



**(U) Iraqis Vote for First Permanent Parliament -- A Report from Baghdad**

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*(U//FOUO) An on-the-scene report about the Iraqi parliamentary elections.*

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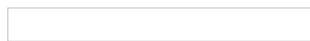
(S//SI) On the 15th of December, Iraqi citizens were able to vote in their third free election in half a century. This election was to put into place their first permanent parliament. Obviously many of you followed the preparations for elections via the various news broadcasts or online. You couldn't 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](http://www.ieciraq.org)) is an independent body of commissioners designed by UN electoral advisors to develop policies and procedures and to oversee elections. The IECI worked closely with the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and Multi-National Forces - Iraq (MNF-I) to ensure a safe and secure process.

**(U) Securing the Polling Centers**

(S) The MNF-I developed plans to enable the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to protect the election process and personnel. To do so, **MNF-I 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 Governorate 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. MNF-I held specific military units in ready reserve to react quickly to any escalating violence.

(S) To ensure voter safety, MNF-I recommended several security measures to the IIG. The IIG implemented vehicle restrictions and banned vehicle use from 14 to 16 December to dissuade suicide bombers. The IIG also implemented a nighttime curfew. Borders were closed to movement, and movement between provinces was restricted as well.



*(U) Iraqis showing off fingers marked with indelible ink signifying that they had voted. (Reuters)*

**(U) Election Logistics**

(S) While safety and security of the polling centers and processes were critical, the logistics of providing election materials to every polling center around the country were just as critical. More than 36 wide-body cargo jets carried ballot materials from manufacturers in North America and China into 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 way across Iraq to polling stations.

(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.



(U) Iraqi women walking by sealed ballot boxes. (Reuters)

### **(U) How the Election Went**

(S) **The major success story of this election is that nearly 70% of all Iraqis voted.** This includes a large population of Sunni Iraqis, who had boycotted the January election. Even with this success, there is still the overhanging gloom of the cries of scandal. Ballot stuffing, false voter registrations by the tens of thousands, scandal in the counting warehouses: these are just a few of the complaints that were formally lodged with the IECI for investigation. 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) SIGINT Support to the Elections**

(TS//SI//REL) To ensure robust SIGINT support to those of us in Iraq, SID established an Elections Support Team. The team set up an Elections Desk in NSOC to serve as the single point of contact for reachback 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 at the "Release to Iraq" level were developed in increasing numbers. The Election SIGINT Summaries, a modified Global SIGINT Highlights report specific to 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.

### **(U) What It Was Like on the Ground?**

(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, Wednesday, a mortar hit the southern end of the Embassy annex (the former Saddam Hussein Presidential Palace). Thankfully this did not result in any injuries or deaths. Although the outlook for this election was much more optimistic than the forecast for the January elections (see [related article](#)), we were still expecting mortar and rocket attacks.

(S//SI) Thankfully there were no reports of major violence on Thursday morning, although there were some scattered reports of minor incidents. Three mortar rounds landed in Baghdad, one near a polling station. Another mortar hit a house in Kirkuk, and a child was taken to the hospital, but was not badly injured. **It might surprise you to know that there were very few attacks in Iraq by insurgents throughout the day.** It was almost eerily peaceful, as the major terrorist elements and insurgents had declared that they were going to cease fire during the elections.

(U) For all the fanfare of this Election Day, however, it was painfully clear just how tenuous the security situation remains throughout the country. Journalists had to be escorted by US troops and private security contractors everywhere they went. And while moving from town, with happy children smiling and waving along roadsides, the troops didn't hesitate to shoot warning shots over cars that took too long to get off the road. **"It's going to take some time for them to learn democracy,"** said one US soldier, who spends most of his days patrolling Kirkuk's highways for the roadside bombs that still account for most US casualties in Iraq. "You can't just throw some alligator clips in there and change 2000 years of culture."

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