

# Two Decades of Death in Iraq

By

Professor Michael Spagat  
Department of Economics  
Royal Holloway, University of London

A talk given at the:  
*Dean's International Council 2010 Meeting*  
in Beirut

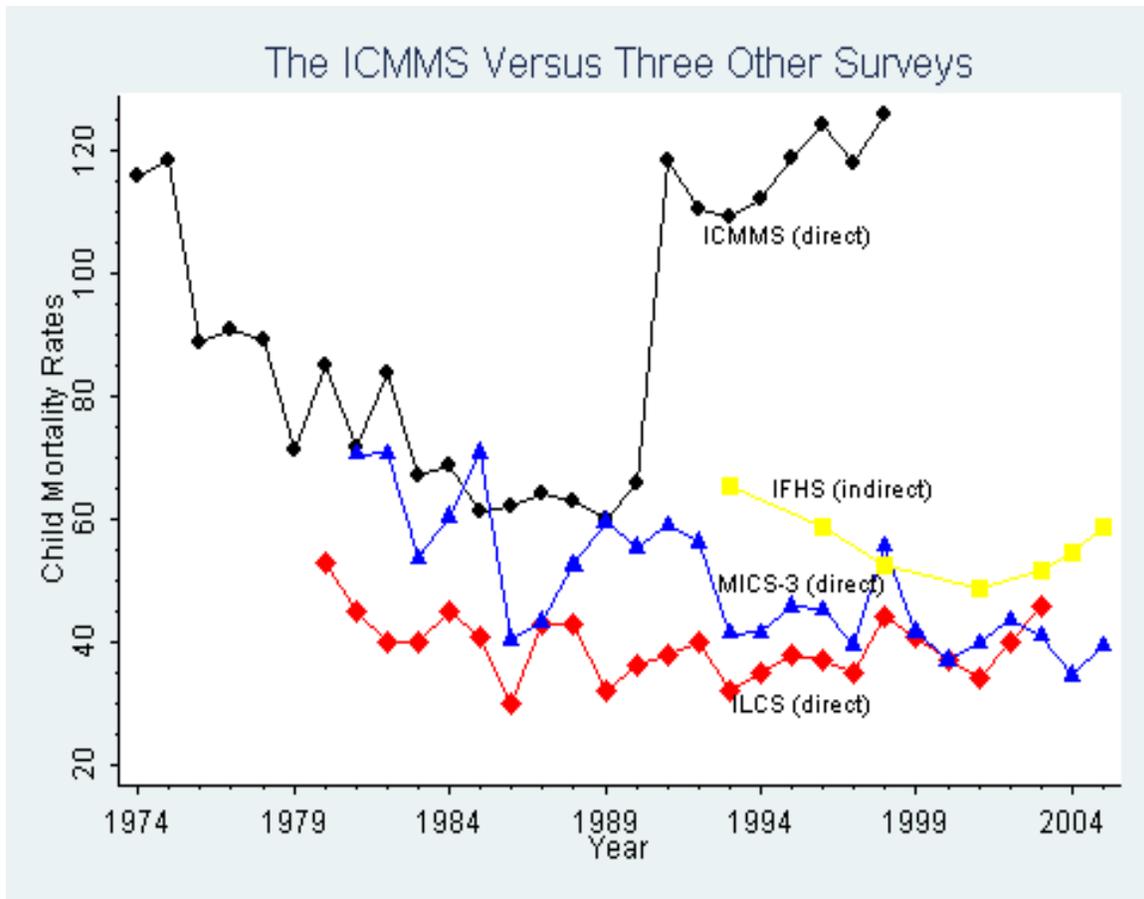
Organized by the Harris School of the  
University of Chicago

October 28, 2010

## Tony Blair Testifies Before the UK's Iraq Inquiry



“In 2000 and 2001 and 2002 they [Iraq] had a child mortality rate of 130 per 1,000 children under the age of five, worse than the Congo....That figure today is not 130, it is 40. That equates to about 50,000 young people, children [alive today who would have died if Saddam Hussein had remained in power], ...that’s the result that getting rid of Saddam makes.”

