



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Iraq Policy Team  
MENAD

11/11/09

Brian Rappert

B.Rappert@exeter.ac.uk

Dear Mr Rappert

**Subject: Freedom Of Information Request: Ref: 0894-09**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request in which you asked;

Since 2001, what projects has the FCO funded, undertaken or analysed in Iraq that work, *inter alia*, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners? Can the reports of these projects be made available?

Since 2001, what analyses or assessments have been made by FCO staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence – either in general or in relation to specific projects or publications?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) may hold information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provisions for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ days working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may therefore wish to further refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. You could adjust the timeframes set out in your request, the number of questions, or narrow the scope of the request. Any reformulated request the department receives from you will be treated as a fresh Freedom of Information request.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request an internal review, you should write to the FOI - Information Rights Management Team. E-mail: [Dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk) . Please note any request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days from the date our response was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow

Cheshire  
SK9 5AF



Your sincerely

R. Croker

Richard Croker  
Iraq Policy Team



Leading the British Government's fight against world poverty

Dr Brian Rappert  
[B.Rappert@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:B.Rappert@exeter.ac.uk)



Abercrombie House, Eaglesham Road  
East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 8EA

Tel: 01355 84 3491

Email: [foi@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:foi@dfid.gov.uk)

2 December 2009

Dear Dr Rappert

### Freedom of Information Request F2009-272

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 4 November 2009. I have taken each of your questions in turn.

*Since 2001, what projects has the DFID funded, undertaken or analysed in Iraq that work, inter alia, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners? Can the reports of these projects be made available?*

DFID has not funded or undertaken any project work on this issue. I can, therefore, confirm that we do not hold information relevant to this part of your request.

*Since 2001, what analyses or assessments have been made by DFID staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence – either in general or in relation to specific projects or publications?*

DFID staff or scientific advisors have not undertaken specific work to analyse methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence. DFID is however funding work on strengthening the international evidence base on both the direct and indirect impact of violent conflict on civilians. For example, through DFID's Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Fund (CHSF), DFID provides grant funding to the Human Security Report Project that undertakes a wide variety of research projects analysing civilian costs of violent conflict. You can find more information on this project through the following link to their website <http://www.hsrgroup.org>. DFID also provides grant funding to the International Crisis Group (ICG) through the CHSF. ICG's CrisisWatch provides information monthly on developments in approximately 70 situations of current or potential conflict. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/>.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me, quoting F2009-272.



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[www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

If you are unhappy with the service we have provided and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to Openness Unit at the address shown above or email [foi@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:foi@dfid.gov.uk)

If you do make a complaint and are not content with the outcome, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted DFID's complaints procedure. You can contact the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Helen Kennedy  
Openness Unit



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Iraq Policy Team  
Middle East & North Africa Directorate  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7008 4117  
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b.rappert@exeter.ac.uk

7 January 2010

Dear Dr Rappert,

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST: REF 1087-09**

I am writing to confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has now completed its search for the information you requested on 12 December 2009, when you asked:

*Since November 2007, what projects has the FCO funded, undertaken or analysed in Iraq that work, inter alia, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners? Can the reports of these projects be made available?*

We do not hold any information relating to projects funded or undertaken by the FCO to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners. We do, however, hold one document relevant to your request, entitled 'Analysis of Iraqi Civilian Death Tolls' and dated 7 December 2007. A copy is enclosed (appendix A).

I also include a digest of an email chain in which the creation of this document is discussed. I have provided a digest on the grounds that the rest of the email chain is not relevant to your request.

**Digest**

The relevant parts of an email chain entitled 'CSR07 PSA on conflict prevention and resolution: results of Iraq workshop: updates needed by 14 December', between two FCO officials in Iraq Group and an official at DFID, dated 4 and 5 December 2007:

*4 December 2007: 'Battle deaths. ... were you going to investigate what data source we could use given the political sensitivity issues?'*

*4 December 2007: 'I will look into the battle deaths point but my instinct is that we will have to use MNF stats. Petraeus produced a slide during his testimony on September on "Iraqi civilian deaths", sourced to "coalition and host government reports." ... do you (or DIS colleagues) have any idea how regularly MNF produces this sort of reporting – and do we have timely access to it? ... it would be helpful if you could produce a checklist of all the different data sets which purport to measure Iraqi civilian deaths from conflict, together with a short summary of our views on their reliability, and what we have said about them in public.'*

*5 December 2007: 'I will do my best, although we have not come to a view on the reliability of many of the sources. We have tried to stay out of the debate on figures, and have always said that the GOI are best placed to monitor them. I would be very wary of using MNF's figures – they do not record all*

incidents, and if they arrive on the scene later, many victims will already have been taken away by relatives.

