



## Multi-National Corps – Iraq

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### **Sons of Iraq: A Vote of Confidence for Reconciliation**

By Adam Weinstein, MNC-I Public Affairs  
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In early November, as U.S. Soldiers looked on, Baghdad-based members of the Sons of Iraq got their monthly paychecks from a new boss: the Iraqi government.

“It was a critical step in the turnover of the mostly Sunni volunteers from Coalition to Iraqi control. And the Baghdad transfer has become a model for similar moves in four other key provinces,” according to Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kulmayer, the chief of reconciliation and engagement for Multi-National Corps - Iraq. “The government is doing the right thing. Baghdad has gone quite well, and we expect that the rest of the provinces will do the same.”

The Sons of Iraq, one of the war’s good-news stories, occupy what Maj. Gen. Michael Ferriter, the deputy commanding General of MNC – I, calls “the leading edge of reconciliation.” A few years ago, many of the group’s members considered Coalition forces their enemies; some fought against U.S. troops and their allies. But in June 2007, armed militiamen in Anbar province found they shared a goal with the Coalition: taking back their neighborhoods from al Qaeda in Iraq. “We helped organize them and eventually began to fund them to provide critical infrastructure and security throughout Anbar,” said Ferriter, “and it quickly spread to many of the other provinces.”

The security situation improved greatly, owing in part to Sons of Iraq tips and operations. Now, Coalition and Iraqi forces are cooperating to integrate approximately 99,000 Sol members across nine provinces into the Iraqi security forces, or provide them with peacetime livelihoods.

“The government will not abandon these people,” said Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Muzhir al-Mawla, vice chairman of the Iraqi Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation. “The government will provide employment opportunities for these people ... as a reward for their sacrifice and their duties.”

U.S. leaders have dubbed the process “transfer and transition.” First, the Sol troops are transferred to Iraqi control and begin receiving paychecks from the government. Then, the members are given the opportunity to transition into new careers.

Many have begun to join the Iraqi army and police forces, where 20 to 30 percent ultimately will be integrated. The rest can enter a variety of literacy and job-training programs to earn a living in civil service – from banking to auto repair to electrical maintenance. “Those who have a degree will be given government jobs,” said al-Mawla. “Those who do not have much of a degree or any trade can go to a vocational school.”

Early reports on the Baghdad program, which includes over 51,000 Sol members, have been positive and the Iraqi government has followed through on its commitment to pay the Sol salaries. Nearly 2,300 Sons of Iraq from Baghdad have entered training to become police officers; others are signing up for apprenticeship training on Civil Service Corps projects, a New Deal-style employment program, with spots reserved for Sol.

“I feel good and appreciated that I got paid by the Iraqi government,” said Ahmed Kareem Ahmed, a Sol member from Ameriyah in north Baghdad. “I am very happy, very satisfied when I see my neighborhood safe and secure.”

The next provinces to transfer Sol members to Iraqi control are Diyala, Wasit, Babil, and Qadisiya. Sons of Iraq in these provinces will register during the month of December, and the transfer will take place on Jan. 1, 2009. The Sol’s four remaining provinces are slated to complete their transfers in spring 2009.

Kulmayer acknowledged that the program faces several challenges. “Many of the Sons of Iraq were worried that they might not get paid after the Coalition forces gave control to the Government of Iraq,” said Capt. Landgrave Smith, commander of Company D, TF 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt.

Further, many Sol leaders have expressed skepticism over how many of their members will be admitted into the Iraqi Army and Police, jobs that are seen as a means to regaining Sunni prestige and political power.

Sol leaders in Diyala province had many of those questions answered in meetings with Coalition and Iraqi leaders Nov. 17 and 19. They were reassured that the government of Iraq was meeting its obligations to Sol members in Baghdad, and would do so across the country as the transfer continued.

“I think it was absolutely critical that the Iraqi government was there to speak directly to their people. It was uncertainty of what was going to happen with the transfer that I think was most worrisome to the Sol,” Kulmayer said.

