

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2009

Contact: Jared Young

202-293-5550

AHEAD OF IRAQ VOTE, ISW RELEASES DIYALA PROVINCE POLITICAL REPORT

WASHINGTON DC – Just before Iraqis head to the polls tomorrow to vote in the first provincial election since 2005, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) today released its latest Iraq Report on the political maneuvering that has taken place in the highly volatile province of Diyala. *Iraq Report 13: Countdown to Diyala's Provincial Election: Maliki & The IIP*, written by ISW Research Analyst Claire Russo, examines how Sunni and Shia political movements have battled for control of Diyala, and how Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki has tried to consolidate his own power in the process. *Iraq Report 13: Countdown to Diyala's Provincial Election: Maliki & The IIP* can be found at: <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/countdown-diyalas-provincial-election-maliki-iip>.

Key Findings from *Iraq Report 13: Countdown to Diyala's Provincial Election: Maliki & The IIP*

- The elections in Diyala Province are critical to the Sunni population of the province who, though the majority of the population, are underrepresented in the legislature as a result of their boycott of the 2005 elections. This disproportionate allocation of political power has contributed to the sectarian and political struggle that has inflamed the province.
- Beginning in 2007, the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), one of the few Sunni groups to participate in the 2005 election, launched a successful outreach campaign to enhance its stature and political support among the Sunnis of Diyala Province by successfully exploiting their partnership with the Coalition Forces and by organizing grassroots Sunni security forces based on the model of the Al Anbar Province Awakening.
- In response to the Sunni's growing power in Diyala Province, in mid-2007, Prime Minister Maliki created a system of Tribal Support Councils with the purported goal of promoting reconciliation and resettlement. These Tribal Support Councils, along with his use of the Iraqi Security Forces, has enabled Maliki to effectively limit the quickly growing power of the Sunnis in Diyala.
- The IIP stand to do well in the upcoming elections among the Sunni electorate because the recently passed elections law favors parties with greater financial resources and candidates with greater name-recognition, both of which the IIP and its coalition have in greater abundance than their Sunni political rivals.
- The IIP are nevertheless competing against well established and more experienced Kurdish and Shia political parties. Moreover, there are many among the Sunni population who are disaffected with the IIP. It is likely that, although the Sunnis are expected to take a greater number of Diyala's Provincial Council seats in this election, many among the Sunni electorate will be disappointed by the election's outcome.

Claire Russo holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Politics from Tulane University. While at Tulane, she studied counterinsurgency operations, American foreign policy, and Arab language and culture. Claire served in the Marine Corps for four years as an Intelligence Officer. In 2006, she deployed to Fallujah, Iraq where she completed one tour of duty and rose to the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

ISW is a private, nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution whose goal is to educate current and future decision makers and thereby enhance the quality of policy debates. The Institute's work is addressed to government officials and legislators, teachers and students, business executives, professionals, journalists, and all citizens interested in a serious understanding of war and government policy.

###