*'There is intense FOI and parliamentary interest in this – if we started using figures internally now as a measurement of progress, we would risk having to release them under an FOI request, which would contradict previous statements that we do not collate or endorse any casualty figures.'*

The names of officials have been redacted under section 40 of the Act, on the grounds that their identities are not relevant to the information requested.

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<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/crown-copyright/copyright-guidance/index.htm>

Information you receive which is not subject to Crown Copyright continues to be protected by the copyright of the person, or organisation, from which the information originated. You must ensure that you gain their permission before reproducing any third party (non Crown Copyright) information.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request an internal review of our decision, you should write to the Open Government Liaison Officer, Middle East Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Middle East Group. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Please contact me if you have any queries about this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Farrell

## Appendix A: Document dated 7 December 2007

### Analysis of Iraqi Civilian death tolls.

#### **Lancet Survey November 2004**

- 98,000 deaths from March 2003 – November 2004

#### Advantages:

- none

#### Disadvantages:

- Methodology deemed flawed by MOD's Chief Scientific Adviser and FCO's Chief Economist.
- Figures extrapolated from a small sample.
- Figure higher than any previously quoted.

#### Public statements:

- FS's statement November 2004: "...so while recognising the bravery and professionalism of those conducting the *Lancet* study, the Government does not accept its central conclusion, and continues to believe that the most reliable figures for casualties in Iraq are those provided by Iraqi hospitals to the Iraqi Ministry of Health"

#### **Lancet Survey October 2006**

- 654,965 deaths from March 2003 – June 2006

#### Advantages:

- MOD Chief medical adviser and DfID statisticians agree the methodology is tried and tested, although some flaws highlighted by other scientists e.g. Royal Holloway team.

#### Disadvantages:

- Figure higher than any previously quoted.

#### Public Statements:

- FS released the following statement: "Every death in Iraq is a tragedy for those affected. The Government of Iraq represents all communities and is committed to tackling sectarian violence. We are supporting this effort and will continue to do so. The numbers that the *Lancet* has extrapolated are a substantial leap from other figures. What is important is that we bring an end to the violence and death in Iraq."
- Lord Triesman in an Oral PQ answer on 19/10/06 said: "My Lords, there is no doubt that the survey has been done by a very reputable statistical team at Johns Hopkins University; I have no doubt about their abilities in that sense. What does disturb me a good deal is the extent to which this is a very high estimate compared with others in which the methodology is also regarded as really pretty good. For those reasons it is extremely difficult to arrive at a sensible conclusion."

#### **MOI figures**

- 12,320 deaths in 2006 and other various monthly totals.

#### Advantages:

- GOI best placed to monitor Iraqi deaths.
- Figures include all provinces in Iraq.

#### Disadvantages:

- No official, centrally-collated Iraqi statistics exist for the period before April 2004.
- No details were provided of how the figures were compiled.

- Figures conflict with those provided by MOH, which led to the GOI ceasing co-operation with UNAMI in March 2007.

Public Statements:

- Margaret Beckett on 24 January during debate on Middle East: "First, my hon. Friend asks me for the figures from the beginning of the year. From memory, the Iraqi Government estimate that 12,500 people or thereabouts were killed during the year ending 31 December 2006. He knows that there are other widely and wildly varying estimates, but the figure that the Iraqi Government have given is based on returns to the Ministry of the Interior. Secondly, the most recent month for which I have figures is December-January, and the figure is about 1,900. There has been an increase in the past couple of months..."

MOH/ UNAMI figures:

- 34,452 in 2006 and other various monthly figures until January 2007

Advantages:

- GOI best placed to monitor Iraqi deaths
- Some detail on methodology – figures collected from hospitals and morgues across Iraq, including the Baghdad morgue, the Medico-Legal institute, which received Red-Cross funding to improve procedures.

