

THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR



Backgrounder # 17

The Fight for Diwaniyah: The Sadrist Trend and ISCI Struggle for Supremacy

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Even as U.S. operations to co-opt large elements of the Sunni insurgency and target irreconcilable al-Qaeda in Iraq fighters resulted in lower levels of violence during the summer, U.S. forces have simultaneously pursued rogue elements of Muqtada as-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). These operations, often in collaboration with Iraqi Security Forces friendly to Sadr's main Shi'a rival, the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI), took place within the broader context of a violent struggle between ISCI and the Sadrist Trend for supremacy within the Shi'a community, the lucrative income from control of the Shi'a shrines, and control of southern oil fields. This struggle has increasingly centered on the city of Diwaniyah, located in southern Iraq, approximately halfway between the capital of Baghdad and the southern port city of Basrah.



Map 1: Central Iraq; Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping.

The city sits along Highway Eight, running from Basrah to Baghdad and Main Supply Route (MSR) Tampa, the chief link between U.S. facilities in Kuwait and U.S. forces deployed in central and northern Iraq. Furthermore, it sits at the road junction linking Highway Eight to the city of Najaf, the home of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the senior Shi'a cleric in Iraq and an ally of ISCI. Since April, it has been the scene of persistent violence between the forces of the Sadrist Trend, Shi'a extremists, and ISCI and its allies in the Iraqi government. This violence recently culminated in the ongoing Operation Lion Pounce, an Iraqi-led effort to clear the city of extremists.

The Sadrist Trend and the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq

The Sadrist Trend is composed of a number of different organizations, whose responsiveness to Muqtada as-Sadr is uncertain. Originally built around Sadr and his militia, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), or Mahdi Army, the Trend has also come to encompass other organizations, like the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), a social service organization named after Muqtada as-Sadr's late father, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a prominent Shi'a cleric. The Trend also includes offices responsible for liaison with tribal elements in the south, as well as the Martyr of God Organization, which supports veterans and families of dead Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters.¹ Over the last eighteen months, Sadr has struggled to maintain control of this movement, and elements known alternatively as "secret cells" or "Special Groups" or "rogue Jaysh al-Mahdi" have continued to fight coalition forces, Iraqi security forces, and prey on Sunni and Shi'a civilians.² These fighters, often referred to collectively as Shi'a extremists, have links to the Sadrist Trend but it is unclear whether they operate independently of the Trend or in conjunction with it. They have also been one of the principal targets of U.S. operations over the summer of 2007.³

Unlike the Sadrist Trend, the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI) is generally regarded as well-organized, highly disciplined, and consolidated under the control of the Hakim family. Founded in Iran by Iraqi exiles and known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) until it changed its name earlier this year, ISCI has deep links to the Iraqi security forces and controls seven of the nine southern provinces. The organization is closely linked with the Hakim family; it is run by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, while his son Ammar is responsible for Shaheed al-Mihrab, the ISCI counterpart to Sadr's OMS. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, while formally neutral, was instrumental in the formation of the United Iraqi Alliance, the main Shi'a coalition headed by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, and is generally considered an ally of ISCI.⁴

Since the ratification of the constitution, and the elections that brought the United Iraqi Alliance into power, SCIRI has consistently maneuvered for the creation of a semi-autonomous region in the Shi'a south, analogous to the Kurdish Regional Government in the north.⁵ This project has been fiercely opposed by the Sunni community as well as by nationalist Shi'a like Muqtada as-Sadr and the Fadilah Party. The creation of semi-autonomous regions is particularly important because regions are constitutionally empowered to raise and control internal security forces, whereas provinces, constitutionally, lack this power. The Council of Representatives (COR) passed a law in October 2006 outlining the procedures for creating semi-autonomous regions; each province that wishes to join must hold a separate referendum, and these referendums cannot begin prior to April 2008, as the COR imposed an eighteen-month blackout period. The

requirement for individual provincial referendums makes control of provincial governments key for ISCI and the Sadrist Trend, as the provincial governments will be responsible for organizing the referendum, regulating the campaign prior to the vote, providing security for voting centers, and reporting the results. The importance of provincial government control helps to explain the concentrated fight in Diwaniyah between the Shi'a factions.