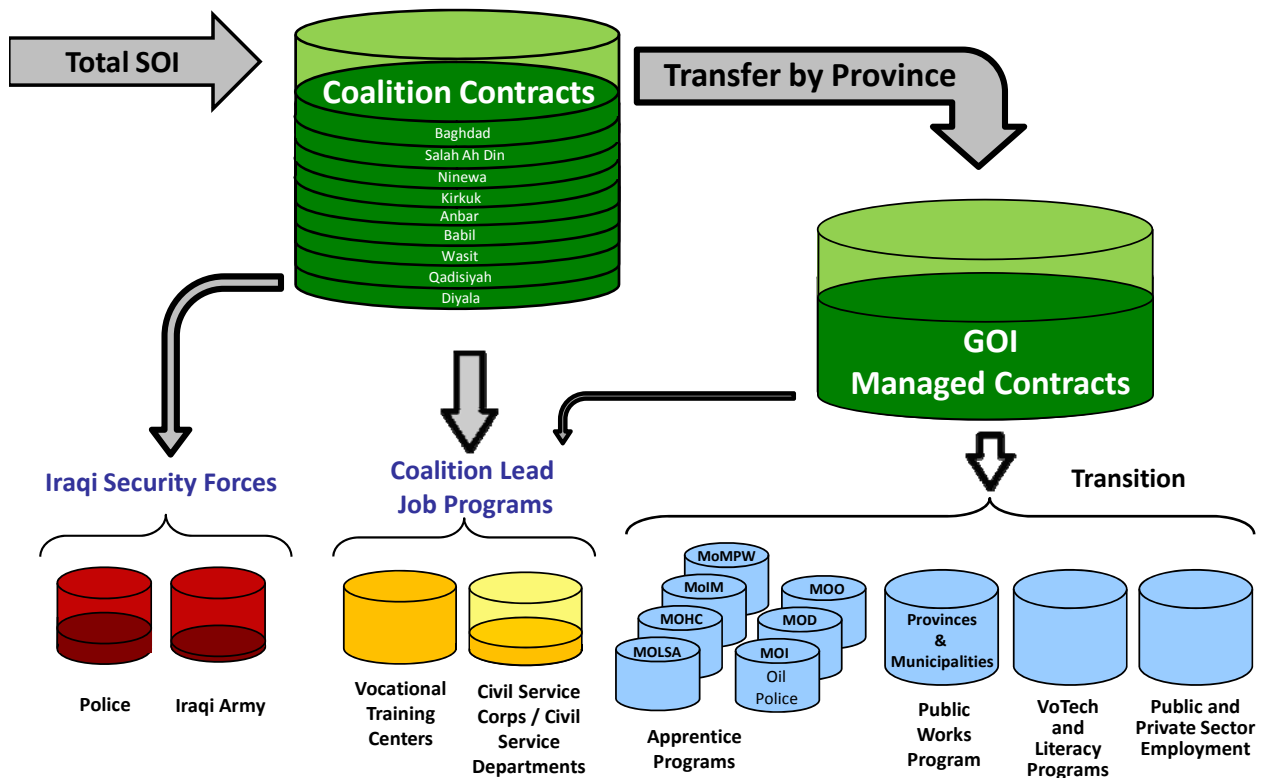
“The message is so much better received when it comes from your own officials and the leaders that are actually going to take care of you.”

**SOI Registration and Transfer Timelines**  
*All SOI personnel will be transferred by province. Baghdad provincial transfer has been executed, with the remaining eight provinces to follow, and ultimate completion in spring 2009.*

<b>SOI Registration and Transfer Timeline</b>		
Province	Begin Registration	SOI Transfer to GOI
BAGHDAD	-----	01 Oct 2008
WASIT	01 Dec 2008	01 Jan 2009
BABIL	01 Dec 2008	01 Jan 2009
QADISIYAH	01 Dec 2008	01 Jan 2009
DIYALA	01 Dec 2008	01 Jan 2009
ANBAR	01 Jan 2009	01 Feb 2009
NINEWA	01 Feb 2009	01 Mar 2009
KIRKUK	01 Feb 2009	01 Mar 2009
SaD	01 Mar 2009	01 Apr 2009

## SOI Transfer and Transition

All SOI personnel in respective provinces are transferred to GoI authority, then transitioned to job training as noted below on the basis of qualifications and needs of the GoI.



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