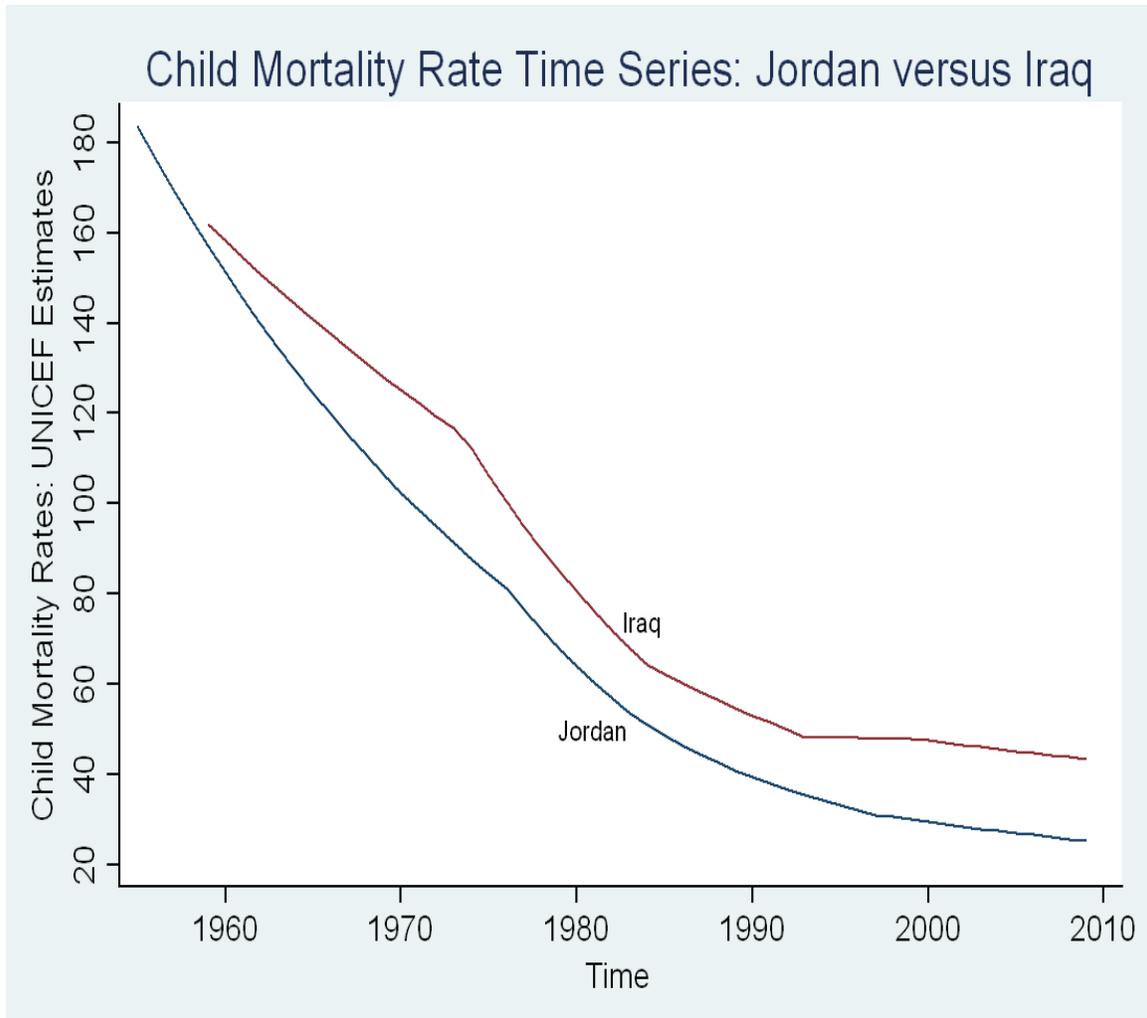


Unfortunately Tony Blair's comment is based upon a **survey** done in 1990's Iraq that turns out to be **wrong**.

