

Appendix 3: Chronology: Australia's military involvement in Iraq, 2003–09

Milestones	Details
20 March 2003	US, UK and Australian forces invade Iraq.
9 April 2003	US troops capture Baghdad. Saddam Hussein disappears.
21 April 2003	General Jay Garner becomes the civilian leader of Iraq when his Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance is established.
1 May 2003	US President George W. Bush, aboard USS <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> , declares an end to major combat operations.
12 May 2003	L. Paul Bremer (appointed US Presidential Envoy and Administrator) arrives in Iraq as the head of the newly formed Coalition Provisional Authority and replaces General Jay Garner as civilian leader of Iraq.
22 May 2003	UN Security Council Resolution 1483 passed. The resolution empowers the US- and UK-led coalition, making it the legitimate and legal governing and peacekeeping authority in Iraq and recognising the creation of a transitional governing council of Iraqis.
14 June 2003	Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez assumes command of Combined Joint Task Force 7.

- 13 July 2003 The Iraqi Governing Council (comprising 25 Iraqis chosen under the supervision of the Coalition Provisional Authority) holds its inaugural meeting in Baghdad.
- 14 August 2003 UN Security Council Resolution 1500 passed, establishing the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq.
- 19 August 2003 Suicide truck bomb wrecks UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.
- 13 December 2003 US troops capture Saddam Hussein near Tikrit. Paul Bremer breaks the news with the announcement: 'We got him.'
- 2 March 2004 Almost 200 killed in a series of bomb blasts in Baghdad and Karbala at the climax of the Shia festival of Ashura.
- 8 March 2004 Iraq Governing Council approves Iraq's interim constitution.
- 31 March 2004 Four US civilian contractors are murdered and mutilated in Fallujah.
- 4–30 April 2004 First battle of Fallujah.
- April 2004 Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal breaks.
- 15 May 2004 Headquarters Combined Joint Task Force 7 disbands, and Headquarters Multi-National Force – Iraq and Headquarters Multi-National Corps – Iraq are established.
- 28 May 2004 Iyad Allawi is chosen as Prime Minister of the Iraqi interim government.
- 1 June 2004 Iraqi Governing Council dissolved to make way for Iraqi Interim Government led by Ayad Allawi. Ghazi al-Yawar is named President.
- 8 June 2004 UN Security Council Resolution 1546, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council, establishes the multinational force in Iraq. This provides a mandate for the coalition's occupational mission in Iraq.
- June 2004 General George Casey assumes command of Multi-National Force – Iraq.
- June 2004 Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq is established.

- 23 June 2004 John D. Negroponte appointed US ambassador to Iraq.
- 28 June 2004 Coalition Provisional Authority transfers sovereignty to Iraqi Interim Government. Coalition Provisional Authority is dissolved. Bremer leaves Iraq.
- November 2004 Second battle of Fallujah.
- 19 December 2004 A suicide car bomb blast in Najaf, 300 metres from the Imam Ali shrine and near crowds of people, kills 52 and wounds at least 140. On the same day a car bomb explodes in Karbala, killing 14 and injuring at least 52.
- 31 January 2005 Iraqis elect the Iraqi Transitional Government in order to draft a permanent constitution. Although some violence and a widespread Sunni boycott mar the event, most of the eligible Kurd and Shia populace participates. The Shia-led United Alliance dominates election for interim parliament. The government is headed by Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.
- 16 March 2005 Iraqi National Assembly holds its first meeting.
- 21 June 2005 Zalmay Khalilzad replaces John Negroponte as US ambassador to Iraq.
- 15 October 2005 Referendum ratifies new Iraqi constitution by 78 per cent despite Sunni Arab opposition, which almost vetoes it.
- 19 October 2005 Saddam Hussein goes on trial charged with crimes against humanity for the killing of 148 Shia men and boys in Dujail after an assassination attempt in 1982. He pleads not guilty.
- 8 November 2005 UN Security Council Resolution 1637, brought forward by Denmark, Japan, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States, is passed, allowing the extension of the Multi-National Force – Iraq mandate to 31 December 2006.
- 15 December 2005 Parliamentary elections. Sunnis vote in strength.
- 10 February 2006 Final results give Shia Alliance a near majority with 128 seats, Sunnis 58 and Kurds 53.

NICHE WARS

- 22 February 2006 Al-Qaeda destroys Shia al-Askari mosque in Samarra, which sparks widespread sectarian violence, provoking fears of civil war.
- 21 May 2006 New Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki chairs his first cabinet meeting.
- 7 June 2006 US aircraft kill al-Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.
- September 2006 Sheik Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi forms the Anbar Awakening Council (also known as 'Anbar Awakening') to counter the influence of al-Qaeda. The Anbar Awakening Council is trained and equipped with assistance from coalition forces.
- 5 November 2006 A court in Baghdad finds Saddam Hussein guilty of crimes against humanity and sentences him to be hanged because of the Dujail killings.
- 18 November 2006 UN Security Council Resolution 1723, submitted by Denmark, Japan, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and the United States, extends the Multi-National Force – Iraq's mandate until 31 December 2007.
- 23 November 2006 Suspected Sunni Arab militants use suicide car bombs and mortar rounds on the capital's Shia Sadr City slum, killing at least 215 people and wounding 257.
- 6 December 2006 Iraq Study Group Report released. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group, led by former US Secretary of State James Baker and former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton, concludes that 'the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating' and that 'US forces seem to be caught in a mission that has no foreseeable end'.
- 30 December 2006 Saddam Hussein is executed.
- 23 January 2007 In the 2007 State of the Union address, George W. Bush announces that he has decided to deploy reinforcements of more than 20,000 soldiers and marines to Iraq.
- 10 February 2007 General David Petraeus replaces General George Casey as commander of Multi-National Force – Iraq.

