



Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience, A report of SIGIR, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction

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Since the March 2003 invasion, the Congress appropriated about \$50 billion in taxpayer dollars for Iraq's relief and reconstruction. This generous provision funded a continuously evolving rebuilding program that sought, among other things, to restore Iraq's essential services, establish new security forces, create a free-market economy, and put the country on the path to achieving an effective democracy. Some of the initiatives succeeded but others did not. Hard Lessons, the first comprehensive account of the Iraq reconstruction effort, reviews in detail the United States' rebuilding program, shedding light on why certain programs worked while others fell short of goals. Since 2003, the U.S. Congress has appropriated more than \$50 billion for the support of relief and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, including the restoration of the country's oil and electricity sectors, the establishment of new security forces, and the strengthening of Iraq's capacity to govern itself. A number of federal agencies—including SIGIR, the U.S. Army Audit Agency, the Inspectors General of the Directorates of Defense, State, and USAID, and the Government Accountability Office—have conducted oversight of and reporting on the expenditure of funds for Iraq relief and reconstruction activities. This extensive body of work is available in studies, reports, audits, inspections, and congressional testimony covering issues that arose during the expenditure of U.S. government funds for or in Iraq. They range from the meticulous analysis of specific projects to broad overviews of entire programs and sectors. Most included recommendations for improving the management of reconstruction efforts now and in the future. In 2008, the Congress established the independent, bipartisan Commission on Wartime Contracting to study U.S. wartime contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Its mandate is to study, assess, and make recommendations concerning contracting for “the reconstruction, logistical support, and performance of security functions” in both theaters from 2003 to the time of the commission's final report in 2010. Its objectives include assessing “the systemic problems identified with interagency wartime contracting,” identifying instances of waste, fraud, and abuse and “ensuring accountability for those responsible.

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