leadership of President Saddam Hussein—became involved in three wars that have had devastating effects on the country. In the first war, Iraq fought Iran from 1980 to 1988. The second war followed Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990. In response to the invasion, 39 nations sent forces to the region and defeated Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1991. The third war, called the Iraq War, began in 2003. A military coalition led by United States forces invaded Iraq and overthrew Hussein. A new Iraqi government later took office. However, the country was left unstable and on the brink of civil war. Iraqi and foreign militants, claiming to fight for Iraq's freedom from invaders, have carried out many attacks against coalition troops and their Iraqi allies, both military and civilian.

Government



Picture

Iraq flag and coat of arms

National government. Iraq's Constitution, approved in a 2005 referendum, made the country a federal republic. The legislature is called the Council of Representatives. Voters elect council members to four-year terms. The political party with the largest number of seats nominates the prime minister, who must be approved by the council. The council also elects the president and two deputy presidents. The president and prime minister serve four-year terms, and the president may serve up to two terms. The prime minister is the head of government.

Local government. Iraq has 18 provinces called *governorates*. In addition, the Constitution provides for a Kurdistan Regional Government for the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq.

Armed forces. In 2003, after U.S.-led military forces overthrew President Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi armed forces were dissolved. The U.S.-led coalition forces then assumed responsibility for Iraq's security and defense. A new Iraqi military force, assembled and trained by the U.S. military, has been cooperating with coalition forces in fighting militants since late 2003.

Before the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the Iraqi army was one of the world's largest, with an estimated 955,000 troops. After the 1991 war, the Iraqi army had an estimated 350,000 troops. The Iraqi armed forces now have about 15,000 troops.

People

Iraq's population has been expanding rapidly. About three-fourths of Iraq's people live in a fertile plain that extends from Baghdad south along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This area has many of Iraq's largest cities and towns.



Map
Iraq: Ethnic groups

Arabs make up about 75 percent of Iraq's population. About 20 percent of the people belong to Iraq's largest ethnic minority, the Kurds. Other ethnic groups in Iraq include Armenians, Assyrians, Turkomans, and Yazidis.

Language. Arabic is spoken throughout Iraq. Kurdish is spoken in Kurdish areas. Both are official languages.



Picture
Paradise Square in Baghdad

City life. Most of Iraq's people live in cities. The number of people in urban areas has increased dramatically since the 1940's as a result of migration from rural areas. Many people have moved to the cities in search of work. Others fled rural villages and southern Iraqi cities that were damaged by wars. Overflowing urban populations have resulted in severe unemployment and housing shortages in some cities.



Picture
Craftsmen in Iraq

Wealthy city dwellers work in business and government. Many of them live in the suburbs. People at middle-income levels include office workers, craftworkers, and small business owners. Many of them reside in apartments in the cities. Many laborers and factory and oil workers commute to city jobs from nearby villages.

Clothing styles vary in Iraq's cities. Middle-class and wealthy people generally wear clothing similar to that worn by North Americans and Europeans. Most laborers prefer traditional clothes. For men, these garments include long cotton gowns and jackets. Traditional dress for women consists of a long, concealing gown and a scarf that covers much of the head.

Rural life. Many people in rural Iraq are villagers who farm for a living. Many farmers lease land from the government. Herders form a small part of rural society. Bedouin *nomads* herd camels, goats, and sheep in western Iraq. Nomads are people who move with the seasons to find pastureland for their herds. Some Kurds graze livestock in northern Iraq.

Buildings in the rural areas of southern and central Iraq are made of dried mud and brick. In the north, villagers build stone houses.

Clothing in the countryside is traditional. Arab men wear gowns and checkered headdresses. Women dress in long black robes, and some veil their faces. Kurdish men wear shirts and baggy trousers with sashes. Kurdish women wear trousers but cover them with a dress.

Food and drink. Iraqis eat a varied diet that includes vegetables, rice, flat bread, meat, fish, and dates. Bread, rice, and meat are the main foods at many meals. Grilled lamb, chicken, and fish are popular. *Sanbusak*, a traditional Iraqi dish, consists of moon-shaped dough stuffed with cheese or meat. Popular beverages in Iraq include tea, coffee, and fruit juices.

