

General Petraeus' report on the surge in Iraq has brought much attention to recent casualty trends as a measure of success or failure. CDI Research Associate Ana Marte and Research Assistant Elise Szabo present available data on Iraqi civilian and U.S. military casualties in Iraq with commentary by CDI's Straus Military Reform Project on its implications for evaluating the surge.

### **Fact Sheet: Civilian and Military Casualties in Iraq and Their Implications for "The Surge"**

General Petraeus and others assert that a reduction in civilian and military casualties in Iraq mean that the "surge" in Iraq is showing progress and, given more time and resources, it could prove to be successful. Recent news articles and the Government Accountability Office's recent testimony on Iraq's progress in meeting the "benchmarks" legislated by Congress show this to be a matter of considerable controversy.

While there are reliable statistics available for U.S. military casualties, data on civilian casualties is problematic. For example, difficulties with the latter are noted at the iCasualties.org website. The website notes, "This is not a complete list, nor can we verify these totals. This is simply a compilation of deaths reported by news agencies. Actual totals for Iraqi deaths are much higher than the numbers recorded on this site." At other websites, the data covers only limited time periods, and they appear to have limitations similar to those noted by iCasualties.org. Clearly, the data on civilian casualties should be addressed with caution.

The data available from IraqBodyCount.org at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/> is also important to consider, as is the data collected by the Brookings Institution for its Iraq Index at <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>. These data tend to show the same trends as discussed below; CDI will release an analysis that employs these IraqBodyCount.org and Brookings data in the next few days.

The limitations of the available data notwithstanding, the tally of civilian casualties taken in combination with the more reliable and complete data on U.S. military casualties comprise little, if any, reason to conclude that the "surge" in Iraq has achieved a meaningful level of success in establishing order or security in Iraq.

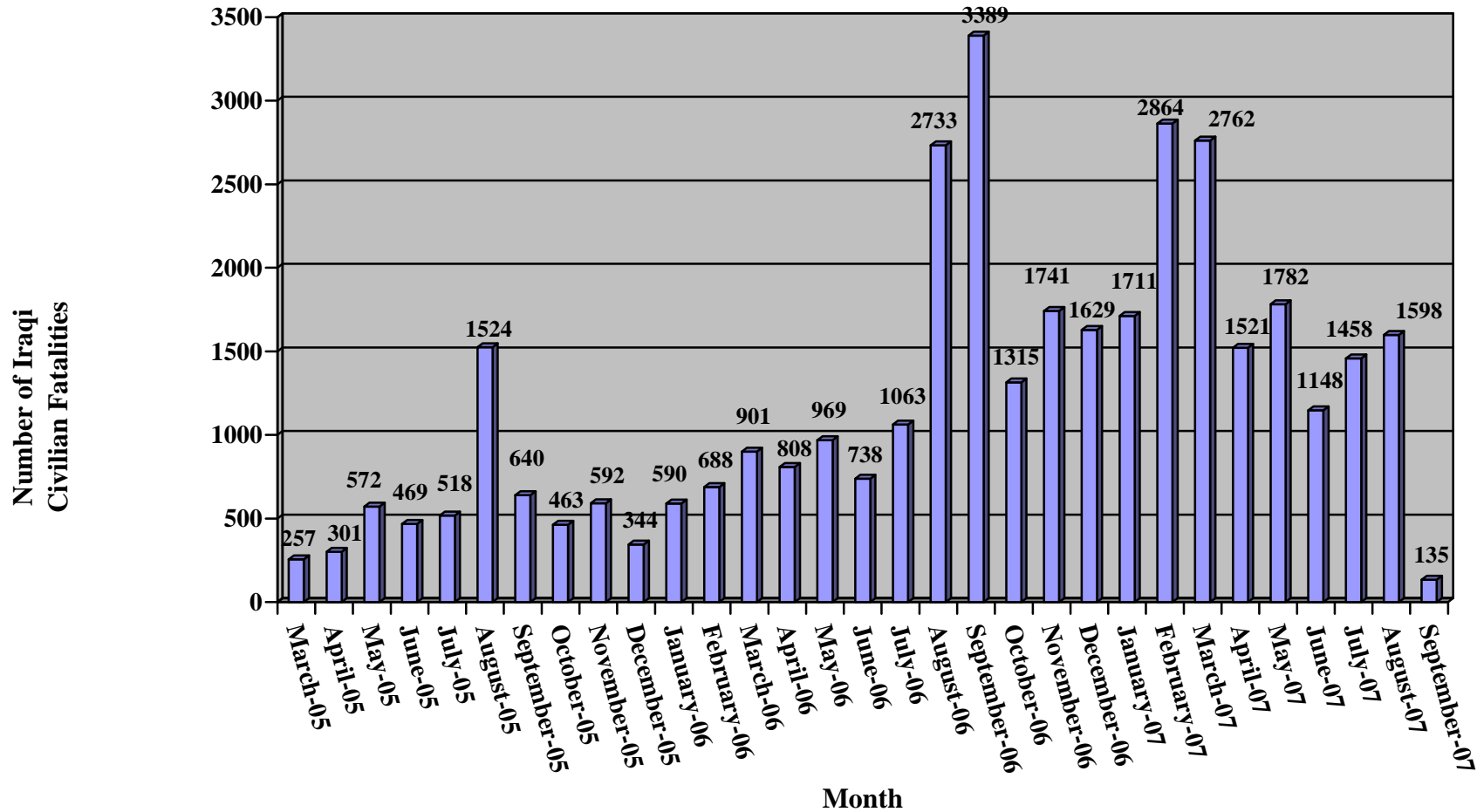
Using the data available from icasualties.org, Figure 1 and Table 1, below, show July 2007 to be the bloodiest July for Iraqi civilians since 2005. (Data from icasualties.org for the period before 2005 for Iraqi civilians is not available.) Different data available from the *Associated Press*' data collection shows the same trend with civilian casualties in 2007 occurring at a rate as high as double of that of 2006.<sup>1</sup>

