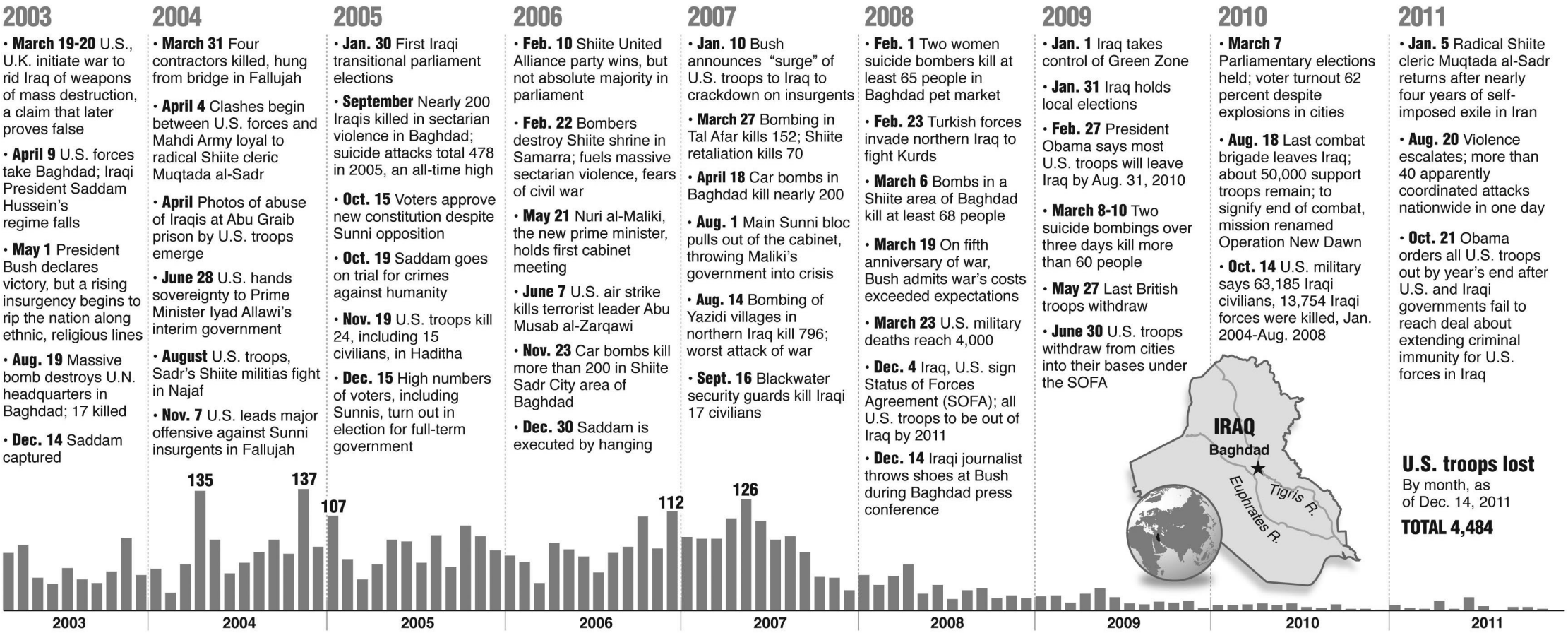


Nearly nine years in Iraq



Source: BBC, Reuters, AP, Council on Foreign Relations, McClatchy Washington Bureau

Graphic: Pat Carr, Judy Treible

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Arpaio Hit With Scathing Civil Rights Report

PHOENIX (AP) — A scathing U.S. Justice Department report released Tuesday found that Sheriff Joe Arpaio's office carried out an blatant pattern of discrimination against Latinos and held a "systematic disregard" for the Constitution amid a series of immigration crackdowns that have turned the lawman into a prominent national political figure.

The government found that Arpaio's office committed a wide range of civil rights violations against Latinos, including unjust immigration patrols and jail policies that deprive prisoners of basic Constitutional rights.

The Justice Department's expert on measuring racial profiling said it is the most egregious case of profiling in the nation that he has seen or reviewed in professional literature, said Thomas Perez, who heads the Justice Department's civil rights division.

"We found discriminatory policing that was deeply rooted in the culture of the department, a culture that breeds a systematic disregard for basic constitutional protections," said Thomas Perez, who heads the Justice Department's civil rights division.