Disadvantages:

- No official, centrally-collated Iraqi statistics exist for the period before April 2004.
- Figures do not include the three Kurdish provinces.
- The figures do not distinguish between insurgents, civilians or Iraqi Security Forces killed.
- Potential for under-counting, as execution style murders frequently classified as "criminal" or "mystery" killings by police, and not counted towards total figure.
- Only bodies taken to hospitals or morgues counted.
- MOH stopped providing figures directly to BE Baghdad in May/June 2006 and to UNAMI in March 2007.

Public statements:

- FS in November 2004 in Lancet statement: The UK government "continues to believe that the most reliable figures for casualties in Iraq are those provided by Iraqi hospitals to the Iraqi Ministry of Health"
- Lord Triesman in Oral PQ answer on 19/10/06 "I believe that the Government of Iraq—assisted by the Medico-Legal Institute, which itself is assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross—and the UN human rights officials who compile a report and are on the ground, still have a very effective operation. I would be loath to try to judge which set of figures is right or to believe that we could do a better job than those who are there....The figures from the Iraqi Government and the Medico-Legal Institute and the UN human rights figures are 3,000 a month, but the bases on which those figures are compiled also have methodological flaws...the Government of Iraq, are the one body with authority to deal with the issue right across Iraq."

**Joint MOH/MOI/ MOD figures:**

- 14,135 from Feb 07-Nov 07, monthly totals released to AFP/Reuters

Advantages:

- GOI best placed to monitor Iraqi deaths
- Figures supposedly an agreed figure between MOH/MOI/MOD

Disadvantages:

- Figures have only been released since February 2007.



- A breakdown of figures between civilian/army/police have only been provided since October 2007.
- No information is given on how the figures are reached. Our embassy in Baghdad thinks they are an average of MOH/MOI/MOD figures, however, all these departments reach their totals in different ways.
- We have deliberately not quoted these figures in any recent PQ answers.

**Iraq Body Count/icasualties.org:**

- 78,062-85,046 from March 2003 – present

**Advantages:**

- deaths monitored consistently since March 2003

**Disadvantages:**

- Figures are estimates based on media reporting.
- No guarantee that every violent death reported in the media or that figures quoted in media reports are accurate (although IBC dispute this)

**Public Statements:**

- In December 2005, President Bush mentioned the figure of 30,000 civilian deaths. We believe that he based his estimates on figures published in the media and possibly on studies such as the Iraq Body Count.
- FS' 2004 statement on the Lancet report: IBC "is an estimate relying on media reports, and which we do not regard as reliable. It includes civilian deaths at the hands of terrorists as well as of the Coalition forces. It relies on media reporting to decide who is a civilian and who is not. It does help to show however that the Iraqi Ministry of Health figures are not the only ones to differ widely from the Lancet's estimate."

**MNF-I figures:**

**Advantages:**

- MNF consistently recording casualty data since 2003? (Although, I have never seen a total figure)

**Disadvantages:**

- MNF-I are not always called to scenes of incidents which leads to a great probability of under reporting. There is no MNF-I presence in many areas of Iraq.
- If MNF-I do go to the scene there is a risk of bodies being removed before MNF-I do a body-count.
- As Iraqis become increasingly in the lead it is becoming even more difficult for them to obtain accurate figures.
- Do they differentiate between civilians and insurgents?

**Public statements:**

- General Petraeus used MNF-I figures in his Washington evidence sessions in September 2007.
- As far as I am aware, we have never publicly quoted MNF-I figures.



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Our Ref: 1087-09

15 January 2010

Dr B Rappert  
Department of Sociology and Philosophy  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Exeter  
Exeter EX4 4QJ

c/o b.rappert@exeter.ac.uk

Dear Dr Rappert,

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST - No 1088/09**

I am writing in reply to the request for information you e-mailed on 12 December to my colleague, Sophie Farrell, asking the following:

*Since November 2007, what analyses or assessments have been made by FCO staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence – either in general or in relation to specific projects or publications?*

I can advise you that, following a search of our paper and electronic records, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold information falling within the description and parameters specified in your request.