Recreation. Iraqis enjoy a variety of sports and games, including soccer, horse racing, backgammon, and chess. Weddings and other family events are occasions for traditional folk dances and songs.

Religion. About 95 percent of Iraq's people are Muslims. Over half of Iraq's Muslims are Shi'ites (members of the Shi'ah branch of Islam). The other Muslims belong to the Sunni division. Most Arabs living southeast of Baghdad are Shi'ites. Central and southwestern Iraq have a mixture of Sunni and Shi'ite Arab populations. The Kurds are Sunnis. Christians and other groups make up about 5 percent of the population. When the Baath Party ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003, most of its high-ranking members were Arab Sunni Muslims. Many Shi'ites resented the Sunni monopoly on governmental power.



Picture

Iraq Museum in Baghdad

Education. Iraqi law requires all children from ages 6 through 12 to attend school. Some children continue their education in vocational or secondary schools. Iraq has many universities, including those in Arbil, Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and Tikrit. A higher percentage of men than women attend colleges and universities. Over half of Iraq's adult population can read and write.

The land

Iraq's land regions are (1) the northern plain, (2) the southern plain, (3) the mountains, and (4) the desert.

The northern plain, a region of dry, rolling land, lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers north of the city of Samarra. The highest hills in the area rise about 1,000 feet (300 meters) above sea level. There are a small number of farming villages in the northern plain.

The southern plain begins near Samarra and extends southeast to the Persian Gulf. It includes the fertile delta between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where many people live. The Tigris and Euphrates meet at the town of Al Qurnah and form the Shatt al Arab river, which empties into the gulf. Some major oil fields lie between the Shatt al Arab and the border with Kuwait.

Complex dam and irrigation systems control the flow of water in the southern plain. As a result, the region has experienced rising farm productivity and more permanent human settlement, especially north of Al Kut. Much of the area south of Al Kut is marshland, due to frequent flooding and poor drainage. In the 1990's, the government drained much of the marshland, harming the environment and local communities. In 2003, local residents began reflooding the area to restore the marshland.

The mountains of northeast Iraq are part of a range called the Zagros in Iran and Iraq that runs into the Taurus Mountains of Turkey. The mountains rise to more than 10,000 feet (3,000 meters) near Iraq's borders with Iran and Turkey. Kurds live in the region's foothills and valleys. Valuable oil fields in the region lie near the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk.

The desert covers southwestern and western Iraq. Most of this region of limestone hills and sand dunes is part of the Syrian Desert, which stretches into Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Scattered throughout the desert are *wadis*—valleys that are dry most of the year but become rivers after a rain.

Climate

Iraq's climate ranges from moderate in the north to semitropical in the east and southeast. The west and southwest have a desert climate—warm or hot days and much cooler nights. Summer high temperatures average more than 100 °F (38 °C) throughout much of Iraq. Winter low temperatures may drop to around 35 °F (2 °C) in the desert and in the north.

In general, little rain falls in Iraq. Average annual precipitation ranges from 5 inches (13 centimeters) of rain in the desert to 15 inches (38 centimeters) of rain and snow in the northern mountains. Most of the precipitation falls between November and April.

Economy

The export of oil has played a vital role in Iraq's economy since the 1950's. But Iraq has tried to become less dependent on oil exports by expanding other industries. In the 1970's, Iraq's economy prospered. But starting in the 1980's, wars greatly damaged the economy. Trade routes were disrupted, ports were closed, and factories were destroyed. Also, a United Nations (UN) trade embargo imposed in August 1990 halted all oil exports from Iraq. The embargo was partially lifted in 1996 and fully lifted in 2003.

Industry includes mining, manufacturing, and construction. Oil is the chief mineral resource. Iraq was once the second-largest producer of oil in the Middle East. In the early 1980's, the oil industry accounted for about 60 percent of Iraq's *gross domestic product* (GDP), the total value of all goods and services produced within the country in a year. But war damaged many oil reservoirs, pipelines, and refineries, and interfered with the oil trade. Iraq's major oil fields are in southern Iraq near the Kuwait border, and west of Kirkuk in the north. Other natural resources mined in Iraq include phosphates, sulfur, and natural gas.