- 14 February 2007 Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki launches a US-backed crackdown in Baghdad aimed at pulling Iraq back from the brink of civil war.
- 26 March 2007 Ryan Crocker replaces Zalmay Khalilzad as US ambassador to Iraq.
- 28 May 2007 Iranian and US ambassadors to Iraq meet in Baghdad to discuss ways to improve security in the country. The talks end a three-decade diplomatic freeze between the two nations.
- 15 June 2007 US military completes its troop build-up, or 'surge', to 160,000 soldiers.
- Mid-2007 Following the success of the Anbar Awakening Council, the coalition begins a controversial program to recruit Iraqi Sunnis for the formation of 'Guardian' militias to secure various Sunni neighbourhoods, a form of armed neighbourhood watch of concerned local citizens. The militias are later named the 'Sons of Iraq'.
- 1 August 2007 Main Sunni Arab bloc pulls out of Prime Minister al-Maliki's cabinet, plunging the government into crisis.
- 14 August 2007 Numerous al-Qaeda bomb attacks against the minority Yazidi community in Qahtaniya kill 411 people. More than 100 homes and shops are destroyed in the blasts.
- 29 August 2007 Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr imposes ceasefire on Mahdi Army militia for six months after clashes with police.
- 17 September 2007 Iraqi government announces that it is revoking the licence of the US security firm Blackwater USA over the firm's involvement in the deaths of eight civilians, including a woman and an infant, in a firefight that followed a car-bomb explosion near a State Department motorcade.
- 18 December 2007 At the request of the Iraqi Government, the UN Security Council passes Resolution 1790, which extends the mandate of the Multi-National Force – Iraq until 31 December 2008.
- 12 January 2008 Parliament votes to allow members of Saddam's Baath Party to return to government jobs, winning US praise for achieving a benchmark step towards reconciling warring sects.

NICHE WARS

- 21 February 2008 Thousands of Turkish troops cross into northern Iraq to hunt for Kurdish PKK guerrillas. Eight days later, Turkish forces withdraw.
- March 2008 The Green Zone in Baghdad comes under repeated rocket attack, killing two US government officials and injuring several others.
- 25 March 2008 Al-Maliki launches crackdown on militias in Basra, sparking pitched battles with Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. Fighting rages for a week in southern Iraq and Baghdad. Hundreds are killed.
- 7 July 2008 For the first time, Al-Maliki raises the prospect of setting a timetable for the withdrawal of US troops as part of negotiations over a new security agreement with the United States.
- July 2008 Sons of Iraq grow to number 103,000. A program to integrate them into the Iraqi Army or police forces or to find alternative employment is developed.
- 19 July 2008 In a political breakthrough, Iraq's main Sunni Arab bloc rejoins the government after parliament approves its candidates for several vacant ministerial posts.
- 1 September 2008 The US military hands over the province of Anbar to Iraqi security forces—the first Sunni Arab province to be returned to Iraqi control since 2003.
- 16 September 2008 General Raymond Odierno replaces General David Petraeus as commander of Multi-National Force – Iraq.
- 24 September 2008 Parliament approves a provincial elections law. The presidency approves it formally on 7 October, paving the way for the election to take place by 31 January 2009.
- 15 October 2008 US forces announce that they have killed the second-in-command of al-Qaeda in Iraq, a Moroccan named Abu Qaswarah, in a raid in Mosul on 5 October.
- 4 November 2008 Senator Barack Obama wins the US presidential election.

- 17 November 2008 Iraq and the United States sign an Iraqi–US Security Agreement, requiring the United States to withdraw its forces by the end of 2011. The agreement gives the Iraqi Government authority over the US-led mission for the first time, replacing the UN Security Council Resolution.
- 27 November 2008 Iraqi parliament approves the Iraqi–US Security Agreement after protracted negotiations between rival factions, removing the last major hurdle to the agreement. The Presidency Council subsequently endorses the Iraqi–US Security Agreement on 4 December.
- 14 December 2008 During a joint press conference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in Baghdad, President Bush dodges two shoes thrown at him from the audience.
- 30 December 2008 Memorandum of understanding between Iraq and Australia signed.
- 31 December 2008 UN Security Council Resolution 1790 expires.
- 1 January 2009 Iraqi–US Security Agreement comes into effect. Memorandum of understanding between Iraq and Australia takes effect.
- 31 January 2009 Provincial elections held in 14 of Iraq’s 18 provinces.
- 27 February 2009 President Obama gives his ‘Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq’ speech at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.
- March 2009 Ryan Crocker stands down as US ambassador to Iraq.
- 21 April 2009 Christopher Hill is confirmed as US ambassador to Iraq.
- 30 April 2009 The United Kingdom declares an end to its combat operations in Iraq.
- 30 June 2009 In accordance with the Iraqi–US Security Agreement, all US combat forces are withdrawn from cities. Other non-combat US military advisers and trainers remain.
- 28 July 2009 Last group of 11 Australian Defence Force members, serving as part of Operation CATALYST, depart Baghdad.

NICHE WARS

- 30 July 2009 Last group of 11 Australian Defence Force members, serving as part of Operation CATALYST, arrive in Australia.
- 31 July 2009 Memorandum of understanding between Iraq and Australia expires.

This text is taken from *Niche Wars: Australia in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001–2014*, edited by John Blaxland, Marcus Fielding and Thea Gellerfy, published 2020 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.