



(U) 30 January, Iraq Election Day

FROM: (C) Ron Carback
NSA/CSS Representative Iraq, US Mission Baghdad
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The situation on the ground during Election Day (U)

(S//SI) On the 30th of January, Iraqi citizens were able to vote in the first free elections in half a century. Obviously many of you followed the preparations for elections via the various news broadcasts or online. You couldn't escape it as more than 2,000 media personnel came to Iraq for the historic event. What you may not know is what it took to get to the point of elections and how SIGINT played a role.

(U) The Independent Election Commission of Iraq (IECI, www.ieciraq.org) is an independent body of commissioners designed by UN electoral advisors to develop policies, procedures, and oversee elections. The IECI worked closely with the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and Multi-National Forces - Iraq (MNFI) to ensure a safe and secure process.

(S) The MNFI was responsible for developing plans to enable the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to protect the election process and personnel. To do so, MNFI and ISF had to harden and secure 5,200 polling centers with more than 28,000 polling stations within. They also had to harden and secure each and every Governate Election Office, District Election Office, and the various Public Distribution System Warehouses (storage location for all materials). In general, the Iraqi Police forces secured the polling centers with additional Army and National Guard forces at outer cordons. MNFI held in ready reserve specific military units to quickly react to any escalating violence.

(S) To ensure voter safety, MNFI recommended to the IIG several security measures for adoption. The IIG implemented vehicle restrictions and banned vehicle use near polling centers. The IIG also closed the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) from 29 to 30 January and a curfew was put into place. The airport was not closed due to security threats -- closure allowed MNFI and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to re-deploy to assist in election security. Border security was also increased as the borders were closed to movement. Movement between provinces was restricted as well. (Note: You might not understand the significance of closing the airport or the borders, but with travel restrictions, supply routes are affected and here at the Embassy, for over a week, we did not see lettuce or fresh fruit.)



(U) Iraqis from Abu Ghurayb walking towards Polling Centers west of Baghdad

(S) While safety and security of the polling centers and processes were critical, the logistics of providing election materials to each and every polling center around the country was just as critical. More than 36 wide-body cargo jets carried ballot materials from manufacturers in North America and China into Iraq. Each of these jets carried materials into the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) from which more than 197 C-130 flights carried the materials to regional airports. More than 3 million kilograms of ballot materials made their ways across Iraq to polling stations.

(S) Every morning, during General Casey's Battle Update, election activities and trends throughout the Multi-National Divisions (MND) were briefed. While a very small number of problems occurred on election day as a few polling centers ran out of ballots or did not receive them in time, a ready reserve pushed the materials where needed. There were a few controversies where polling centers could not open due to security concerns, but the IECI, MNFI, and ISF worked hard to provide resolution throughout the day. Election day signaled the infant steps of a democracy as we know it in the US -- as candidates and political parties allege

improprieties and put forth formal challenges to the process.



(U) Sealed ballot materials after Election Day

(S) The logistics effort was incredibly impressive -- but it did not end on Election Day. At each polling center a tally sheet was put together counting the votes. These sheets were safely and securely transported to the IECI headquarters in the International Zone to enable the final count. The ballot boxes were sealed and transported back to the distribution warehouses for safekeeping and will eventually be transported to a central location.

(TS//SI//REL) To ensure robust SIGINT support to those of us in Iraq, SID enacted an Elections Support Team. The team erected an Elections Desk in NSOC to serve as the single point of contact for reach back to the global SIGINT enterprise. Various SIGINT production elements also ramped up 24/7 leading into Election Day. SIGINT products were reviewed and tear lines were developed in increasing numbers at the "Release to Iraq" level. The Election SIGINT Summaries, a modified Global SIGINT Highlights report specific for Operation Iraqi Freedom and disseminated every 4 hours on Election Day, were of great value to us here at the US Mission. The summaries of recent Iraq-related reporting enabled our customers to quickly review the large volumes of SIGINT being produced. (See [related story](#).)

(TS//SI//REL) While details of Election Day were important to our customers, they were and remain interested in the various discussions and views of the political parties, clerics, and leadership on the framing and personalities of the new Iraq Transition Government (ITG) that will be selected following the announcement of the election results for the National Assembly. Assessment reporting provided additional insight into leadership views of the elections. Force protection was also of great concern throughout the day. Various SIGINT elements at NSAW, GRSOC, GCHQ, RAF Digby, and at the MNDs developed threat warning and actionable SIGINT, which was forwarded by CSG Baghdad and the Cryptologic Support Teams (CSTs) to the right warfighter throughout the day.

(TS//SI//REL) The Iraq SIGINT Element (ISE) reduced its threshold for reporting and disseminated expanded threat warning tippers throughout the final week before Election Day to assist in force protection in the Baghdad area. This is a nascent organization comprising several former Iraqi intelligence officers and lots of new, young officers. Each of these SIGINTers are faced with death threats to them and their families daily because of their chosen profession. In the days leading up to the elections, the threats were even greater and yet they came and worked long hours. While their efforts may not have produced sensational intelligence, the production provided incredible insight into the atmosphere surrounding the day.

(TS//SI//REL) Knowledge of the intimidation of police and military forces who were abandoning their posts, citizens complaints about polling centers not opening or not being stocked, and situational awareness reporting proved invaluable in getting out the appropriate logistical and security responses. The fact that the ISE was able to contribute to the overall success of this democratic process is a significant point of pride for them.

(U) For those of us in Baghdad proper, we had planned for and expected a rough day and increased assaults by insurgents through mortar and rocket attacks. Many of you are aware that on election eve, Saturday, a mortar hit the southern end of the Embassy annex (the former Saddam Hussein Presidential Palace) resulting in 2 deaths and several wounded, leading us to believe that election day would be as expected -- fraught with mortar and rocket attacks.

(S//SI) Sunday morning was noisy, with a continuous rumble of mortars nearby, but thankfully, no mortars landed in the vicinity of the Embassy proper. It might surprise you to know that there were 285 attacks in Iraq by insurgents throughout the day, with 108 occurring against election-related targets. While there was SIGINT and other reporting indicating a possible 50 to 60 suicide bombers, there were 10 suicide vests/bomber attacks and none made it into the polling centers. The ISF held their ground throughout the day. At the Director's Campaign Update, I shared an anecdote that we heard Election Day. A policeman at one of the polling centers was patting down a potential voter in line when he noticed a suicide vest. He quickly grabbed the attacker and moved him away from the line of voters and the vest exploded. He gave his life to save those who wanted to vote -- he gave his life for his country.



(U) Iraqi women showing their badge of courage -- fingers marked with indelible ink after voting.

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