Oil refining and petrochemical production make up an important industry, despite wartime damage to refineries. Several of Iraq's chemical and oil plants are near the cities of Baiji, Basra, and Kirkuk. Other factories in Iraq process farm products or make such goods as cloth, soap, beverages, cement, iron, and steel.

Service industries provide jobs for many of the country's workers. Before the Iraq War, the government employed about 25 percent of the work force. Other major service industries in Iraq include banking and real estate.

Agriculture. Iraq was importing about 70 percent of its food before the 1990 UN trade embargo. The government invested heavily in agriculture, but poor organization and a lack of labor and private investment have hampered growth. Major crops harvested in Iraq include barley, dates, grapes, rice, tomatoes, and wheat.

Energy sources. Oil and natural gas are the main sources of energy in Iraq. War has interfered with the availability of electric power in the country.

International trade. Oil accounts for most of Iraq's exports. The UN trade embargo, which began in 1990, halted all oil exports from Iraq. In 1996, the embargo was eased when a UN "oil-for-food" program was implemented. Under this program, Iraq was allowed to export oil in exchange for food, medical supplies, and other nonmilitary goods. In 2003, the UN trade embargo was lifted, allowing oil exports to fully resume.

Transportation and communication. Airlines, including the government-owned Iraqi Airways, link Iraq's cities. Airports in Baghdad and other cities handle international flights. Roads and railways also connect Iraq's largest cities to one another. The shipping facilities at Basra, once a major port, were damaged during Iraq's wars. As a result, use of the port has been limited. Many Iraqis rely on public transportation because they cannot afford automobiles. In cities, many people ride bicycles. In the countryside, people often use buses, donkeys, and camels for transportation.

Under the Baath Party regime, the government controlled all print and broadcast media that originated in Iraq, except for the media in Kurdish-run areas of the north. After the Baath regime was overthrown in 2003, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority established radio and television stations in the country. These stations were incorporated into a new Iraqi Public Broadcasting Service. In addition, Iraq has more than 100 private newspapers and magazines and several private radio and TV stations. Iraqis can also pick up radio and TV broadcasts from other countries.

History

Early days. The world's first known civilization developed in Sumer, now southeastern Iraq, about 3500 B.C. Sumer was part of Mesopotamia, an area that included most of present-day Iraq and parts of Syria and Turkey. Other ancient civilizations, including Assyria and Babylonia, flourished along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers between about 3500 and 539 B.C.

In 539 B.C., the Persians conquered Mesopotamia. Greek and Macedonian armies under Alexander the Great took the area from the Persians in 331 B.C. Greek rule continued until the Parthians, from the Caspian Sea area, established control by 126 B.C. Except for brief periods of Roman rule, the Parthians controlled Mesopotamia until about A.D. 224. That year, the Persian Sasanian *dynasty* (family of rulers) overthrew the Parthian Empire. The Sasanians ruled for about 400 years.

Arab rule. Arabs conquered the Sasanians in 637. The Arabs brought the religion of Islam and the Arabic language to Mesopotamia. The Abbasid dynasty came to power in 750 and soon founded Baghdad as the capital of the Arab empire. Under the Abbasids, Arab civilization reached great heights. By 800, Baghdad had nearly a million people and was a world center of trade and culture.

In 1258, Mongols from central Asia invaded Mesopotamia and destroyed the Arab empire. The Mongols neglected Mesopotamia, and the region deteriorated culturally and economically under their rule.

Ottoman control. The Ottoman Empire, based in what is now Turkey, began to control Mesopotamia in the early 1500's. The Ottomans battled with the Persians and local Arab leaders to maintain control.

During the 1700's and 1800's, the Ottoman Empire declined in power and size in the face of new, strong nations that developed in Europe. The United Kingdom became involved in the Persian Gulf region in the 1800's to protect its trade routes with India, which was then under British rule. By World War I (1914-1918), the United Kingdom had become interested in Mesopotamia's oil resources.