If you are not content with the outcome of your requestor with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request an internal review, you should write to: Information Rights Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room SG127, Old Admiralty Building, London, SW1A 2PA, or by e-mail to [dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk](mailto:dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days from the date this letter is issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow

Out-Reach Team, Middle East Group  
Room K 2.272, Middle East and  
North Africa Directorate  
King Charles Street  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2PA

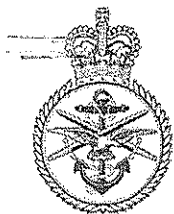
Tel: 020 7008 6889  
Fax: 020 7008 4119

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

R S Petherbridge



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

SIT-Corporate Support Secretariat  
Ministry of Defence  
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London SW1A 2HB  
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Telephone [MOD]: +44 (0)20 7218 9000  
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Reference: SIT4/1 (PF 26 10 2009 120909 003 Rappert)

Dr Brian Rappert  
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EX4 4RJ

E-mail: [b.rappert@ex.ac.uk](mailto:b.rappert@ex.ac.uk)

31 March 2010

Dear Dr Rappert,

1. Your correspondence dated 23 October 2009 has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am sorry for the lateness of this response. You requested the following information:

*"I would like to request the following:*

*Since 2001, what projects has the MOD funded, undertaken or analysed in Iraq that work, inter alia, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners? Can the reports of these projects be made available?*

*Since 2001, what analyses or assessments have been made by MOD staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence – either in general or in relation to specific projects or publications?"*

2. Please find enclosed the information you requested that was originally released on 19 October 2007. A schedule of the information is set out below:

Minute from PS/CSA dated 29 October 2004 (Reference: D/CSA/11/6(388/04)

Minute from APS/CSA dated 13 October 2006 (Reference: D/CSA/11/6(604/06)

3. Some of the information you have requested falls within the scope of the following absolute exemptions under the Act:

*Section 40 (Personal Information) - names of members of staff belonging to Grades below Senior Civil Service level.*

*Section 41 (Information provided in confidence)*

4. Under section 16(1) of the Act it is the duty of a public authority to provide assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect, to persons who propose to make, or have made requests for information. We can advise you that in many conflict situations it would be impossible to make a reliably accurate assessment either of the civilian casualties

resulting from any particular attacks or of the overall civilian casualties of a conflict. We always said that we believe that the Iraqi authorities are in the best position to monitor the casualties of their own nationals, as they have better access and provide more accurate information. The Iraqi Ministry of Health collates information from their hospitals. It is clearly for the Iraqi Government to decide how they want to count deaths among their own citizens.

5. No projects of the type you described have been funded undertaken or analysed by the MOD. However, the UK had a requirement to be able to estimate the amount of collateral damage that may result from conducting a given attack against a particular target. The Defence Scientific and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) have a continuing programme of work, begun before 2001, to further the UK's understanding of the scientific mechanisms associated with collateral damage, and to develop a fast-running software tool (the UK Collateral Damage Model, CDM) to assist in the estimation of collateral damage prior to a proposed attack and to provide scientific support in the formulation of UK targeting policy in the area of collateral damage. This work has been conducted on behalf of the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) and the Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations – Targets (DTIO-Tgts) with additional funding coming from and the Directorate of Equipment Capability – Deep Target Attack (DEC DTA).

6. The MOD had conducted an assessment of the methodology of an article from the Lancet article in 2004. I enclose a copy of that assessment dated 29 October 2004, redacted to withhold information that can identify specific individuals under exemption S40 (personal information). As I am sure you are aware, civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan is very much a Foreign and Commonwealth Office policy lead. As such, they may be able to assist you further.

7. The MOD also conducted an assessment of the methodology used in an article Lancet in October 2006 entitled "*Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: A cross-sectional cluster sample survey*". A copy of that survey dated 13 October 2006 is enclosed with a related e-mail dated 11 October 2006. Both documents have been redacted to withhold information that can identify specific individuals under exemption S40 (personal information). That dated 13 October 2006 has also been redacted to withhold that if released would constitute an actionable breach of confidence under exemption S41 (Information provided in confidence).

8. The MOD also holds further information related to your request, but that we believe the information falls within the scope of the following qualified exemption: *Section 27 [International Relations]*. As such it is necessary for us to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

9. The Freedom of Information Act requires us to respond to requests promptly, and in any case no later than 20 working days after receiving your request. However, when a qualified exemption applies to the information and the public interest test has to be conducted, the Act allows the time for response to be longer than 20 working days. A full response must be provided within such time as is reasonable in all circumstances of the case and, in relation to your request, we estimate that it will take an additional 12 working days to take a final decision on where the balance of public interest lies. We therefore plan to let you have a response by 16 April. If it appears that it will take longer than this to reach a conclusion we will let you know.