The Fight for Diwaniyah

Control of Diwaniyah was first contested in April 2007, after the headquarters of Multi-National Division – Central South (MND-CS) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Echo had been exposed to months of repeated indirect fire by JAM militants.⁶ In response, coalition forces launched Operation Black Eagle, launched on April 6th, involving approximately 3,300 U.S. and Iraqi troops.⁷ These forces, including the 1-14th Cavalry, which entered Diwaniyah, encountered organized resistance for militants, and executed a series of cordon and sweep operations.⁸ The aim of the operation was to “re-establish security in the area and create an environment where the government can improve the quality of life for the people of...Diwaniyah.”⁹ Although the 8th Iraqi Army (IA) was nominally responsible for planning and executing this operation, there was significant U.S. participation. Approximately sixty Shi'a extremists were detained, but the operation was a failure; security was not re-established in Diwaniyah.¹⁰ Although there was a brief drop in indirect fire attacks while the 1-14th Cavalry remained in Diwaniyah, indirect fire attacks on FOB Echo rose after their departure and would average over 100 a month through September.¹¹ The failure of Operation Black Eagle demonstrated the futility of cordon and sweep operations in a counterinsurgency campaign without a corresponding plan to maintain presence and provide security for the population



Photo 1: Eighth Iraqi Army Division soldiers prepare to capture suspected militia members during Operation Black Eagle, April 9, Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq; Sgt. Rob Summitt

This operation was followed by a series of assassinations of ISCI and Sadrist Trend figures across the south, although none in Diwaniyah. Shaykh Rahim Muhammad Nayef, the head of the Sadr office in Babil Province was killed on June 5th, followed by Shaykh Rahim al-Hassanawi, a prominent cleric and representative of al-Sistani in the Miskhab district of Najaf.¹² Sadr and Sistani met on June 10th in Najaf to “discuss the political and security situation in the country” but if they agreed to work to reduce violence between the Sadrist Trend and ISCI, they were not successful.¹³ The head of the Sadrist office in Iskandariyah in Babil Province was killed a week and a half later, followed by a string of assassinations targeting Sistani officials in July and early August.¹⁴ Several more Sistani associates, including a senior official in Sistani’s office in Najaf, Shaykh Abdallah Falak, the official formerly responsible for guarding the Mosque of Imam Ali, Kadhem al-Bederi, and a Sistani deputy, Fadel al-Aql, were all killed between July 21st and August 3rd.¹⁵ The Sistani office in Hillah in Babil Province was bombed on August 6th, although no one was killed.¹⁶

This assassination campaign reached its climax in August, when Khalil Jalil Hamza, Governor of Qadisiyah Province, and Muhammad al-Hassani, Governor of Muthanna Province, were both killed by improvised explosive devices, possibly multiple explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) arranged in an array to increase lethality.¹⁷ Both governors were members of ISCI, and al-Hassani was a former member of the Badr Organization.¹⁸ Khalil Jalil Hamza was returning from a meeting in Afak, a JAM stronghold to the east of Diwaniyah when he was killed on August 11th, along with the Diwaniyah Police Chief, Maj. Gen. Khalid Hamza.¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, given the dominance of ISCI in the provincial security forces, Hamza was also a member of ISCI. Al-Hassani was killed ten days later in Al-Rumaythah by an EFP array targeting his car. Although there is no documented history, al-Hassani apparently had difficult relations with JAM in his province.²⁰

While there was no direct evidence implicating JAM, or the Iranian-backed Special Groups with links to JAM, suspicion immediately fell upon them.²¹ The targets were both prominent ISCI figures with powerful positions in their respective provincial governments, at the front lines of previous moves against the Sadrist Trend, especially in Diwaniyah. The means used in the second attack, explosively formed penetrators, have been the means of choice for the Iranian-backed Special Groups. The killings took place in southern provinces, where these groups are known to have operated, and where the other possible perpetrator, al-Qaeda in Iraq, would have difficulty operating given the sectarian demographics.

Even in the absence of firm proof, ISCI held the Sadrist Trend responsible for the bombings. The new governor of Diwaniyah, Shaykh Hami al-Khudari, a member of ISCI, and the chairman of the Provincial Council called for a new security campaign in Diwaniyah Province on August 25th, raising fears of renewed clashes.²² Shaykh Abu Zaynab, spokesman for the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) in Diwaniyah continued to deny responsibility, insinuating that any new security campaign would target the Mahdi Army as a whole, rather than the rogue elements under Muqtada’s control.²³ According to Shaykh Abu Zaynab, all “sides are making conspiracies against us [the Sadrist Trend]” and “the new security plan is designed to destroy the Mahdi Army.”²⁴ He went on to say that “Muqtada as-Sadr has issued direct orders to his followers not to carry out any military operation and exercise self-restraint,” but that “this state of calm will

not last forever if the movement continues to be an easy target for the enemies and for those who collaborate with the occupation forces.”²⁵ The phrases “all sides” and “those who collaborate with the occupation forces” were implicit references to ISCI. According to some security sources in Diwaniyah Province, there were elements of the security forces that sought to delay any new security plan in order to put some distance between the Black Eagle operations in July and any new push against the Sadrists.²⁶