Data collected for the month of August is somewhat different but not encouraging. August 2006 was significantly bloodier for Iraqi civilians than August 2007, but the data for August 2007 (and for July) are among the highest of the war, except for spikes in February-March 2007 and August-September 2006.

---

<sup>1</sup> Steven R. Hurst, "Iraq Body Count Running at Double Pace," Associated Press, August 26, 2007, [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IRAQ\\_COUNTING\\_THE\\_DEAD?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2007-08-26-02-23-08](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IRAQ_COUNTING_THE_DEAD?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2007-08-26-02-23-08).

**Figure 1: Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Iraqi Civilian Fatalities by Month**  
*March 1, 2005 - September 7, 2007<sup>2</sup>*



<sup>2</sup> iCasualties: OIF Iraqi Deaths, Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.

**Table 1: Iraqi Civilian Fatalities**  
*March 1, 2005 - September 7, 2007*<sup>3</sup>

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>January</b>	-	590	1711
<b>February</b>	-	688	2864
<b>March</b>	257	901	2762
<b>April</b>	301	808	1521
<b>May</b>	572	969	1782
<b>June</b>	469	738	1148
<b>July</b>	518	1063	1458
<b>August</b>	1524	2733	1598
<b>September</b>	640	3389	135 <sup>4</sup>
<b>October</b>	463	1315	-
<b>November</b>	592	1741	-
<b>December</b>	344	1629	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,680</b>	<b>16,564</b>	<b>14,979</b>

The presumably more reliable data for American military casualties are similar. July 2007 is the bloodiest July of the war for American military personnel, as was also the case for June and May 2007. August was bloodier than any previous August, except for August 2005, which recorded virtually the same number of fatalities as August 2007. Moreover, with four more months to go for 2007, this year looks to be the bloodiest year of the war for American military personnel, unless casualties precipitously decline for the rest of 2007 for some reason.

