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SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2005

## Iraqi Troop Levels: Bush Lies

by Michael in New York on [7/17/2005 03:17:00 PM](#)

Everyone's known from the start that US forces won't leave Iraq until the Iraqi people themselves can keep their country safe. That's why Bush has played games with the number of Iraqi troops that are properly trained. He's been purposefully misleading the American people -- first by throwing out any numbers he thinks he can get away with and then pretending they actually mean something.

Bush and his surrogates keep pounding away at the idea that 140,000 Iraqi troops have been trained (adding sotto voce that this number includes troops broken down into three groups -- some ready to battle on their own, some who can fight side by side with the US and the rest who, apparently, have been given an "I'm an Iraqi soldier" baseball cap and sent on their way).

That figure -- 140,000 -- is a lie, plain and simple. Bush knows perfectly well that the facts don't back him up and yet he stood in front of the American people on national television in primetime last month and lied. As we've said before, only 2,500 are fully trained (that is, can fight on their own -- which is the only standard that matters). About 8,900 can fight with our help. That means about 130,000 of those troops Bush keeps mentioning can't fight even with our help. So 90% of the Iraqi troops are useless in battle.

Now more news is coming out. A terrific [London Review of Books](#) article on corruption in Iraq also takes a pass at those Iraqi troops:

This February, the State Department glowingly reported that almost 82,000 Iraqi police and 60,000 troops had been trained.

These figures are grossly misleading. According to the GAO's March report to Congress 'the reported number of Iraqi police is unreliable because the Minister of the Interior does not receive consistent and accurate reporting from the police forces around the country. **The data does not exclude police absent from duty.**' As for the army, 'Ministry of Defense reports exclude the absent military personnel from its totals. According to DOD officials, **the number of absentees is probably in the tens of thousands.**' Furthermore **the State Department no longer reports on whether Iraqi security forces have the required weapons, vehicles, communication equipment and body armour.** Bluntly, 'US government agencies do not report reliable data on the extent to which Iraqi security forces are trained and equipped.' The GAO further found that the Iraqi police are being trained for 'community policing in a permissive security environment' rather than getting 'paramilitary training for a high-threat hostile environment'. It's hardly surprising that close to 2000 Iraqi police have been killed.

This is all horribly reminiscent of American policy in Vietnam. American troops are staying in Iraq to stiffen Iraqi

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