The clash between ISCI and JAM took a major turn at the end of August, when violence broke out between Sadrist gunmen, apparently acting without any direction from Sadr, and the guards at the Imam al-Husayn shrine in Karbala, affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.²⁷ Over fifty people were killed, and there were simultaneous attacks against ISCI offices across the country.²⁸ The ISCI office in the northwest Baghdad neighborhood of Kadhimiyah was destroyed when unidentified gunmen, likely Sadrists, broke in and burned the building down.²⁹ In Habbibiyah, on the southern edge of Sadr City, a group of gunmen believed to be Sadrists attacked the ISCI office with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms fire.³⁰ Elsewhere in Iraq, gunmen burned down the ISCI office in al-Kut in Wasit province, and attacked ISCI offices in Diwaniyah and in Najaf.³¹

This violence was interpreted at the time as evidence that Muqtada as-Sadr was losing control of his movement. Sadr immediately announced that “the work of the Mahdi Army shall be frozen in preparation for a campaign with the aim of restricting and re-qualifying its fighters.”³² If this violence was evidence of a movement disintegrating, ISCI figures did not interpret it this way, at least not publicly. Jalal ad-Din as-Sagheer, an ISCI parliamentarian and a preacher at the Buratha mosque in Kadhimiyah in Baghdad, alleged that the Karbala violence had been planned, and that it was coordinated with the other attacks against ISCI offices across the country.³³

The response from coalition forces and from ISCI in Diwaniyah unfolded in two stages: a quiet campaign of detentions and raids targeting Sadrists and other “Shi’a extremists” in and around the city in September and October, followed by a visible, conventional operation beginning in mid-November aimed at clearing the city and surrounding towns of Shi’a extremists. Many of the targets in the first phase were likely members of so-called “Special Groups” or former elements of JAM that may have moved beyond the control of Muqtada as-Sadr. These raids appear to have been discriminating with respect to target selection. The conventional operations that followed in mid-November, according to some sources, targeted a wider range of Sadrists.

The first stage kicked off shortly after the violence in Karbala. On September 2nd, Iraqi Security Forces detained a “militant extremist leader” in southern Babil province.³⁴ Iraqi security forces claimed, perhaps implausibly, that he had been directly involved in “the majority of terrorist acts in Hillah.”³⁵ According to local residents, he “led a militia to assassinate locals and recruited a sniper with training in Iran to target Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army soldiers.”³⁶ Polish forces stationed at FOB Echo detained four men on September 7th, suspected of financing and conducting terrorist attacks in Diwaniyah, confiscating five machine guns and \$40,000 USD.³⁷ Although they were not identified, they were likely Sadrists or previously linked to the Sadrist Trend.

There were no conventional U.S. forces in Diwaniyah at the time, but U.S. special operations forces were quite active. A joint U.S.-Iraqi air assault was conducted on September 8th, targeting Sadrists in the center of Diwaniyah. Sixteen suspects with links to JAM were detained.³⁸ These operations may have been supported by a new complement of Polish attack helicopters that arrived at FOB Echo on September 4th.³⁹ The governor of Qadisiyah (Diwaniyah), Hamid Musa al-Khudari, announced on September 9th that a number of “criminals” and “terrorists” had been arrested in the province in recent days and that “security forces [were] moving forward towards restoring security and stability” in the province.⁴⁰

