

The National Strategy For Disaster In Iraq

By [American Progress Report](#)

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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On March 8, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appeared before the Senate Appropriations Committee to request [\\$65 billion in emergency security funds](#) for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, on top of the [\\$369 billion](#) the United States has spent already. This appearance came amidst deep dissatisfaction among the U.S. public over the war (only [30 percent](#) approve of President Bush's handling of Iraq), increasing [sectarian violence](#), and a [troubling human rights situation](#). The testimony by Rice and Rumsfeld did little to reassure the American people that the administration is using taxpayers' money wisely, amounting to "[more or less a recitation of the administration's standard formulations on Iraq](#)," according to the New York Times. Rice and Rumsfeld's testimony yesterday ignored the U.S. responsibility for Iraq's current state of instability. The administration's post-invasion failure to properly train security forces, oversee detainee interrogations, and plan for reconstruction have left a situation of chaos and insecurity in Iraq. (American Progress has a [plan to move forward](#).)

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES PLAGUED BY CORRUPTION, MISMANAGEMENT: In yesterday's hearing, Rumsfeld touted the progress of Iraq's security forces, noting that Generals George Casey and John Abizaid "have been impressed by the work of the Iraqi security forces." As a sign of their increased capabilities, Rumsfeld said that in the case of a civil war, the plan would be "[have the Iraqi security forces deal with it](#) to the extent they're able to." But Rumsfeld's positive testimony focused primarily on the Iraqi Army and ignored the struggling — yet crucial — police force, which the United States has not prepared to restore order during a civil war. Senior military advisors acknowledge that "[\[t\]rying to reform the police forces could take years](#), because sectarian loyalties have become entrenched, and police officers are rooted in their communities." When Shiite militiamen attacked dozens of Sunni mosques after the February bombing of the Shiite Askariya shrine, many "police units stood aside, either out of confusion or sectarian loyalties, according to Iraqi witnesses." Rumsfeld's testimony ignored the administration's responsibility for the unprepared state of the police force, which has been "[exacerbated by a lack of steady oversight](#)" on the part of the United States. As of March 2005 — two years into the war — the Pentagon still had not developed a "[system to assess the readiness of Iraqi military and police forces](#) so they [could] identify weaknesses and provide them with effective support." Reflecting Rumsfeld's blind spot on the Iraq army in his testimony to the Senate, "[U.S. advisors to the police units have been stretched thin](#) as the United States focused on training Iraqi army recruits."

THE LEGACY OF ABU GHRAIB: Two years after his [promise to shut down Abu Ghraib prison](#), Bush will finally do so. Prisoners from Abu Ghraib — now called an "[incubator for terrorists](#)" by U.S. commanders in Iraq — will be moved to Camp Cropper, where [Saddam Hussein is being held](#). But closing the infamous prison will not erase the blight on the U.S. human rights record, and many Iraqis were skeptical that it was anything more than a public

relations stunt. One Iraqi shopkeeper noted, “Closing Abu Ghraib will never improve the image of the Americans in Iraq. ... I believe the Americans will close one Abu Ghraib and open a hundred new ones somewhere else.” The legacy of Abu Ghraib is also living on in the Iraqi police force, which a [recent State Department report](#) criticized for its human rights abuses. In 2005, [Human Rights Watch](#) concluded that abuse by Iraqi police forces had become “[routine and commonplace](#).” Last November, U.S. officials discovered a secret prison run by Interior Ministry officials with links to a Shiite militia that had tortured and killed Sunnis. “U.S. officials suspected that Iraqi police officers who worked at the illegal prison had [received American training in interrogation](#).”

DROPPING RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS: While Rice and Rumsfeld yesterday outlined the importance of additional security funding for Iraq, they ignored the country’s unfinished reconstruction projects. Last week, Amb. James Jeffrey, Senior Advisor to Rice and Coordinator for Iraq, stated that the United States will not be seeking significant additional funding for reconstruction projects in Iraq — except for prisons. “And in fact, in these two budgets, [the only new construction is related to prisons](#), you know, which we see as a rule of law, capacity-building. ... There is no significant new money apart from that in our accounts for reconstruction in the narrow sense of building up the infrastructure.” “For a country like the United States that is promoting the advancement of freedom, building jails is not necessarily your best image,” said Rick Barton of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. But just because the administration is requesting no new funding doesn’t mean that the projects are finished. A recent report by Iraq’s Special Inspector General, Stuart Bowen, concluded that even the [current \\$18.4 billion allocated for Iraq’s reconstruction will run out](#) before projects are finished. “Of the 136 water projects first envisioned, only 49, or 36 percent, will be completed. And only 300 of the 425 electrical projects will be completed. The goal of 3,400 additional megawatts of electricity will also be missed, with only 2,200 megawatts delivered.” Yet the United States cannot solely blame security problems for the slow pace of reconstruction. Bowen also noted that the United States never built up a plan to rebuild Iraq after the invasion: “There was [insufficient systematic planning for human capital management in Iraq](#) before and during the U.S.-directed stabilization and reconstruction operations.” (On the eve of the three year anniversary of the invasion, American Progress will host an event, “[Iraq: Next Steps for U.S. Policy](#),” featuring Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski.)

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