The **ICMMS overestimated child mortality** rates in Iraq under sanctions by a huge margin.

For details see my paper [Truth and Death in Iraq under Sanctions](#).

**Economic sanctions** may have exerted **some small upward pressure on child mortality rates** but such an effect seems to be fairly small if it exists.



Claims of **half a million or a million “excess deaths”** due to sanctions are **clearly wrong.**

What is the **impact of the ongoing war** on deaths in Iraq?

In this brief presentation I will focus just on **violent deaths**.

Contrary to a common opinion, there is actually a **huge amount of good information** available on violent deaths in the Iraq war.

There is also **strong consistency** between the good information even though the methodologies leading to these figures differ greatly from one another.

Unfortunately, as is the case with sanctions era deaths, **false information has been injected into the public discussion**, causing great confusion.

The main problem here has been the so-called “*Lancet* survey” of 2006.

There is now a **large peer-reviewed literature debunking the *Lancet* survey.** For a taste see:

[Ethical and Data-Integrity Problems in the Second Lancet Survey of Mortality in Iraq](#), *Defense and Peace Economics*.

[Bias in epidemiological studies of conflict mortality](#), with Neil F. Johnson, Sean Gourley, Jukka-Pekka Onnela and Gesine Reinert, *Journal of Peace Research*. This was the journal’s article of the year in 2008.

The above are mine. Here are two others.

[Violence-Related Mortality in Iraq from 2002 to 2006](#), Iraq Family Health Survey (IFHS) Study Group. *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

[Wartime estimates of Iraqi civilian casualties](#), Beth Osborne Daponte. *International Review of the Red Cross*.

There is a lot more literature that could be cited and I could show [some pictures that drive home the point](#).

But I would rather use our limited time today to cover some **more interesting material**....in particular...



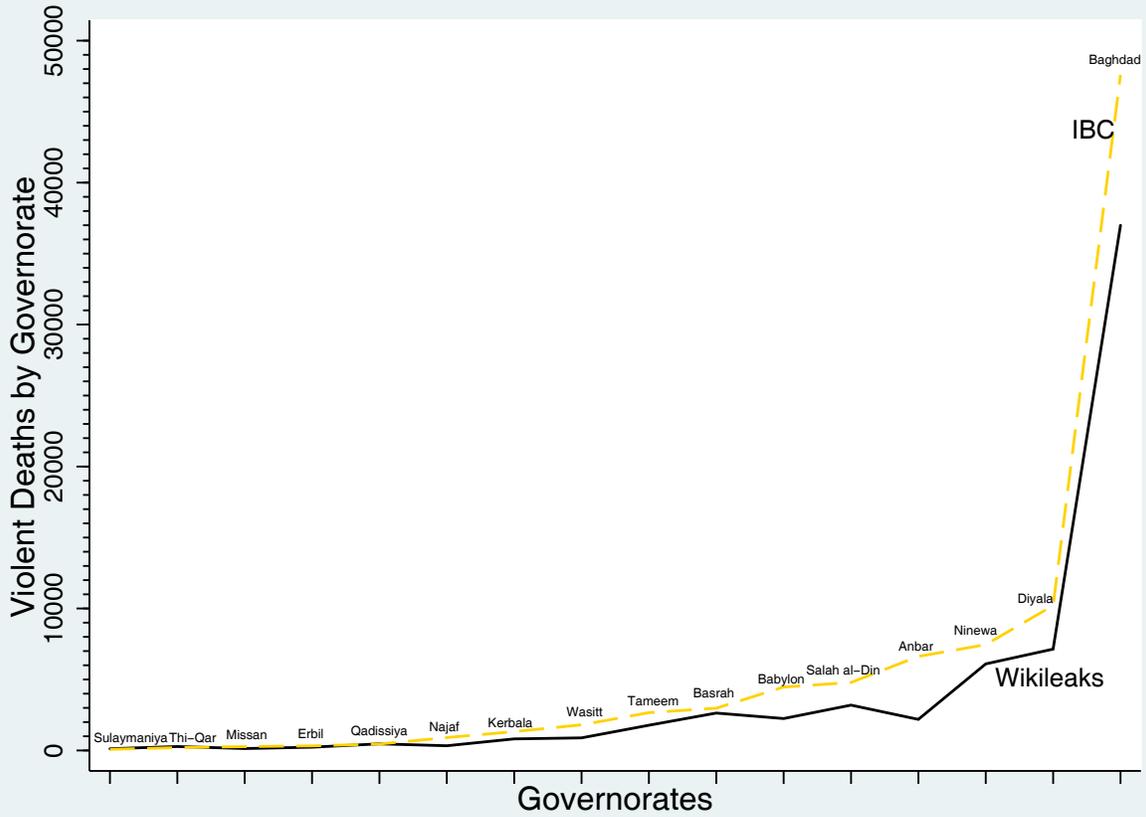
Nearly **400,000 military logs** from the Iraq war have just been placed into the public domain by wikileaks. It hard to overstate the importance of this development.