The operations tempo of the joint U.S. – Iraqi units in Diwaniyah only accelerated over the course of September, with the detention of several “extremist company commanders” and local officials with ties to the Sadrism Trend. On September 12th, a joint U.S.-Iraqi force raided the house of one of the leaders of Jaysh al-Mahdi in al-Jaza’ir in central Diwaniyah.⁴¹ According to the press director for the local OMS office, the JAM leader wasn’t home at the time, and the man detained in the raid was only an OMS press official, with no relationship to JAM.⁴² The next day, according to a local police source, another joint U.S.-Iraqi force conducted a raid in Zubat in central Diwaniyah, probably targeting an affiliate of the Sadrism Trend.⁴³ In what was likely the same raid, Multi-National Force – Iraq confirmed that an Iraqi Special Operations Forces unit, with U.S. Special Forces in support, killed a “Shi’a extremist company commander,” Najah al-Agra, in Diwaniyah.⁴⁴ He was apparently responsible for a group of twenty five fighters who conducted indirect fire attacks against coalition forces in the Diwaniyah area, including a July mortar attack in Diwaniyah against FOB Echo.⁴⁵ Two days later, the same unit detained another “extremist company commander” in a raid in Diwaniyah.⁴⁶ Apparently intelligence indicated that this company commander was responsible for using IEDs and EFPs against coalition forces.⁴⁷ Furthermore, his group was believed to be responsible for over 450 indirect fire attacks on FOB Echo since May. In a raid on September 16th, targeting a third “extremist company commander,” U.S. Special Forces and ISOF killed two Shi’a extremists in Diwaniyah.⁴⁸

In an interesting operation on September 19th, a joint U.S.-Iraqi force arrested ten members of JAM in the town of Afak, approximately 34 km east of Diwaniyah.⁴⁹ Several days earlier, a joint force arrested the head of the municipal council of Afak, in addition to a council member suspected of involvement in the killing of a police colonel, both likely Sadrists, in an unpublicized raid.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that the road between Afak and Diwaniyah was particularly treacherous, as the former governor, Khalil Jalil Hamza, was killed in an ambush there.

U.S. and Iraqi forces also targeted those involved in the smuggling and supply of weaponry to Shi’a extremists, likely the aforementioned Special Groups. On September 19th, ISOF, with USSF support, detained eleven suspects in Diwaniyah believed to be involved in “smuggling operations and supply routes bringing arms, ammunition, mortars and IEDs into Diwaniyah.”⁵¹ Several days later, a unit from the 8th Iraqi Army (IA) division seized a large weapons cache in an intelligence-driven raid in Diwaniyah.⁵² They raided a “secret storage facility,” and confiscated “three RPG rounds, one EFP case, three EFPs, one shaped charge for an IED, twelve 81mm Iranian mortars, detonation cord” and other bomb-making materials.⁵³ According to Maj. Gen. Kevin Bergner, a spokesman for Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I), “this weapons cache

was supporting criminals in the Diwaniyah area associated with groups that have relied in the past on support from Iranian sources.”⁵⁴

The operations freeze announced by Muqtada as-Sadr and the coalition operations had a demonstrable effect on security in the city, as attacks in Diwaniyah against civilians, Coalition Forces, and Iraqi Security Forces fell from fifty in July to only fourteen in September.⁵⁵ Despite the improvement in the security situation generally and Sadr’s pledge to freeze operations, the campaign of tit-for-tat raids and killings continued across the south. On September 8th, the head of the Sadrist Tribes Office in Najaf, Muhammad al-Qar’awi, was killed in front of his home, prompting complaints by OMS.⁵⁶ Three days later, Husayn al-Husayni, a member of the Badr Organization and one of the representatives of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Basra was killed outside his home, followed by an attack on September 14th against Lt. Col. Husayn Ali Hassoun, commander of the 4-2-8 IA in central Hillah province.⁵⁷ On September 15th, Salah al-Obaydi, a spokesman for the Sadrist Trend, announced that Sadrists would be withdrawing from the United Iraqi Alliance, the main Shi’a coalition, in part because of government operations targeting members of the Trend.⁵⁸ The very next day, arrest warrants were issued against two Sadrists on the provincial council in Karbala, as well as a third on the municipal council in the town of Hindiya.⁵⁹ Raheem Maza’al, a prominent Sadrist affiliated with the Martyr of God Organization, was killed by unidentified gunmen outside his home in the Furat neighborhood of Diwaniyah on the 18th.⁶⁰

Unidentified gunmen, likely affiliated with the Sadrist Trend although there is no direct evidence, responded to this pressure from ISCI and the government by targeting a string of clerics and officials affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who is considered close to the Supreme Council. Imad Abd al-Karim, a representative of Sistani in Basra, survived an assassination attempt against him in western Basra on September 18th.⁶¹ He was lucky, insofar as two other representatives of al-Sistani in Basra had been killed in the previous two weeks.⁶² Amjad al-Janabi, another representative of Sistani in Basra, was later killed on September 20th along with his driver.⁶³ It was unclear who was responsible, but yet again, circumstantial evidence suggested Sadrist involvement. This violence was not confined to Basra in the south; Sistani’s representative in Diwaniyah, Ahmad al-Barqaawi was killed while driving home from his office.⁶⁴

