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A Baghdad "Awakening" in the Works?

By *[Dave Dilegge](#)*

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Based on previous "turning the corner" related statements and news items we may have come "full-circle" in Iraq...

- "Ladies and Gentlemen, we got him" -- Dec 03
- "Coalition forces have turned a corner in Anbar" -- Jan 04
- "The insurgency in Iraq is in its last throes" - May 05
- "The insurgency in Iraq is losing steam" -- August 05
- "I think we've turned the corner, if you will" -- December 05
- "I think, in that area, we have turned the corner" -- April 07
- "... we seem to be turning a corner" -- April 07

That said, and if true and not merely anecdotal, this latest development would be significant and contribute much to neutralizing the influence of the [Mahdi Army](#) in Baghdad -- much like the [Awakening](#) has accomplished concerning Al-Qaeda in [Al Anbar](#).

[Relations Sour Between Shiites and Iraq Militia](#) -- Sabrina Tavernese, *New York Times*

In a number of Shiite neighborhoods across Baghdad, residents are beginning to turn away from the Mahdi Army, the Shiite militia they once saw as their only protector against [Sunni militants](#). Now they resent it as a band of street thugs without ideology.

The hardening Shiite feeling in Baghdad opens an opportunity for the American military, which has long struggled against the Mahdi Army, as American commanders rely increasingly on tribes and local leaders in their prosecution of the war.

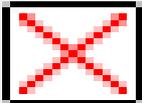
The sectarian landscape has shifted, with Sunni extremists largely defeated in many Shiite neighborhoods, and the war in those places has sunk into a criminality that is often blind to sect.

In interviews, 10 Shiites from four neighborhoods in eastern and western Baghdad described a pattern in which militia members, looking for new sources of income, turned on Shiites.

The pattern appears less frequently in neighborhoods where Sunnis and Shiites are still struggling for territory. Sadr City, the largest Shiite neighborhood, where the Mahdi Army's face is more political than military, has largely escaped the wave of criminality...

It was a disparate group with one thing in common: All were Shiites killed by Shiites. Residents blamed the Mahdi Army, which controls the neighborhood...

About the Author



Dave Dilegge

Dave Dilegge is a retired USMCR Intelligence and Counterintelligence / HUMINT officer. He is also a former USMC civilian intelligence analyst and worked several years in the private sector. He served with the 1st Marine Division during Operation Desert Storm. In 1999 he was the recipient of the National Military Intelligence Association's Colonel Donald G. Cook Award for his work in supporting USMC and DoD urban operations analysis, wargaming and experimentation. He is currently a Director at the Small Wars Foundation and is Editor-in-Chief of *Small Wars Journal*. His son David is an Infantry Sergeant currently serving in the Army's 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized).

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