What does the Iraq War Logs released by wikileaks look like and **how does it compare to data that was already in the public domain.**

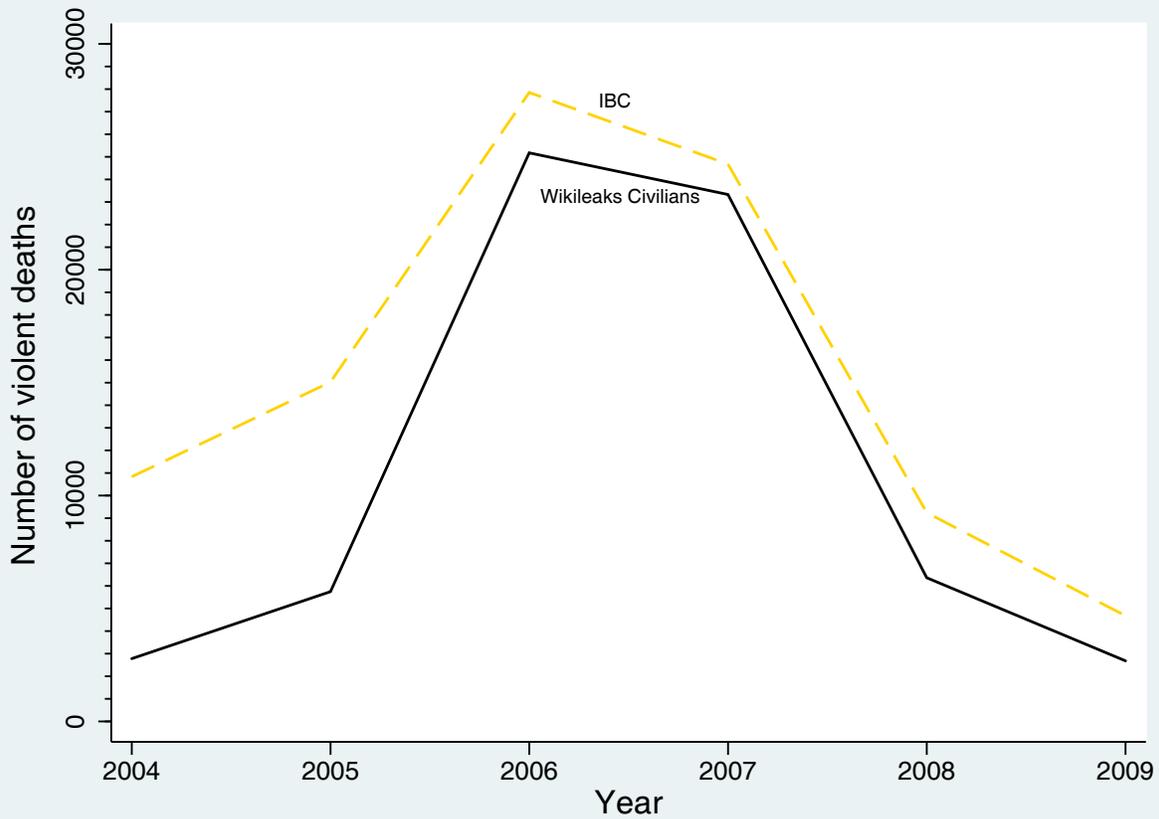
The next two slides compare the Iraq War Logs with the data of **Iraq Body Count**, most of which comes from media sources.