Some have attempted to assert that the reduction in American casualties in July and August relative to previous months in 2007 demonstrates success for the surge; however, that logic presents two problems:

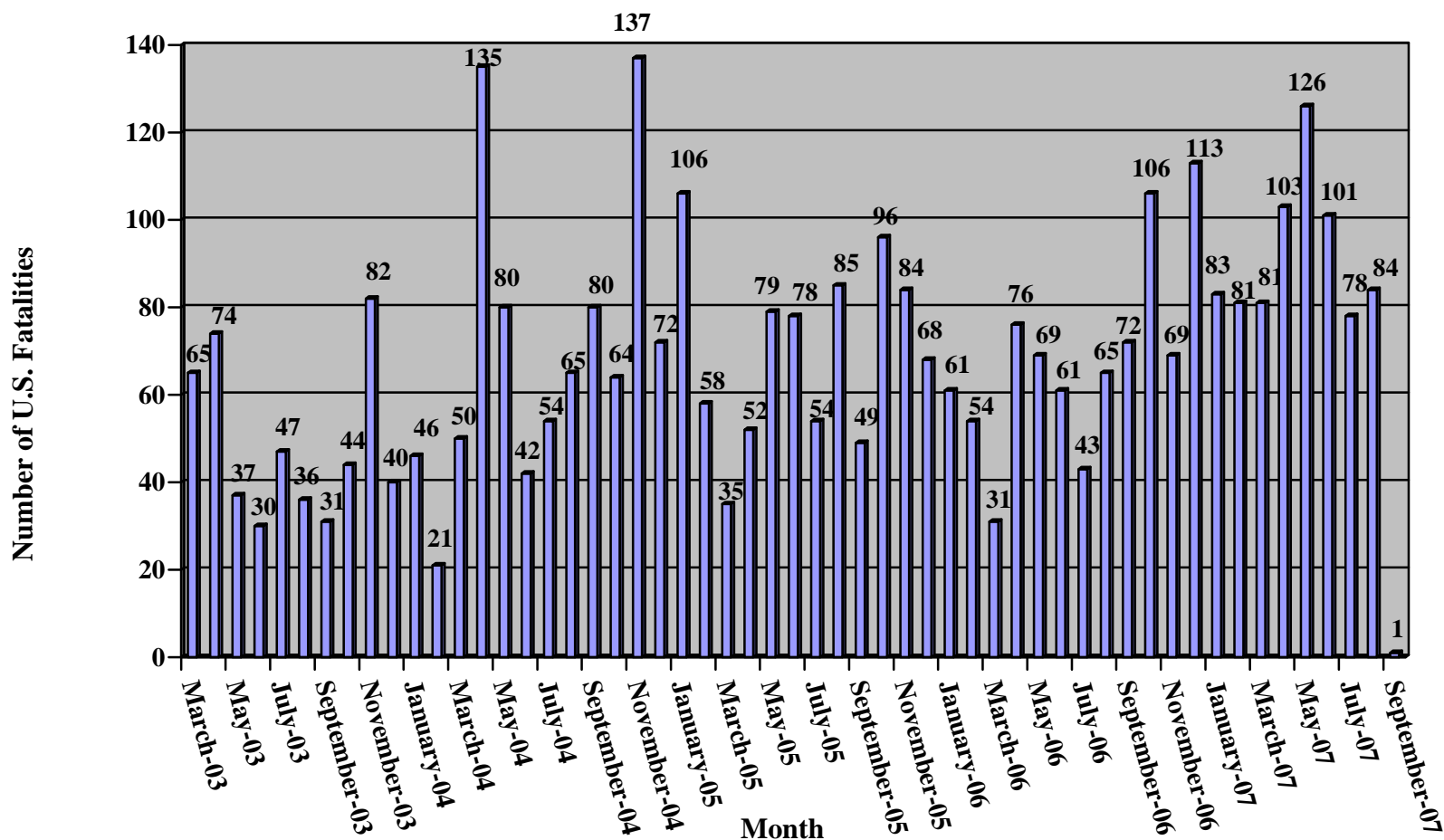
1. Will any possible increase in American casualties later this year mean the effects of the surge have reversed? Such an increase appears predictable given previous peaks in U.S. casualties in the fall of 2004, 2005 and 2006.
2. Given the increased U.S. military activity accompanying the “surge,” should we not expect an increase in U.S. casualties, not a decrease, as American forces engage the enemy more aggressively? The assertion that fewer American casualties is a sign of success would seem illogical. As unfortunate and tragic as the increase in casualties is, is it not appropriate to believe that such an increase was inherent in the concept behind the surge?

