

THE QUESTION THEY DIDN'T ASK AND BUSH'S NEW PLAN C

You don't need me to tell you things are not going well in Iraq. The NYT surveys the state of affairs this morning, and the news is not good.

The number of roadside bombs planted in Iraq rose in July to the highest monthly total of the war, offering more evidence that the anti-American insurgency **has continued to strengthen despite the killing of the terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.**

Along with a sharp increase in sectarian attacks, the number of daily strikes against American and Iraqi security forces has doubled since January. The deadliest means of attack, roadside bombs, made up much of that increase. In July, of 2,625 explosive devices, 1,666 exploded and 959 were discovered before they went off. In January, 1,454 bombs exploded or were found. [my emphasis]

The article then goes on to discuss two studies—an August 3 DIA study entitled "Iraq Update" and the upcoming NIE—that tell more of that same story.

But what struck me about this article is the way they seem to be measuring whether Zarqawi's death has led to a decrease in attacks. In spite of the many reports that told us the bulk of Sunni violence came from Baathist "Dead-Enders" rather than Al Qaeda, they seem to have taken seriously the proposition that Zarqawi's death would lead to a decrease in attacks.