10. If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal

resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Head of Corporate Information, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

11. If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.



## CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER

D/CSA/11/6 (388/04)

29 October 2004

### D News

Copy to:

APS/Secretary of State  
PS/PUS  
PSO/CDS  
DG Op Pol

### IRAQI CIVILIAN DEATHS: LANCET ARTICLE

1. Further to your discussion with CSA this morning, Professor Anderson has quickly reviewed the recent Lancet article on Iraqi civilian deaths.
2. CSA has concluded that the design of the study is robust, the methodology section is (unusually for the Lancet) long and detailed and that good quality statistical advice has been sought and applied in the presented analysis. He therefore believes that the paper is a sensible one, except perhaps for some of the language in the final paragraph, and that the results are probably as robust as one could have achieved in the very difficult circumstances. He therefore recommends that we should proceed with caution in publicly criticising the paper.
3. He would, however, add three caveats. First, the extrapolation from a very small sample size to the whole of Iraq is a weakness, especially given the rather small sample size (a total of 58 excess deaths) on which part of the extrapolation is based. Second, there are weaknesses in the way that deaths have been recorded. Attempts to get families to provide death certificates as evidence of death often met with a hostile response, so sub-sampling was adopted, further reducing the net sample of "confirmed" deaths. This means that in many cases the only evidence of a death having occurred, and of the cause of death, was the verbal information provided from (not necessarily disinterested) family members. And finally, as the penultimate paragraph of the paper notes, there were excess of deaths amongst males, possibly indicating that some of those who died were combatants rather than civilians.

[original signed]

PS/CSA  
Level 5 Zone G Main Building WH



**CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER**

D/CSA/11/6 (604/06)

13<sup>th</sup> October 2006

**DJC-Sec10**

Copy to:  
APS1/Secretary of State  
PS/PUS  
PSO/CDS  
DG Op Pol  
DJC  
D News

**IRAQ – MORTALITY AFTER THE 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ: A CROSS-SECTIONAL CLUSTER SAMPLE SURVEY – LANCET OCTOBER 2006**

1. Further to our discussions yesterday, CSA has reviewed the recent article by Burnham and colleagues published in the *Lancet* (Online – 11 October 2006) and received comments from an independent expert in statistical epidemiology and demography ([REDACTED]). He has the following comments to make:
  - a) The study design is robust and employs methods that are regarded as close to 'best practice' in this area, given the difficulties of data collection and verification in the present circumstances in Iraq. The methods section of the paper is sufficiently detailed to gain a good impression of the techniques adopted, problems encountered in implementation and the statistical methods employed in analysis. The methods are an improvement on those used in the 2004 *Lancet* article by the same senior author (G Burnham). Sample sizes have been increased, given critical comment on the earlier study with respect to small sample size (and the concomitant large confidence intervals surrounding estimates of excess mortality) and previous lack of verification of reported death against death certificates. The senior author is a competent researcher in public health and demography and the study received appropriate scrutiny from the sponsoring institutions in the USA and Iraq.
  - b) The most significant improvement in methodology between the 2004 and 2006 studies lie in death certificate verification of reported mortality, larger sample sizes and better design in the cross-sectional (by age and gender) cluster-



[REDACTED]

cluster-based survey methods.

- c) The reported analyses and statistical methods employed seem robust, although moderate confidence bounds remain on the estimate of 601,027 post-invasion deaths due to violence (95% confidence bound of 426,369 to 793,663). This is in part a consequence of heterogeneity between clusters and extrapolation from samples to the total population. In the difficult circumstances surrounding data collection this is hardly surprising. The average estimate in the 2006 study is close to that reported in the 2004 study.
  - d) Deaths were much more prevalent among adolescent to middle aged men and bias may remain with respect to average levels of non-combatant mortality in the overall population, given that some of the recorded deaths were amongst combatants against both the coalition forces and opposing sectarian groups.
  - e) The discussion section of the 2006 paper is more balanced than that in the 2004 study, with reasonable discussion of problems in data collection plus study implementation, and the interpretation of the reported estimates.
- 2. [REDACTED]
  - 3. Given the reasonably robust study design and appropriate analysis methods, CSA recommends caution in publicly criticising the study.