British rule. British troops took over Mesopotamia during World War I. In 1920, the League of Nations, a forerunner to the United Nations, gave the British a *mandate* (order to rule) over the area. The British set up a new government there in 1921. They renamed the country Iraq and chose an Arab prince as King Faisal I. See Back in Time: [Iraq \(1922\)](#).

During the 1920's, British advisers retained positions in the Iraqi government, and the British controlled Iraq's army, foreign policy, finances, and oil resources. Some Iraqis opposed British involvement, and a movement for independence developed.

Independence. Under pressure from Iraq's independence movement, the United Kingdom signed a treaty with Iraq in 1930. In the treaty, the British promised military protection and eventual independence for Iraq. In return, Iraq promised the United Kingdom continued use of British air bases in Iraq. It also agreed to use British foreign advisers only. The British mandate over Iraq ended in 1932, and Iraq joined the League of Nations as an independent country.

In the 1930's, Iraq's politicians disagreed over the alliance with the United Kingdom. King Faisal worked to balance the interests of Iraq's political factions and to unify the country's ethnic and religious groups. Faisal died in 1933, and his son Ghazi became king. Ghazi was a weak ruler, and tribal and ethnic rebellions broke out. In 1936, anti-British groups in the army took control of the government, though Ghazi officially was still king. Ghazi died in 1939. His 3-year-old son, Faisal II, became king, but the boy's uncle, Prince Abdul Ilah, ruled for him.

In 1940 and 1941, during World War II, Iraqi government leaders and army officers sought an alliance with the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. They hoped the alliance would end British influence in Iraq. The British tried to use Iraq as a military base in the war, as authorized under the 1930 treaty, and an armed conflict broke out. The British defeated the Iraqi army in 1941, and the pro-Axis leaders left the country. Iraq declared war on the Axis in 1943.

Inflation and supply shortages brought on by World War II transformed Iraq's society and economy. A wide economic gap developed between the rich and poor. Many Iraqis blamed the government for their economic situation.

In 1948, Iraq joined other Arab countries in a war against the new nation of Israel. The Arab defeat in the war touched off protests in Iraq and other Arab lands.

The 1950's. In 1950 and 1952, Iraq signed new agreements with foreign oil companies. The 1952 deal gave Iraq half of the profits from oil drilled there. As a result of the agreements, Iraq's oil revenues rose dramatically. The government used some of this money to build hospitals, irrigation projects, roads, and schools. But the increased amount of money also caused serious inflation.

King Faisal II took full power in 1953 at the age of 18. In the 1950's, opposition to the monarchy grew. Many Iraqis wanted a voice in government. Others felt that they had not benefited enough from Iraq's oil profits. In addition, a large number of Iraqis opposed the government's ties to the West. In particular, they objected to the Baghdad Pact—a U.S.-supported mutual defense accord that Iraq signed with Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the

United Kingdom in 1955. Many Iraqis felt that the ties with the West went against the *Pan-Arabism* movement. Advocates of Pan-Arabism believed that Arab countries should strive for political unity and be free of outside influence. In 1958, army officers overthrew the government and declared Iraq a republic. The rebels killed King Faisal and Prince Abdul Ilah.

The republic. The army officers set up a three-man Sovereignty Council consisting of a Shi`ite Arab, a Kurd, and a Sunni Arab. The council issued a temporary constitution giving a cabinet the power to rule by decree with the council's approval. General Abdul Karim Kassem (also spelled Qasim), who led the revolution, became Iraq's premier. He reversed Iraq's pro-West policy and accepted both economic and military aid from Communist countries. He worked to develop industry in Iraq and set up land reform programs aimed at narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

In 1961, Kurdish leaders asked Kassem to give the Kurds complete *autonomy* (self-rule) within Iraq and a share of the revenues from oil fields in northern Iraq. Kassem rejected the plan. In response, the Kurds revolted. A cease-fire was finally declared in 1964.



