The Current Situation

While acts of terrorism against Iraqi government institutions and civilians persist, the overall security situation in Iraq has improved dramatically over the past two years. Moreover, political space is opening in Iraq: January 2009 provincial elections, though imperfect, were largely viewed as free and fair, incumbents were turned out, and a broad range of parties participated. In the run-up to January 2010 national elections, sectarian political mobilization on the scale experienced during and after the 2005 round has yet to materialize, despite grave concerns about the capacity of Iraqi forces to maintain security in the wake of U.S. troop withdrawal. Prominent national leaders are raising a cross-sectarian mantle.

Nonetheless, as the fog of war has receded, the obstacles Iraqis face have become clear, and profound challenges remain. At the grassroots level, Iraqi society remains fractured. Numerous Iraqis have been uprooted and displaced in the past five years and are unable to return home and resume their lives. Iraq's weak governing institutions, corruption, and endemic poverty are constant impediments to long-term stability. After decades of destruction, communities are struggling to rebuild themselves within the new political order and lay the foundation for an enduring peace. The gains of the past two years are fragile, and it is imperative that Iraqis, with our help, seize the opportunity to shore them up.

Going Forward: USIP in Iraq

Since 2004, USIP has maintained a permanent field mission in Iraq, with an outstanding Iraqi and American staff who provide essential on-the-ground support to USIP's programs. Experts in Baghdad and Washington implement projects aimed at:

- Promoting reconciliation and moderation;
- Strengthening governance and civil society;
- Giving the next generation a stake in peace and stability

Promote Moderation and Reconciliation

USIP is building on its successful efforts to promote reconciliation by broadening the scope of dialogue at the grassroots and national levels.

- **Network of Iraqi Facilitators:** Since 2004, USIP has trained and expanded its Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF) to over 120 skilled individuals who conduct grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in the most violence-prone areas of Iraq. At the request of communities, the NIF bring together local government, tribal, religious and civil society leaders to prevent and resolve conflict at the local level.

- **PRT Reconciliation Support:** In 2007, USIP staff and NIF members, in coordination with the Mahmoudiyah ePRT and the 10th Mountain Division, assisted tribal and local government leaders in forging a groundbreaking peace accord in the South Baghdad region formerly known as the “Triangle of Death.” Local leaders and the U.S. military refer to the accord as a “turning point” in putting one
of Iraq’s most violent regions on a path to lasting stability and peace. USIP continues to work with PRTs to produce similar successful results throughout some of Iraq’s most conflicted areas. In Diyala province, USIP staff and facilitators are helping community leaders establish priorities to provide better basic services and enable the peaceful return of internally displaced persons to the region.

**Confronting the Truth: Transitional Justice in Iraq**: USIP has distributed over 440 Arabic and Kurdish language copies of its film *Confronting the Truth*, which explores truth commissions and transitional justice around the world. In coordination with the Ministry of Human Rights, USIP supports screenings and dialogues surrounding the film, to spread awareness of the potential role of truth commissions as Iraq confronts its own painful past.

**Facilitating Community Discussions on Religious Peacemaking in Iraq**: In 2009, USIP premiered an Arabic language version of the documentary film chronicling interfaith reconciliation in Nigeria, *The Imam and the Pastor*. The film resonated deeply with religious leaders in attendance from all eighteen of Iraq’s provinces who requested its broad dissemination. USIP is now developing a curriculum to accompany screenings and training for religious leaders to facilitate community discussions on religious reconciliation and pluralism.

**Preventing Media Incitement**: Through its newly established Center of Innovation for Media, Conflict and Peacebuilding, USIP is bringing Iraqi media officials and private-sector figures together with international experts to discuss how to prevent inflammatory coverage of conflict in Iraq. In addition, the Center will establish a citizen’s media watchdog network to monitor incitement in the Iraqi media.

**Strengthen Governance and Civil Society**

_Institutional capacity-building is essential to Iraq’s long-term stability. USIP projects aim at bolstering Iraqi institutional capacity and strengthening civil society organizations._

**Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise (SENSE)**: Hundreds of senior Iraqi decision-makers have benefited from this interactive, computer-supported program that teaches negotiation, coalition-building, and effective resource allocation skills. This intensive 5-day program is designed to encourage cooperation and coordination across government and civil society institutions. Managed by USIP’s Baghdad office, the SENSE program is staffed and delivered by and for Iraqis.

**Property and Land Policies**: USIP is bringing together senior Iraqi officials, civic leaders and international experts to assist the Iraqi government in developing and effectively implementing a strategy to facilitate the safe and durable return of Iraq’s displaced community. USIP’s facilitator network is working to increase public awareness of services offered by the government and implementing projects locally to help mitigate violence.

**The Justice System and Judicial Independence Initiative**: USIP has played an instrumental role in helping create the Iraqi Committee on Judicial Independence (ICJI), a consortium of representatives from the Ministries of Human Rights and Justice, the judiciary, the legal community, civil society organizations, academia and the media across Iraq. USIP’s legal experts provide technical assistance to help ICJI develop sound consensus-based policies and advocacy strategies to promote judicial independence. Separately, USIP has worked with Iraq’s national and regional judiciaries to improve the effective administration of justice in Iraq.

**USIP Grants in Iraq**: USIP’s grant program is a well-respected source of funding and support among Iraqi civil society organizations that aim to resolve conflict and build peace. USIP has funded sixty-one projects in Iraq since 2004, and will grant an additional $1.2 million to Iraqi organizations in 2010. USIP assists organizations throughout the application process,
and places heavy emphasis on monitoring and evaluation to ensure maximum efficiency and impact.

**Give the Next Generation a Stake in Peace and Stability**

The next generation in Iraq faces the challenge of transcending the effects of their recent past, and embracing democratic values and human rights. USIP projects help Iraqi youth emerge from the cycle of violence by giving them a stake in peace and stability.

- **Iraqi National Civic Education Curriculum Project:** USIP is assisting the Ministry of Education with strengthening its secondary school civic education curricula, producing a Civic Education Teacher Training Guide, and in training Teacher-Trainers in effective methods of teaching civic education.

- **Developing Peace and Human Rights Educators:** USIP is helping to develop the field of peace and human rights education in Iraq through teacher-training, development of curricular resources, dissemination of Iraqi academic research, and by connecting Iraqi academics with counterparts in the region.

- **Peace Media for Iraqi Youth:** By assisting Iraqi media experts in developing media peacebuilding products that can reach a new generation of young people, USIP aims to engage youth in building peace for the future. In 2010, USIP’s experts will work with Iraqi media partners to produce a television series and create an Arabic-language website that enables youth participants to network with their peers and share their peacebuilding experiences.

**Distance Learning**

Drawing from exit and post-deployment interviews of individuals who have worked in Iraq, USIP produced an award-winning DVD on “The Iraq Experience.” The Institute is incorporating such best practices and lessons-learned into seventeen new courses on conflict prevention and management, peacemaking, and state-building. USIP’s existing online course in conflict analysis is now available in Arabic. An Arabic language version of the interfaith conflict resolution online course is currently being developed.

**Policy Focus**

Following the success of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group in 2006, USIP continues to convene regular expert working groups to discuss policy options for mitigating the present challenges faced in Iraq. In-house research fellows regularly publish articles, books and option papers are furnished to the public.