The findings will force Arpaio's department to make major changes to carry out new policies against discrimination and improve training of staff and officers. Arpaio faces a Jan. 4 deadline for saying whether he wants to work out an agreement to make the changes. If not, the federal government will sue him, possibly putting in jeopardy millions of dollars in federal funding for Maricopa County.

Senate Backs \$662 Billion Defense Bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress passed a massive \$662 billion defense bill Thursday after months of wrangling over how to handle captured terrorist suspects without violating Americans' constitutional rights.

A last-minute compromise produced a truce but lawmakers said the fight's not over.

The Senate voted 86-13 for the measure and will send it to President Barack Obama for his signature. The bill would authorize money for military personnel, weapons systems, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and national security programs in the Energy Department for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The legislation is \$27 billion less than Obama wanted and \$43 billion less than Congress gave the Pentagon this year, a reflection of deficit-driven federal budgets, the end of the Iraq war and the drawdown in Afghanistan.

In a rare show of bipartisanship, the House voted 283-136 for the measure last Wednesday. Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the senior Republican on the Armed Services Committee, said Thursday the cooperation was a "little ray of sunshine" in a bitterly divided Washington.

The comment belied a fierce struggle over provisions on suspected terrorists that have pitted the White House against Congress, divided Republicans and Democrats and drawn the wrath of civil rights groups. The White House initially threatened to veto the legislation but dropped that warning late Wednesday, saying last-minute congressional changes no longer challenge the president's ability to prosecute the war on terror.

Lagarde: Global Economy Facing Gloomy Future

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of the International Monetary Fund sketched a dim outlook for the global economy and said all countries must work together to resolve Europe's escalating debt crisis.

IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said Europe's problems will not be solved by Europe alone.

"It's not a crisis that will be resolved by one group of countries taking action," Lagarde said in remarks at a State Department conference. "It's going to be hopefully resolved by all countries, all regions, all categories of countries actually taking action."

She said if the issues are not dealt with decisively, the global economy could confront the same threats that pushed the world into the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"It's a question of actually facing the issues, not being in denial, accepting the truth, accepting the reality, then dealing with it," Lagarde said.

She did not provide details on what actions she expected individual countries or the IMF to take.

She also cautioned financial markets to allow time for individual nations to work through the political process to arrive at a solution.

"It would be ideal and it would be lovely from a market perspective if it was not just currently but immediately signed, sealed and delivered, done deal, overnight," she said. "Unfortunately, for those of you who have the privilege of belonging to democracies, things do not happen in that way and things do take time and have to go through parliamentary processes."

In March 2003, the U.S. bombed Baghdad, beginning an unpopular war that gave rise to an insurgency that continues to claim Iraqi lives. In October, President Barack Obama ordered the withdrawal of all U.S. troops, putting an end to the war by Dec. 31.

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR
AND REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Nearly nine years after American troops stormed across the Iraq border in a blaze of shock and awe, U.S. officials quietly ended the bloody and bitterly divisive conflict here Thursday, but the debate over whether it was worth the cost in money and lives is yet unanswered.

While many of the speeches painted a picture of victory — for both the troops and the Iraqi people now set on a path for democracy — the gnawing questions remain: Will Iraqis be able to forge their new government amid the still stubborn sectarian clashes. And will Iraq be able to defend itself and remain independent in a region fraught with turmoil and still steeped in insurgent threats.

Stark reminders of the fragile and often violent nature of the situation in Iraq engulfed the 45-minute ceremony. It was tucked into fortified corner of the airport, ringed with concrete blast walls. And on the chairs — nearly empty of Afghans — were tags that listed not only the name of the VIP assigned to the seat, but the bunker they should move to in case of an attack.

The speeches touched on the success of the mission as well as its losses: Nearly 4,500 Americans and 100,000 Iraqis killed. Another 32,000 American and tens of thousands Iraqis wounded. And \$800 billion from the U.S. Treasury.

On the other side of the ledger, an Iraq free from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, inching forward toward democracy and vowing to be a good neighbor in the region.

"To be sure the cost was high — in blood and treasure of the United States and also the Iraqi people," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told the roughly 200 troops and others in attendance. "Those lives have not been lost in vain — they gave birth to an independent, free and sovereign Iraq."