Picture
Coup in Iraq in 1958

In 1963, army officers and supporters of the Pan-Arabism movement assassinated Kassem. The Pan-Arabists, led by the Baath Party, took control of Iraq. They named Abdul Salam Arif president and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr prime minister. Both were army officers. Later that year, Arif used the military to take over the government and remove the Baath Party from power. Arif died in 1966, and his brother, Abdul Rahman Arif, became president. The Arifs followed socialist economic policies.

Bakr overthrew Arif in 1968 and reestablished Baath control. The Baath Party soon began to dominate all aspects of Iraqi politics. Party leaders wrote a new constitution in 1970 that institutionalized Baath control of the government. Bakr supported further socialist economic reform and stronger ties with the Soviet Union. During Bakr's presidency, Saddam Hussein, who held important party and government posts, gained influence.

In 1973, the Iraqi government completed a take-over of foreign oil companies in the country. This *nationalization* of the oil industry made Iraq instantly wealthy.



Picture
Saddam Hussein

In 1970, Bakr signed an agreement with the Kurds that ended years of on-and-off fighting. The government promised that, beginning in 1974, the Kurds would have self-rule and several posts in the government. New fighting erupted in 1974 after the Kurds objected to revisions in the agreement. The revised agreement gave limited autonomy to the Kurds in the Kurdish Autonomous Region in northern Iraq. Government forces largely defeated the Kurds by March 1975. After Bakr resigned as president in 1979, Saddam Hussein succeeded him.

War with Iran. In September 1980, Iraq invaded Iran, and war broke out.(see Back in Time: [Iraq \(1980\)](#)). The war resulted partly from boundary disputes, from Iran's support of the rebellious Kurds, and from the efforts of

Shi`ite leaders in Iran to incite rebellion in Iraq's Shi`ite population. Also, Iraqi leaders believed Iran had become somewhat unstable as a result of its 1979 Islamic revolution. They felt Iran's weakened position offered Iraq a chance to build its power in the region.

The war lasted eight years. Over 150,000 Iraqi soldiers died. Iranian air attacks on major cities wounded and killed many Iraqi civilians. The war also severely damaged Iraq's economy. Bombs damaged oil facilities in southern Iraq, and Persian Gulf trade was disrupted. Iraq and Iran agreed on a cease-fire in August 1988. See Back in Time: [Iraq \(1988\)](#).

During the war with Iran, Iraq's Kurds supported Iran. In 1987 and 1988, the Iraqi government lashed out against the Kurds. The army released poison gas in Kurdish villages, killing thousands of people. There also were reports that the army destroyed several Kurdish towns and that the inhabitants fled to Turkey and Iran.



Map
Persian Gulf War of 1991

The Persian Gulf War of 1991. In August 1990, Iraqi forces invaded and occupied Kuwait. Hussein had accused Kuwait of violating oil production limits set by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), thus lowering the worldwide price of oil. Iraq and Kuwait had also disagreed over territory and over Iraq's multibillion-dollar debt to Kuwait. The UN called for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and passed a resolution stating that all nations should stop trading with Iraq, except for food and medical supplies under certain circumstances. A coalition of 39 countries, organized mainly by the UN and the United States, opposed the invasion and sent armed forces to the Persian Gulf region. See Back in Time: [Iraq \(1990\)](#).

In November 1990, the UN Security Council approved the use of force to remove Iraqi troops from Kuwait if they did not leave by Jan. 15, 1991. Iraq refused to withdraw. War broke out between the allied forces and Iraq early on January 17 (January 16 in the United States). The allies bombed Iraqi military targets in Iraq and Kuwait. Iraq launched missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel. On February 24, allied land forces began moving into Iraq and Kuwait. They defeated the Iraqis after 100 hours. On February 27 (February 28 in the war area), U.S. President George H. W. Bush declared a halt to allied military operations. See Back in Time: [Iraq \(1991\)](#).



Picture
Bombing damage in Baghdad in 1991

The war devastated Iraq. Estimates of Iraqi soldiers killed range from about 1,500 to as many as 100,000. A great number of civilians also died. Allied air raids destroyed roads, bridges, factories, and oil industry facilities and disrupted electric, telephone, and water service. Diseases spread through contaminated drinking water because water purification and sewage treatment facilities could not operate without electric power.