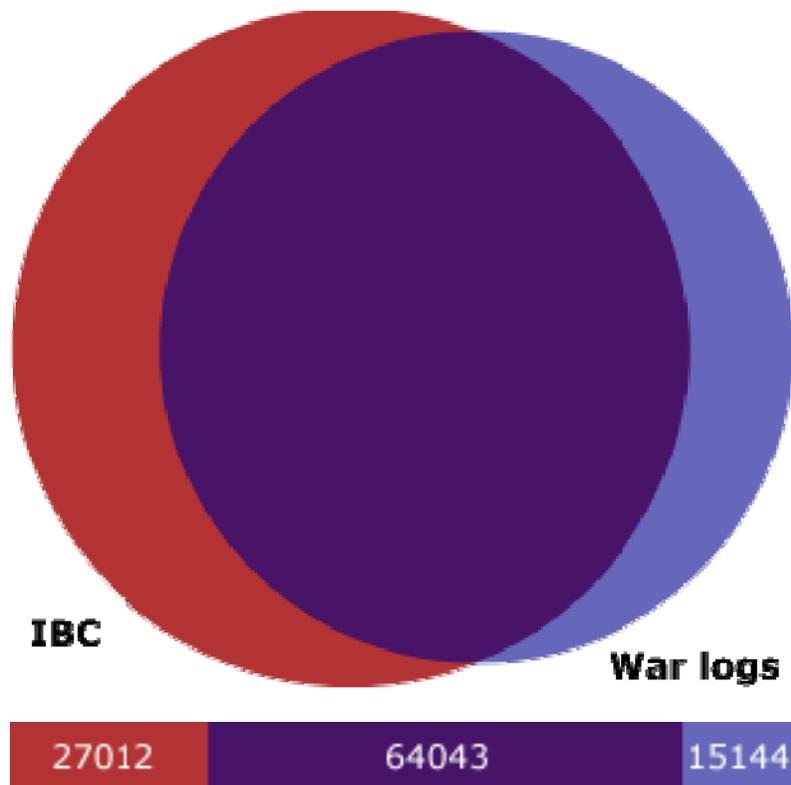
The IBC **[analysis of the Iraq War Logs is posted here.](#)**

## Violent Deaths by Governorate: IBC versus Wikileaks Civilians



## Time Series: IBC versus Wikileaks Civilians





We see that Iraq Body Count and the Iraq War Logs look **very similar over time and geographically** and they **overlap with one another quite a bit**.

They are also generally consistent with data from the [Iraq Family Health Survey](#) and the [Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights](#).

## Total Deaths 2003-2010: [IBC Analysis](#)

Iraq Body Count 2003-10 October 2010	107,369
Iraq War Logs new 'Civilian' and comparable 'Host Nation' - central estimate	15,114
Iraq War Logs 'Host Nation' combatant - central estimate	5,575
Iraq War Logs 'Enemy' (minus IBC overlaps) - central estimate	20,499
Insurgents killed June-December 2003	597
Insurgents & Iraqi soldiers killed January-September 2010	861
Insurgents killed May 2004	652
Insurgents & Iraqi soldiers killed March 2009	59
<b>TOTAL IRAQI</b>	<b>150,726</b>
US & Coalition military killed	4,744
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>155,470</b>