[REDACTED]

APS/CSA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Defence Science & Technology -  
Secretariat  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building (01/M/61)  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB  
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Telephone [MOD]: +44 (0)20 7218 9000  
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E-mail: [SIT-CSSEC1@mod.uk](mailto:SIT-CSSEC1@mod.uk)

Reference: SIT4/1 (PF 26 10 2009 120909 003 Rappert)

Dr Brian Rappert  
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E-mail: [b.rappert@ex.ac.uk](mailto:b.rappert@ex.ac.uk)

16 April 2010

Dear Dr Rappert,

1. Further to my letter of 31 March in connection with your request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

*"I would like to request the following:*

*Since 2001, what projects has the MOD funded, undertaken or analysed in Iraq that work, inter alia, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners? Can the reports of these projects be made available?*

*Since 2001, what analyses or assessments have been made by MOD staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence – either in general or in relation to specific projects or publications?"*

2. Please find enclosed the remaining information for which a schedule is set out below:

Analysis of 2006 Lancet Article – Summary of Findings (undated)

3. If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Head of Corporate Information, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

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<http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

*Richard John*

Richard John

## Summary of Main Findings

### 1) Statistical Methodology looks sound

### 2) The data may still be suspect (but probably isn't)

The Interviewers themselves may be compromised, especially in Sunni areas.

The interview subjects may be mis-attributing deaths to coalition action

There are a few trivial compilation errors in the presented tables

### 3) The casualty numbers are very easy to misrepresent / misunderstand

There is a dangerous confabulation between "Deaths, Violent Deaths, Violent Civilian Deaths, Violent Civilian deaths caused by Coalition forces".

The article statistics strongly imply (but do not quite prove) that **the majority of violent deaths is Insurgent / Criminal activity against civilians.**

The article statistics imply (but do not prove) that **collateral damage by coalition forces is of the order 25-30% of all coalition kills.**

Casualties from the warfighting phase are NOT separated out (but would not have exceeded ~30,000 on this data).

The deaths for the approximate period of the original Lancet article appear to be about double those referenced in the latest article's estimate. It would be expected that these would be the same unless the original article presented the wrong information.

The deaths are high, but historically not unprecedented for nations of this size in a high-end COIN (counter insurgency operations) for this long.

### 4) This is a quick-and-dirty review;

A much more thorough investigation of the article is possible, especially if the original data was made available. All errors are of course, my own.

## Supporting Comment

### **METHODOLOGY**

The article is very rigorous. Of the dozen or so queries I noted down, all were answered satisfactorily within the course of the article. *The cross-sectional cluster-sample statistical technique used is valid and rigorously applied in what must have been very difficult circumstances.* All the major issues I can think of appear to have been satisfactorily addressed. The calculation of confidence intervals for the main findings seem well thought out (though they are sometimes stated to excess), and the accompanying sensitivity analysis looks sound as well; they even double-checked using a bootstrap. *Checking the exact numbers would take more time than I have at present; but none of them look unreasonable.*

CAVEAT: The method used isn't my core area of stats expertise, but it is related and I think I can see clearly what they did all the way through.

## DATA

### Interviewers

In dealing with Iraqi data, western researchers could not go into the field and were wholly dependent upon the reliability of their local researchers. Insurgents in Iraq are presumably acutely aware of the media benefits of high-profile western articles like this one. On the other hand, the researchers were MDs who have done this class of work before, and were apparently consistently supervised by the same individual. Despite my initial concerns, I have to say in all honesty I'm fairly satisfied the data was recorded faithfully, if the situation was as presented in the article.

### Interviewees

It is possible that some interviewees misattributed deaths to Coalition action when the physical cause was ambivalent (i.e. gunshot wound). Though it would have been difficult for the interviewees to misrepresent the *number* of deaths, it would have been easy to misrepresent the agency responsible in these cases. However, the total mis-attribution of these (ambiguous) causes of death would not greatly increase the Coalition totals (~30% increase). Therefore I do not regard it as a problem.

### Minor Errors

The total start and end sample populations do not quite tally with birth / death numbers. "Accident" is listed as both a violent and non-violent cause of death in the post invasion period; though this appears to be two separate categories of "accident" rather than double counting, and the numbers involved are small. One or two column totals do not *exactly* sum. But there is nothing glaringly wrong in the article.