In March 1991, Kurdish and Shi`ite uprisings broke out. By April, Iraqi troops had put down most of the rebellions, but some fighting continued. Refugees fled to Iran and Turkey. The allies ferried supplies to them and set up a safety zone in northern Iraq to protect Kurds.

Iraq accepted the terms of a cease-fire agreement on April 6. On April 11, the UN Security Council officially declared an end to the war. In the agreement, Iraq promised to pay Kuwait for war damages. Iraq also agreed to destroy all of its biological and chemical weapons, its facilities for producing such weapons, and any facilities or materials it might have for producing nuclear weapons. The UN continued the trade embargo to pressure Iraq to carry out its agreements.

Iraq had also been staging air attacks against Shi`ites in southern Iraq who continued to oppose the government. In August 1992, to protect the Shi`ites, the allies imposed a ban on Iraqi military and civilian aircraft over the region. The safety zone in the Kurdish region also included a flight ban. The areas where flights were banned came to be called “no-fly” zones. The no-fly zone in the south did little to protect the Shi`ites. The government sent troops and tanks against the Shi`ites and destroyed dozens of villages. In 1993, the government began to drain the marshlands inhabited by Shi`ites known as the Marsh Arabs. As a result, Marsh Arabs who grew rice in these lands were deprived of a source of food. Thousands of Marsh Arabs and other Shi`ites fled to Iran.

In 1994, fighting broke out between rival Kurdish groups in the northern safety zone. In August 1996, Iraqi troops and tanks entered the zone in support of one of the Kurdish groups. The United States opposed this action, and in September launched missiles against military targets in southern Iraq. At the same time, the United States expanded the southern no-fly zone.

In December 1996, the UN began an "oil-for-food" program that partially lifted the embargo on Iraq. This program allowed Iraq to export oil under strict UN supervision. Most money from the oil sales was to be used to buy food and medicine for the civilian population. However, investigations later revealed that Hussein abused the program and profited illegally from oil sales.

Iraq had frequently failed to cooperate with UN teams sent to inspect suspected weapons sites. In 1998, Iraq began to refuse the entry of UN weapons inspectors into the country. In December of that year, the United States and the United Kingdom launched a series of air strikes against Iraq. United States and British officials said the attacks were to limit Iraq's ability to make *weapons of mass destruction*—that is, biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. Afterward, U.S. and British planes attacked targets in Iraq many times to enforce the no-fly zones and to disable Iraq's air-defense systems.



Picture
UN weapons inspections

By 2002, Iraq still had not fulfilled the terms of the 1991 cease-fire agreement. Under threat of military attack by the United States, Iraq allowed inspectors to return. During the inspections, the United States continued to accuse Iraq of violating the UN disarmament terms and maintained its threat of military action.



Picture
Military action against Iraq in 2003

The Iraq War. On March 20, 2003 (March 19 in the United States), U.S.-led forces launched an air attack against Baghdad, marking the beginning of the Iraq War. The U.S. government claimed the military campaign was intended to overthrow Saddam Hussein and to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and its ability to produce them. British, Australian, Polish, and Danish forces participated in the war effort. The United States

began the war without UN support. Although a number of countries, including Spain and Portugal, expressed support for the war effort, many others—notably France, Germany, Russia, and China—said the war was unjustified without clear UN backing.



Picture

Statue of Saddam Hussein falls

After the initial strike on March 20, the U.S.-led coalition continued its campaign of heavy bombardment of Baghdad. Tens of thousands of coalition ground troops advanced through southern Iraq toward the city, sometimes meeting stiff resistance from Iraqi forces. Coalition air and ground attacks also occurred elsewhere in Iraq. The coalition troops reached Baghdad in early April. On April 9, they took control of central Baghdad.

By mid-April, coalition forces held all of Iraq's major cities. A U.S.-led administration called the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) assumed control of Iraq. Looting broke out in several cities, and coalition troops tried to establish order. Coalition officials also began searching for weapons of mass destruction. On May 1, United States President George W. Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended.