In response, ISCI and its allies took two steps. First, in late September, a special department within the Diwaniyah police was created, apparently with the express purpose of targeting elements of the Sadrist Trend.⁶⁵ Furthermore, a group of clerics affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani decided to set up an “operations room” in Basra to track the deteriorating security situation, in express response to the assassinations and attempted assassinations of Sistani-affiliated clerics.⁶⁶

In October, the pace of special operations forces activity in Diwaniyah slowed, perhaps because many of the high-value Shi’a extremist targets had been killed or captured in September. Conventional operations, on the other hand, laid the groundwork for Operation Lion Pounce, which would be launched later in the fall. On October 15th, the Commander of MND-CS, Tadeusz Buk, hosted a meeting at FOB Echo to assess the “current situation and work out a

common plan of joint activity.”⁶⁷ In addition to Buk, Maj. Gen. Othman Ali Farhood (former ISCI member), commander of the 8th IA, Gen. Safa’a Kadhim Akmoush, the chief of the Iraqi police in Diwaniyah, and Shaykh Husayn Hadi, the chairman of the provincial council, also attended.⁶⁸ The commanders agreed to establish a joint security station in the neighborhood of Iskan in Diwaniyah as part of Operation Oil Drop, which aimed to provide security for the population through the patrolling and the provision of humanitarian assistance.⁶⁹ Hadi “expressed satisfaction with Coalition Forces activities and assured support from local Iraqi authorities to force criminal groups out of the city.”⁷⁰

These expanded patrolling operations did not go uncontested by Shi’a extremists in the area. FOB Echo was attacked repeatedly in October, both by indirect fire and coordinated small arms fire.⁷¹ On October 18th, seven police officers were killed by a roadside bomb in Diwaniyah while driving to Afak in the east, responding to an attack on the Afak police station.⁷² Given the lethality of this explosion and the aforementioned extremist attacks on the Diwaniyah-Afak road, it is plausible that the attack on the police station in Afak was conducted precisely to draw reinforcements from Diwaniyah as part of a coordinated ambush. Later in October, a coalition patrol was hit by a coordinated ambush involving IEDs and small arms fire and the newly arrived Polish attack helicopters were put to good use, providing close air support for the unit in contact.⁷³

Iraqi Security Forces with U.S. advisors began additional preparatory operations for Operation Lion Pounce in early November. On November 8th, a unit from the 8th Iraqi Army Division, operating with U.S. Special Forces advisors, captured a suspected extremist “believed to be involved in illegal activities and [to] have knowledge of several weapons... caches that support explosively formed penetrator [EFP] and indirect fire attacks against coalition and Iraqi forces.”⁷⁴ Several days later, the 8th Iraqi Army launched another operation with U.S. Special Forces in support, this time capturing an “alleged extremist during a raid targeting extremist activity in Diwaniyah.”⁷⁵ It is likely that both of these operations targeted Shi’a extremists, either directly connected to or formerly affiliated with the Sadrist Trend.

On November 17th, the 8th IA launched Operation Lion Pounce, with the avowed aim of clearing criminal and extremist elements from the city of Diwaniyah. According to Maj. Gen. Othman, the “northeast quarters of Diwaniyah, where the operation was conducted, [had been] under the control of criminal and militant groups.”⁷⁶ This was consistent with previous reporting concerning violence on the road between Diwaniyah and Afak; the road to Afak runs directly through the northeast quarter of the city. Following clearing operations, Iraqi security forces planned to construct additional joint security stations to provide security to the population in the northeast quarter.⁷⁷ The 8th IA held operational control, under the direct leadership of Maj. Gen. Othman Ali Farhood, and the force included a brigade from the 8th IA, the 5/2 National Police Brigade, recently retrained at the facility in Numaniyah to the northeast, as well as elements from the Iraqi police, the Polish Battle Group at FOB Echo, and U.S. Special Forces serving in an advisory capacity.⁷⁸



Photo 2: U.S. Special Forces soldier and Iraqi 8th IA soldier take aim at militia positions in Diwaniyah; U.S. Special Forces have been a key force multiplier in the campaign against the Sadrists in the city; Sgt. Rob Summitt

In the first two days of the operation, at least eighty-one suspects were detained, although unofficial sources suggest that the scope of detentions was indeed wider.⁷⁹ While the publicly identified targets were criminals and Shi'a extremist elements that had broken away from Jaysh al-Mahdi, it is likely that the scope of the operation was much wider, and that Iraqi Security Forces aggressively targeted individuals from across the Sadrist Trend, including OMS, JAM, and the Tribes Office.