<sup>3</sup> iCasualties: OIF Iraqi Deaths, Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Figure only representative of civilian fatalities from September 1<sup>st</sup> to September 7, 2007.

Fewer American casualties in July and August compared to the months immediately previous may indeed be welcome, but it is not clear why it should be taken as a sign of the success of the surge.

**Figure 2: Operation Iraqi Freedom U.S. Military Fatalities by Month**  
*March 19, 2003 – September 1, 2007<sup>5</sup>*



<sup>5</sup> “Global War on Terrorism-Operation Iraqi Freedom Casualty by Month,” Defense Manpower Data Center-Statistical Information Analysis Division (SIAD), March 19, 2003 through September 1, 2007, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/OIF-Total-by-month.pdf>.

**Table 2: U.S. Military Fatalities**  
*March 19, 2003 - September 1, 2007<sup>6</sup>*

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>January</b>	-	46	106	61	83
<b>February</b>	-	21	58	54	81
<b>March</b>	65	50	35	31	81
<b>April</b>	74	135	52	76	103
<b>May</b>	37	80	79	69	126
<b>June</b>	30	42	78	61	101
<b>July</b>	47	54	54	43	78
<b>August</b>	36	65	85	65	84
<b>September</b>	31	80	49	72	1 <sup>7</sup>
<b>October</b>	44	64	96	106	-
<b>November</b>	82	137	84	69	-
<b>December</b>	40	72	68	113	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>738</b>

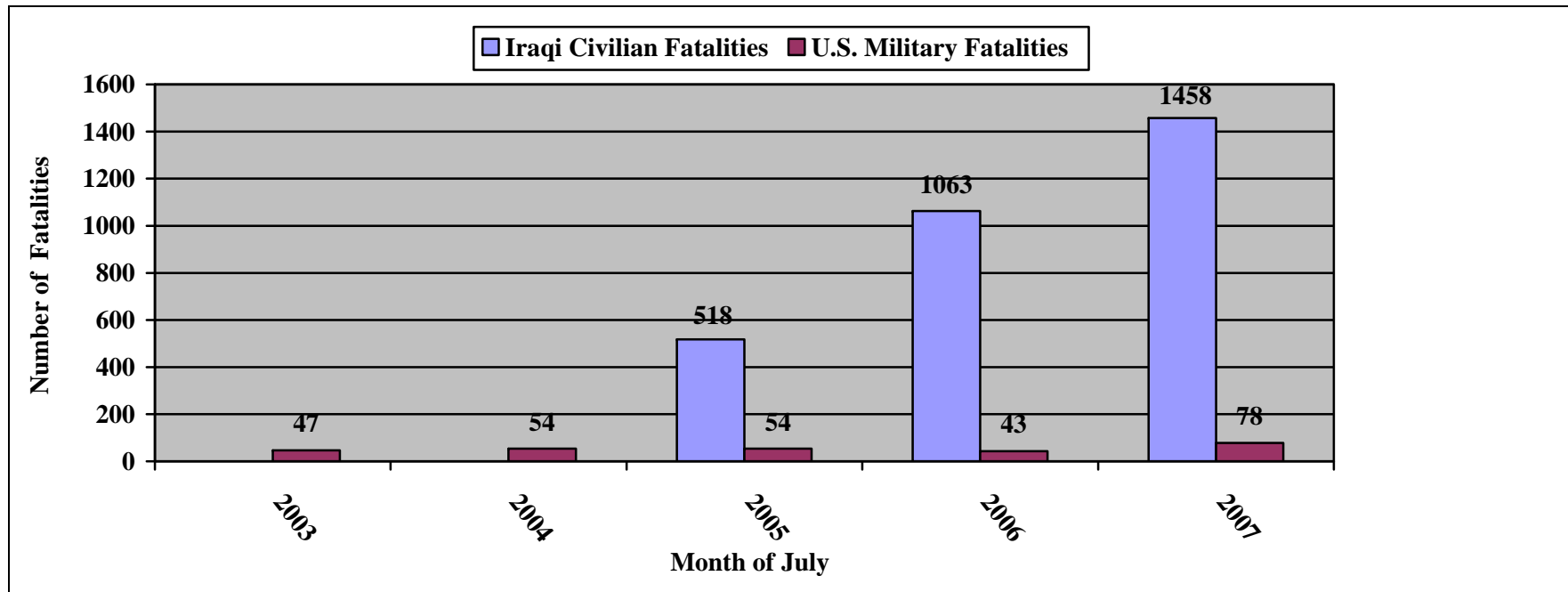
Figures 3 and 4 below simply show the civilian and military casualty data combined for the months of July (Figure3) and August (Figure 4).

