

## Iraq War Timeline

- **Jan. 29, 2002:**

In his State of the Union address, President Bush calls Iraq part of an “axis of evil,” and vows that the U.S. “will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”

- **June 2:**

President Bush publicly introduces the new defense doctrine of preemption in a speech at West Point. Sometimes, he asserts, the U.S. must strike first against another state to prevent a potential threat from growing into an actual one.

- **Sept. 12:**

President Bush addresses the UN, challenging it to swiftly enforce its own resolutions against Iraq. If not, Bush contends, the U.S. must act on its own.

- **Oct. 11:**

Congress authorizes an attack on Iraq.

- **Nov. 8:**

The UN Security Council unanimously approves resolution 1441 imposing tough new arms inspections on Iraq.

- **Nov. 18:**

UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq for the first time in almost four years.

- **Jan. 28, 2003:**

In his State of the Union address, President Bush announces that he is ready to attack Iraq even without a UN mandate.

- **Feb. 14:**

In a UN weapons inspections report on Iraq, chief inspector Hans Blix indicates that slight progress has been made in Iraq’s cooperation with the weapons team.

- **Feb. 24–March 14:**

The U.S. and Britain’s lobbying efforts among UN Security Council members to garner support for a strike on Iraq yield only two supporters (Spain and Bulgaria).

- **March 20:**

The war against Iraq begins 5:30 a.m. Baghdad time (9:30 p.m. EST, March 19), when the U.S. launches Operation Iraqi Freedom.

- **March 21:**

The major phase of the war begins with heavy aerial attacks on Baghdad and other cities. The campaign, publicized in advance by the Pentagon as an overwhelming barrage meant to instill “shock and awe,” is actually more restrained.

- **March 24:**

Troops march within 50 miles of Baghdad. They encounter strong resistance from Iraqi soldiers and paramilitary fighters along the way.

- **March 26:**

About 1,000 paratroopers land in Kurdish-controlled Iraq to open a northern front.

- **March 30:**

U.S. Marines and Army troops launch first attack on Iraq's Republican Guard, about 65 miles outside Baghdad. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld deflects criticism that the U.S. has not deployed enough Army ground troops in Iraq.

- **April 2:**

Special operations forces rescue Pfc. Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Nasiriya. She was one of 12 soldiers captured by Iraqi troops on March 23.

- **April 5:**

U.S. tanks roll into the Iraqi capital and engage in firefights with Iraqi troops. Resistance weaker than anticipated. Heavy Iraqi casualties.

- **April 7:**

British forces take control of Basra, Iraq's second-largest city.

- **April 9:**

Bagdad falls to U.S. forces. Looters pillage government buildings, museums, hospitals, and stores. Statue of Saddam Hussein symbolically toppled.

- **April 11:**

Kirkuk falls to Kurdish fighters.

- **April 13:**

Marines rescue five U.S. soldiers captured by Iraqi troops on March 23 in Nasiriya, and two pilots shot down on March 24 near Karbala.

- **April 15:**

Gen. Jay Garner is appointed by the U.S. to run post-war Iraq.

- **May 1:**  
President Bush declares an end to major combat operations.
- **May 12:**  
Diplomat Paul Bremer replaces Jay Garner as Iraqi administrator.
- **June 15–29:**  
About 1,300 troops launch Operation Desert Scorpion, combating organized Iraqi resistance against American troops near Falluja.
- **July 13:**  
Iraq's interim governing council, composed of 25 Iraqis appointed by American and British officials, is inaugurated. American administrator Paul Bremer, however, retains ultimate authority.
- **July 16:**  
Gen. John Abizaid, commander of allied forces in Iraq, calls continued attacks on coalition troops a “guerrilla-type campaign” and says soldiers who will replace current troops may be deployed for year-long tours.
- **July 22:**  
Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay Hussein, die in firefight in a Mosul palace.
- **Aug. 19:**  
Suicide bombing destroys UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24, including top envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.
- **Aug. 29:**  
A bomb kills one of Iraq's most important Shiite leaders, Ayatollah Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, among about 80 others.
- **Sept. 7:**  
President Bush announces that \$87 billion is needed to cover additional military and reconstruction costs.
- **Oct. 23–24:**  
The Madrid Conference, an international conference to raise funds for Iraq's reconstruction, yields \$33 billion but falls short of the target of \$56 billion.
- **Oct. 27:**  
Four coordinated suicide attacks in Baghdad kill 43 and wound more than 200. Targets include the headquarters of the Red Crescent and three police stations. Insurgents increasingly victimize civilians, Iraqi security forces, and aid agencies, not simply U.S. troops.

- **Nov. 2:**

Iraqi guerrillas shoot down an American helicopter, killing 16 U.S. soldiers and injuring 21 others. Additional attacks this month make it the bloodiest since the war began: at least 75 U.S. soldiers die.

- **Nov. 14:**

The Bush administration reverses policy in a deal with the Iraqi Governing Council, agreeing to transfer power to an interim government much sooner, in 2004.

- **Dec. 9:**

Directive issued by Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, bars France, Germany, and Russia from bidding on lucrative contracts for rebuilding Iraq, creating a diplomatic furor.

- **Dec. 13:**

Saddam Hussein is captured by U.S. troops. He is found hiding in a hole near his hometown of Tikrit and surrenders without a fight.