Although the initial clearing operations lasted a few days, subsequent targeted raids have continued to support Operation Lion Pounce, which remains ongoing. On November 22nd, the Iraqi Emergency Response Unit (ERU), advised by U.S. Special Forces, detained “five suspected extremists” Daghgharah 27km north of Diwaniyah.⁸⁰ They were apparently members of an extremist cell “involved improvised explosive device attacks” against Iraqi security forces and coalition forces in Diwaniyah.⁸¹ Iraqi security forces also believed that “they were gathering intelligence for additional attacks against Iraqi and coalition forces” using improvised explosive devices.⁸² Two days later, the same unit conducted a raid in Ash-Shamiyah 25km to the west targeting a bomb maker responsible for supplying extremist groups with IEDs for use against Iraqi and coalition forces.⁸³ The ERUs are high-end specialized units controlled by the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, where ISCI retains considerable influence. They have been used elsewhere in Iraq, notably in Sadr City, in joint raids against Jaysh al-Mahdi leaders.⁸⁴

Conclusions

Based on the scope and intensity of recent campaign against Shi'a extremists in Diwaniyah and reports that the operations are targeting elements from across the Sadrist Trend, it is likely that intra-Shia violence in the south will accelerate over the next several months, as the parliamentary

limitations on the creation of a regional government in the south expire in April 2008. Furthermore, the freeze announced by Muqtada as-Sadr following the Karbala violence in August was originally intended to remain in effect for six months. Although Sadrist spokesmen have suggested changes to the length of the freeze, if it were to remain in effect as originally intended, it would expire at the beginning of March 2008. In order to win the local referendums necessary to create a southern region, ISCI will need sufficient capacity to dominate the local and provincial governments. The ongoing violence across the south between ISCI and the Sadrist Trend has likely been driven, at least in part, by these requirements.

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³ See Kagan, Kimberly. *Iraq Report #6: Iran's Proxy War Against the United States and the Government of Iraq*. Institute for the Study of War. August 2007.

⁴ See *Shiite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council Crisis Group Middle East Report N°70*. International Crisis Group. November 15th, 2007.

⁵ Dagher, Sam. "In Iraqi South, Shiites Press for Autonomy." *The Christian Science Monitor*. August 6th, 2007.

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⁹ Ibid.

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¹⁴ *Aswat al-Iraq News Service*. "Head of Sadr Office Killed Northwest of Hilla." June 21st, 2007. Translation from Arabic.

¹⁵ *Aswat al-Iraq News Service*. "Sistani Najaf Office Official Assassinated." July 21st, 2007. Translation from Arabic; *Aswat al-Iraq News Service*. "Sistani Aide Assassinated." August 3rd, 2007. Translation from Arabic.

¹⁶ *Aswat al-Iraq News Service*. "Bombing at Sistani Office in Hillah." August 6th, 2007. Translation from Arabic.

¹⁷ *Agence France Press – English*. "Iraqi Provincial Governor, Police Chief Assassinated." August 11th, 2007; *Al-Sharqiyah TV, On-Air Broadcast*, in Arabic, August 11th, 2007 via *BBC Media Monitoring Service*; *Agence France Press – English*. "Iraq PM Orders Probe into Assassinations." August 12th, 2007; Dagher, Sam. "Trouble Grows in Iraq's Shiite South." *The Christian Science Monitor*. August 13th, 2007; *Al-Mu'tamar [Baghdad Daily]*, August 15th, 2007 via *BBC Media Monitoring*; Juhi, Bushra. "Roadside Bomb Kills 2nd Governor of Souther Iraqi Province in Just Over One Week." *The Associated Press*. August 20th, 2007. Samawai, Ali. "Second Iraqi Governor Killed as Shiite Rifts Deepen." *Agence France Press – English*. August 20th, 2007; Abbas, Mushriq. "Battle of Wills, Interests, Ideologies in Southern Iraq; Federation, Resources, Quotas, Unstable Mines; Map of Powers Gives Al-Sadr Street, Al-Hakim Local Governments; Real Authority in Iranian Hands." *Al-Hayat*. August 21st, 2007.

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