---

<sup>6</sup> “Global War on Terrorism-Operation Iraqi Freedom Casualty by Month,” Defense Manpower Data Center-Statistical Information Analysis Division (SIAD), March 19, 2003 through September 1, 2007, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/OIF-Total-by-month.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Figure for September is reflective as of September 7<sup>th</sup> 2007.

**Figure 3: Iraqi Civilian Fatalities<sup>8</sup> vs. U.S. Military Fatalities during the Month of July<sup>9</sup>**

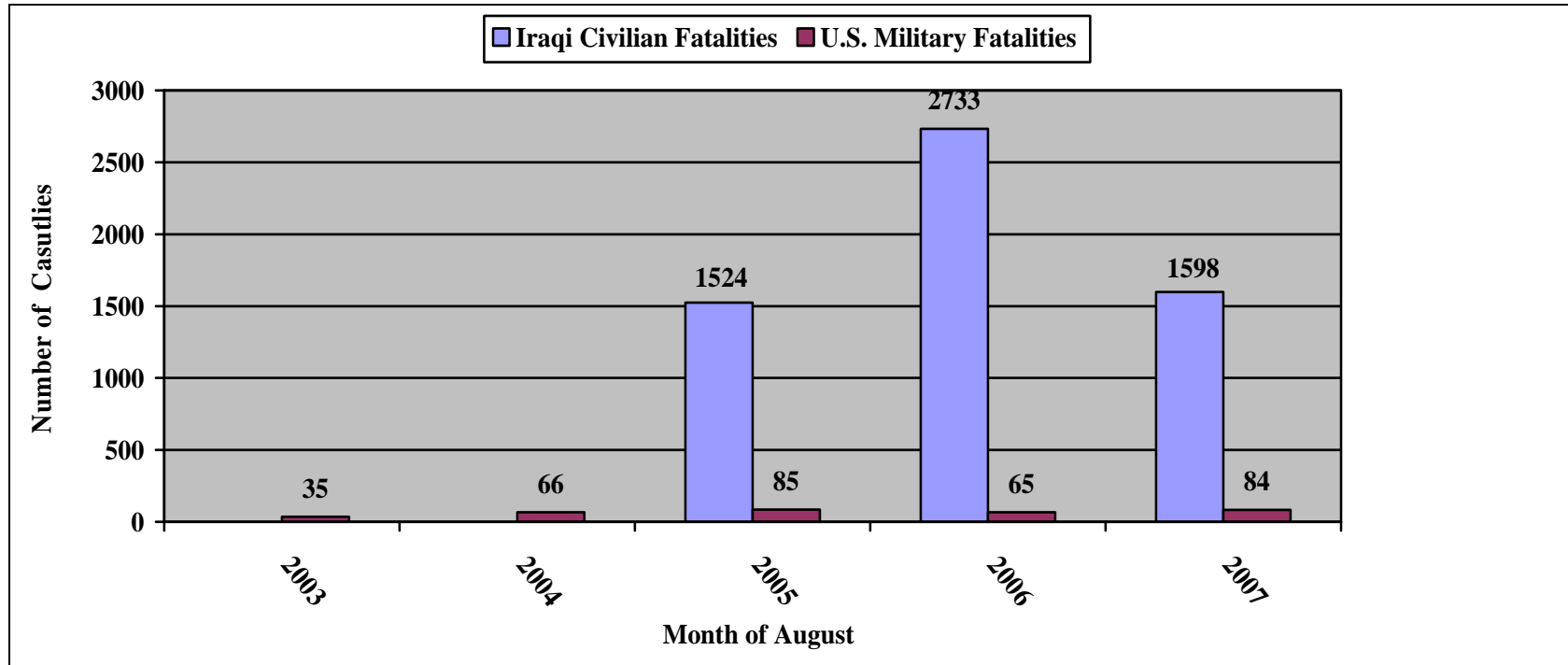


**Note:** No Iraqi civilian fatality figures were available for the years 2003 and 2004 on the icasualties.org website.

<sup>8</sup> iCasualties: OIF Iraqi Deaths, Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> “Global War on Terrorism-Operation Iraqi Freedom Casualty by Month,” Defense Manpower Data Center-Statistical Information Analysis Division (SIAD), March 19, 2003 through August 4, 2007, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/OIF-Total-by-month.pdf>.

**Figure 4: Iraqi Civilian Fatalities<sup>10</sup> vs. U.S. Military Fatalities during the Month of August**



The final Table 3 below shows the total of American military casualties for the complete war, as of September 7.

<sup>10</sup> Figures representative of Iraqi civilian fatalities used for the purpose of this table were gathered from icasualties.org. They represent totals reported by news agencies.

**Table 3: Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) U.S. Casualty<sup>11</sup> Statistics Fatalities<sup>12</sup> as of September 7, 2007**

<b>OIF U.S. Military Casualties by Phase</b>	<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>	<b>Non-Hostile</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<u>Initial Combat Operations:</u> March 19, 2003 - April 3, 2003	<b>139</b>	109	30	542
<u>Irregular Combat Operations:</u> May 1, 2003 through Present	<b>3,602</b>	2,956	646	27,225
OIF U.S. DOD Civilian Casualties	<b>7</b>	6	1	-
<b>OIF Totals</b>	<b>3,748</b>	<b>3,071</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>27,767</b>

For general information, data, and various reports and studies of civilian and U.S. military casualties in Iraq, please see the links provided below.