- **Jan. 11, 2004:**

The Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most influential Shiite cleric in Iraq, says members of the country's interim government must be selected by direct vote. He opposes the U.S. plan to hold regional caucuses. The U.S. has argued that it would be impossible to ensure free and safe elections on such a tight timetable—the U.S. plans to hand control of the government to Iraqis on June 30.

- **Jan. 15:**

Thousands of Shiites hold a peaceful demonstration in Basra in support of direct elections.

- **Jan. 19:**

The U.S. asks the UN to intercede in the dispute over the elections process in Iraq.

- **Jan. 28:**

David Kay, the former head of the U.S. weapons inspection teams in Iraq, informs a senate committee that no WMD have been found in Iraq and that prewar intelligence was “almost all wrong” about Saddam Hussein's arsenal.

- **Feb. 2:**

Under pressure from both sides of the political aisle, President Bush calls for an independent commission to study intelligence failures.

- **Feb. 10:**

About 54 Iraqis are killed in a car bombing while applying for jobs at a police station. The next day an attack kills about 47 outside an army recruiting center. Iraqi security forces become a regular target of insurgents.

- **Feb. 23:**

UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi issues a report concluding that the earliest that credible, direct elections could be held is early 2005.

- **March 2:**

Suicide attacks in Karbala on Shiite Islam's most holy feast day kill more than 85 and wound 233 others. It is believed that the perpetrators are attempting to foment unrest between Shiites and Sunnis.

- **March 8:**

The Iraqi Governing Council signs interim constitution.

- **March 31:**

Iraqi mob kills and mutilates four American civilian contract workers and drags them through the streets of Falluja.

- **April 4:**

U.S. troops begin assault on Falluja in response to March 31 killings. Coordinated attacks by Shiites are launched in the cities of Kufa, Karbala, Najaf, al-Kut, and Sadr City. The militias are led by Moktada al-Sadr.

- **April 9:**

U.S. contract worker Thomas Hamill is taken hostage. In all, more than 20 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq, and hostage-taking becomes a regular tactic of the insurgents.

- **April 15:**

The Bush administration agrees to a UN proposal to replace the Iraqi Governing Council with a caretaker government when the U.S. returns sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30.

- **April 22:**

U.S. announces that some Iraqi Baath Party officials who had been forced out of their jobs after the fall of Saddam Hussein will be allowed to resume their positions. About 400,000 lost their jobs, draining Iraq of skilled workers.

- **April 30:**

The appalling physical and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad comes to light when photographs are released by the U.S. media. The images spark outrage around the world.

- **May 8:**

Nicholas Berg, an American contractor, is beheaded by Iraqi militants. Beheadings of foreign workers become a regular terrorist tactic.

- **May 17:**

A suicide bomber kills the head of the Governing Council, Izzedin Salim, and six others.

- **May 27:**

After seven weeks of fighting in Najaf, U.S. forces and militias loyal to al-Sadr reach a truce.

- **May 28:**

Iyad Allawi is designated prime minister of the Iraqi interim government. A Shiite neurologist, Allawi has close ties to the CIA.

- **June 1:**

Ghazi al-Yawar, a Sunni, is chosen president, a ceremonial post. The Governing Council decides to dissolve itself immediately rather than wait for the official handover of sovereignty.

- **June 16:**

The 9/11 Commission concludes in its report that there is “no credible evidence that Iraq and al-Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States.” The link between al-Qaeda and Iraq was one of the justifications for the war.

- **June 28:**

In a surprise move, the United States transfers power back to Iraqis two days early. The ceremony was held in secret to thwart attacks by Iraqi insurgents.

- **July 7:**

Prime Minister Allawi signs a law permitting him to impose martial law.

- **July 9:**

The Senate Intelligence Committee releases a unanimous, bipartisan “Report on Pre-War Intelligence on Iraq,” harshly criticizing the CIA and other American intelligence agencies for the “mischaracterization of intelligence.” “Most of the major key judgments” on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction were “either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence report.” It also concluded that there was no “established formal relationship” between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

- **Aug. 24:**

The Pentagon-sponsored Schlesinger report’s investigation into the Abu Ghraib scandal calls the prisoner abuse acts of “brutality and purposeless sadism,” and rejects the idea that the abuse was simply the work of a few aberrant soldiers. It asserts that there were “fundamental failures throughout all levels of command, from the soldiers on the ground to Central Command and to the Pentagon.”

- **Aug. 27:**

A bloody, three-week battle in Najaf between U.S. forces and militia of militant cleric al-Sadr ends in August when Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani negotiates a settlement.

- **Sept. 7:**

U.S. death toll in Iraq reaches 1,000; about 7,000 soldiers have been wounded. In August, attacks on American forces reached their highest level since the beginning of the war, an average of 87 per day. No official record of Iraqi civilian deaths is kept, but as of this date estimates range from 12,000 to 14,000 (Iraq Body Count).

- **Sept. 15:**

The Bush administration requests that the Senate divert \$3.4 billion of the \$18.4 billion Iraq reconstruction budget to improving security in the country. The worsening security situation—with pockets of Iraq essentially under the control of insurgents—threatens to disrupt national elections, scheduled for January. Republican and Democratic senators alike harshly criticize the request as a sign that the American campaign in Iraq has been poorly executed. Senators also denounce the slow progress in rebuilding Iraq: just 6% (\$1 billion) of the reconstruction money approved by Congress has in fact been spent.

- **Sept. 15:**

In a BBC interview, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan says the war against Iraq was illegal and violated the UN Charter. The U.S., UK, and Australia vigorously reject his conclusion.