Gen. Lloyd Austin, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said the Iraqi people now have an unprecedented opportunity to live in a relatively peaceful environment, but he also acknowledged it will be a challenging time. And he urged Iraqi leaders to make good choices based on what is best for their people.



ROY GUTMAN/MCT

With the help of a "T-Rex" container stacker and a forklift, SSG Jerrod Keune of Abilene, Kansas, moved a giant Kalmar container lifter onto a trailer for departure from Iraq to Kuwait.

"Violence and prosperity cannot co-exist," said Austin, who eight years, eight months and 26 days ago gave the order for U.S. troops to storm across the border into Iraq. And on Thursday he gave the order to retire the flag of U.S. Forces-Iraq.

The flag was then rolled up, covered by a camouflage colored sheath and will be brought back to the U.S.

Speaking to the troops in the audience, Panetta lauded their service and their bravery, adding, "You will leave with great pride — lasting pride — secure in knowing that your sacrifice has helped the Iraqi people to begin a new chapter in history."

Many Iraqis, however, are uncertain of how that chapter will unfold. Their relief at the end of Saddam, who was hanged on the last day of 2006, was tempered by a long and vicious war that was launched to find non-existent weapons of mass destruction and nearly plunged the nation into full-scale sectarian civil war.

"With this withdrawal, the Americans are leaving behind a destroyed country," said Mariam Khazim, a Shiite whose father was killed when a mortar shell struck his home in Sadr City. "The Americans did not leave modern schools or big factories behind them. Instead, they left thousands of widows and orphans. The Americans did not leave a free people and country

behind them, in fact they left a ruined country and a divided nation."

Some Iraqis celebrated the exit of what they called American occupiers, neither invited nor welcome in a proud country.

"The American ceremony represents the failure of the U.S. occupation of Iraq due to the great resistance of the Iraqi people," said lawmaker Amir al-Kinani, a member of the political coalition loyal to anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Others said that while grateful for U.S. help ousting Saddam, the war went on too long. A majority of Americans would agree, according to opinion polls.

The low-key nature of the ceremony stood in sharp contrast to the high octane start of the war, which began before dawn on March 20, 2003, with an airstrike in southern Baghdad where Saddam was believed to be hiding. U.S. and allied ground forces then stormed across the featureless Kuwaiti desert, accompanied by reporters, photographers and television crews embedded with the troops.

The final few thousand U.S. troops will leave Iraq in orderly caravans and tightly scheduled flights.

Austin led the massive logistical challenge of shuttering hundreds of bases and combat outposts, and methodically moving more than 50,000 U.S. troops and their equipment out of Iraq

over the last year — while still conducting training, security assistance and counterterrorism battles.

The war "tested our military's strength and our ability to adapt and evolve," he said, noting the development of the new counterinsurgency doctrine.

As of Thursday, there were two U.S. bases and less than 4,000 U.S. troops in Iraq — a dramatic drop from the roughly 500 military installations and as many as 170,000 troops during the surge ordered by President George W. Bush in 2007, when violence and raging sectarianism gripped the country. All U.S. troops are slated to be out of Iraq by the end of the year, but officials are likely to meet that goal a bit before then.

The total U.S. departure is a bit earlier than initially planned, and military leaders worry that it is a bit premature for the still maturing Iraqi security forces, who face continuing struggles to develop the logistics, air operations, surveillance and intelligence-sharing capabilities they will need in what has long been a difficult region.

Despite President Barack Obama's earlier contention that all American troops would be home for Christmas, at least 4,000 forces will remain in Kuwait for some months. The troops will be able to help finalize the move out of Iraq, but could also be used as a quick reaction force if needed.

Obama stopped short of calling the U.S. effort in Iraq a victory in an interview taped Thursday with ABC News' Barbara Walters.

"I would describe our troops as having succeeded in the mission of giving to the Iraqis their country in a way that gives them a chance for a successful future," Obama said.

Despite the war's toll and unpopularity, Panetta insisted that it "has not been in vain."

Iraqi citizens offered a more pessimistic assessment. "The Americans are leaving behind them a destroyed country," said Mariam Khazim of Sadr City. "The Americans did not leave modern schools or big factories behind them. Instead, they left thousands of widows and orphans."

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