Later in May, the UN Security Council voted to end the UN trade embargo against Iraq. Critics of the embargo estimate that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis suffered severe hardship and even death under the sanctions.

In July, Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay, who had held high-ranking positions in their father's regime, were killed in a firefight with U.S. troops. In December 2003, U.S. troops captured Hussein himself near Tikrit.

In June 2004, the CPA was dissolved, and power was handed over to an *interim* (temporary) Iraqi government. Iyad Allawi—a former Baath Party member who later became an opponent of Hussein and went into exile—became prime minister of the government.

Since May 2003, coalition troops and Iraqi police have faced much resistance from both Sunni and Shi'ite militants in Iraq. Militants have carried out deadly guerrilla attacks and bombings against both military and nonmilitary targets. High-profile targets have included the UN headquarters in Baghdad; the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, a major holy site for Shi'ite Muslims; two Kurdish political party offices in Arbil; and sites in Baghdad and Karbala where Shi'ites gather each year for the religious festival of Ashura.

Since mid-2004, coalition troops have had frequent clashes with Iraqi Sunni militants in central Iraq, especially in Fallujah and Baghdad. They have also fought with Iraqi Shi'ite militants loyal to the radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada (also spelled Moqtada) al-Sadr. A group believed to have ties to the worldwide terrorist network al-Qa`ida has been blamed for a number of attacks. In mid-2004, Sunni militants gained control of Fallujah and a few nearby cities. United States and Iraqi forces regained control of Fallujah in November 2004 after launching major air and ground assaults on the city.

In late 2004, the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) issued a report stating that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. The ISG, a team of American and British experts, conducted the search for weapons of mass destruction on behalf of the coalition.

In 2005, a special Iraqi court formally charged Hussein with ordering the massacre of over 140 Shi'ites in 1982. The court later charged him with genocide for killing over 100,000 Kurds in the 1980's. In November 2006, the court convicted Hussein of the Shi'ite massacre charges and sentenced him to death by hanging. He was

executed the following month. Some observers criticized the methods and procedures of Hussein's trial and execution.



Picture

Nouri al-Maliki and Ibrahim al-Jafari

There are no official estimates of how many Iraqis have died as a result of the war. Most observers believe that tens of thousands of Iraqis, mostly civilians, have died. Some observers believe there may have been several hundred thousand Iraqi deaths.

A new government. In January 2005, an election was held for a transitional National Assembly for Iraq. Before the election, Sunni militants had threatened to disrupt the election with violence. Nevertheless, nearly 60 percent of all eligible voters went to the polls. Most of the voters were Shi'ite Arabs and Kurds, and a Shi'ite religious alliance won a majority of seats in the Assembly. A large number of Iraq's Sunni Arabs *boycotted* (refused to participate in) the election. Many objected to the *proportional representation* system introduced in the Assembly under the interim constitution. Such representation awards a political party a percentage of seats in the legislature in proportion to its share of the total vote cast. Some Sunnis also stayed away from the polls for fear that they would be attacked.

In April 2005, Ibrahim al-Jafari, a Shi'ite, was named interim prime minister of Iraq. Jafari was part of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), the political group that won the Assembly election. The Assembly oversaw the preparation of a new constitution for Iraq. In October, Iraqis approved the Constitution in a nationwide referendum.

In December 2005, Iraqis elected a permanent Council of Representatives to replace the National Assembly. The UIA received the most seats and nominated Jafari as prime minister. However, the other parties in the Assembly did not accept his nomination. He withdrew his candidacy in April 2006. The UIA then nominated Nouri Kamel al-Maliki, a Shi'ite, as prime minister, and the council approved his nomination. He became prime minister in May. The council also elected Jalal Talabani, a Kurd who had served as interim president, to a four-year term as president.

Contributor:

• Samira Haj, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, College of Staten Island Graduate Center, City University of New York.

How to cite this article:

To cite this article, World Book recommends the following format:

Haj, Samira. "Iraq." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2009. Web. 23 Oct. 2009