## CASUALTY NUMBERS

*The main problem with the article is its inability to separate out both causal agent and moral nature of those violent deaths which occur in the post-war period. Consider the following breakdown of all deaths in the post war period.*

### All Deaths

#### 1) Violent Deaths

##### a) Violent deaths by Coalition action

##### i) Civilian deaths by Coalition action

~ Those caused by accident

~ Those caused by culpable negligence or malice

##### ii) Insurgent deaths by Coalition action

##### b) Violent deaths caused by Insurgents / Criminals / Other

#### 2) Non-violent Deaths

Unfortunately the article is frustratingly vague in trying to determine what these are individually, and it is all but impossible to distinguish civilian from insurgent deaths with the data presented. Naturally this offers ready ammunition to groups in the UK

and abroad who will be willing to misrepresent the findings. Also, many media outlets will not be concerned with the distinctions offered here [1]. Despite the vague overall picture, some general observations can be made from the breakdowns provided.

#### Casualties caused by the coalition

300 violent deaths occurred in the post-invasion period. Of these about 94 (31%) were "directly" attributable to the coalition post-invasion. This would correspond to 190,000 deaths. As previously mentioned, this is dependent on a degree of interviewee trustworthiness, but for various reasons seems unlikely to be less than ~65 sample kills or 130,000 deaths. These sample violent deaths attributable to Coalition action will be a mix of civilians and insurgents deaths. It is very hard to separate these further.

*However there is a fascinating clue in the gender breakdown of deaths by airstrikes.* If we assume that all intended targets of airstrikes are male [2], then the women, child, and senior deaths give us a lower end estimates for collateral damage from this mode of death. It is 16 / 39 or 41% of all casualties. It is possible that there may be other adult males in the area too, in which case it is reasonable to assume they took casualties in equal proportion to the adult females. This would change the collateral damage proportion to (18/39) or 46% for airstrikes.

Airstrikes are possibly the least "discriminate" weapon in the sense of having the largest munition area of effect, though this might be countered by more cautious targeting and ROE. *In any event, we might assume, a fortiori that all other coalition modes of killing have an equal or lower collateral damage ratio.* There is support for this for the female/male ratio in the category of explosives and ordnance (and also small arms). Here a similar set of assumptions yields a worse-case collateral damage proportion of 21% (9/42). The equivalent worst-case estimates for small arms would be 14%.

Rolling all these together would yield total deaths by coalition action at ~135,000 insurgents and ~50,000 collateral [3]. Changing the assumptions to "best case" (no collateral male adult deaths) doesn't seem to make much difference. Remember, this is a very crude methodology, but works on two simple assumptions: all insurgents are adult males, and all non-adult males are not insurgents. It might be possible to check these figures against SIGACTS data; if it can be shown that Coalition forces can't possibly have killed that many people, then the empirical basis of the study may be called into question.

#### Historical Comparison

I don't have the numbers to hand, but the historical comparisons the article makes appear valid. We have some limited Historical Analysis in this area; and again, speaking from memory, the total death rates do not look wildly outside the range of deaths per population year for COIN conflicts. But they are definitely towards the high-end of the spectrum (cf Vietnam / "Modern" Algeria / Cambodia / Soviet Afghanistan / Germans in Yugoslavia). *Note our security force death rates per man-year are nowhere near the level these COIN comparisons suggest, and that is one reason why I admit to an underlying scepticism to the claims of this article.*

#### Casualties caused by insurgents/ Criminals / Other.

These casualties amount to 206 of the post-invasion sample deaths. Though it is impossible to say that none of them are misattributed or un-assigned coalition death, reporting circumstances and prevailing enmities make it unlikely. Hence casualties by enemy or criminal action dominate the deaths totals, with about 410,000 deaths in

the post-invasion period. The majority (122) occur in the past year, and appear to be gunshot wounds. The data appears consistent with a rising level of inter-sectarian violence against a lower "background" noise of an ongoing insurgency.

#### Geography:

The distribution of casualties by province is also frustratingly vague; Baghdad appears "quieter" than the neighbouring provinces, though this could be a function of greater population rather than absolute deaths. The majority of deaths are in the Sunni or mixed areas, though the lawless hotspots are visibly in line with expectations across the south. The missing Dahuk and Muthanna data isn't affecting the results. The detailed breakdown of deaths by province by time would be very interesting.

[1] This was widely done with the original lancet article.

[2] They may be *mistargetted* males - i.e. the munitions hits the point of aim but the luckless males in question were not, actually, insurgents. The numbers above are a lower bound.

[3] Note that these numbers would have required coalition forces to have worked their way through the estimated "20,000" insurgents orbat several times over, but that's a more acute problem with "fewer" civilian casualties. These insurgent mortality rates are not historically without precedent, but look very high, if earlier estimates of their orbat are to be believed.