**General Information on Iraqi Fatalities**

“Military Casualty Information,” Department of Defense Personnel & Procurement Statistics  
<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

Iraq Body Count  
<http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>

Iraq Coalition Casualty Count  
<http://icasualties.org/oif/>

Brookings Institution: “Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq,”  
[www.brookings.edu/iraqindex](http://www.brookings.edu/iraqindex).

“U.S. Casualties in Iraq,” Globalsecurity.org  
[http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_casualties.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm)

<sup>11</sup> “Operation Iraqi Freedom & Operation Enduring Freedom U.S. Casualty Status,” Department of Defense, September 7, 2007,  
<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Operation Iraqi Freedom includes casualties that occurred on or after March 19, 2003 in the Arabian Sea; Bahrain; Gulf of Aden; Gulf of Oman; Iraq; Kuwait; Oman; Persian Gulf; Qatar; Red Sea; Saudi Arabia; and United Arab Emirates. Prior to March 19, 2003, casualties in these countries were considered of Operation Enduring Freedom.

SourceWatch, a project of the Center for Media & Democracy  
[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Iraq\\_Coalition\\_Casualty\\_Statistics](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Iraq_Coalition_Casualty_Statistics)

## **Reports**

*Congressional Report Services (CRS):*

- “American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>.
- “United States Military Casualty Statistics: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22452.pdf>.
- “U.S. Military and Iraqi Casualty Statistics: Additional Numbers and Explanations,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22126.pdf>.
- “Iraqi Civilian Deaths Estimates,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22537.pdf>.

The Lancet Report

- “Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey,” Vol. 364, No. 9445, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2004, <http://www.zmag.org/lancet.pdf>.
- “The Human Cost of the War in Iraq: A Mortality Study 2002-2006,” <http://web.mit.edu/cis/human-cost-war-101106.pdf>.