



THURSDAY, JUNE 09, 2005

Iraq's Kurdish President Supports Armed Militia Accused Of Targeting Sunnis

by Michael in New York on [6/09/2005 10:34:00 AM](#)

Things are going swimmingly in Iraq. Two days ago, the Kurdish president -- instead of upholding the rule of law and calling for all armed militias to disband -- **threw his support behind the Shiite Badr Brigade.**

President Jalal Talabani's backing of the Badr Brigade came at a time when Sunni leaders have not only demanded that it be disarmed, but have complained that the militia provides intelligence and support for some Shiite-dominated special security units.

The Badr Brigade was the military wing of the country's largest Shiite political party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Republic in Iraq, or SCIRI. The party claims the Badr Brigade is no longer a militia but performs social and political functions.

Yes, the Shiite and Kurdish vision of Iraq doesn't include merely a trained and responsible national army. It apparently also includes **armed ethnic militias, militias that the Sunnis claim are targeting and killing them.** It's more complicated than that, of course. The Kurds naturally don't want to give up their militias because they've created the one stable, safe area of Iraq and are loathe to put any of that at risk.

For a closer look at Iraq, [this diary from the London Review of Books](#) is insightful. In case you can't access it, here's the depressing kicker by writer Patrick Cockburn:

The safest areas in the country, despite the bomb in Arbil, are the three inner Kurdish provinces: Iraq's 15 other provinces are a bloody no man's land. In the summer heat of the last few weeks, the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates have become warmer. Bodies that were dumped in the river in the winter months are now rising to the surface. Hundreds of them are being buried in temporary graves but nobody knows who they are or why they were killed.

But my favorite part of the USA Today story is the tag at the end that has become a commonplace. It begins "In other violence Wednesday...."

In other violence Wednesday:

- Gunmen killed two industry ministry officials in a drive-by shooting in the capital's New Baghdad neighborhood.
- One police officer was killed and six injured in clashes between Iraqi police and gunmen in northwest

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