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Restitution or Retribution? Detainee Payments and Insurgent Violence

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Abstract

Counterinsurgents frequently rely on mass arrests to impede rebel operations, but in so doing, risk detaining innocent civilians. Wrongful detention can backfire, fueling insurgent violence by alienating detainees and their kin. Can counterinsurgents mitigate wrongful detention through targeted compensation? I study this question using project-level data on US payments to individuals deemed innocent and released from Coalition custody in Iraq between 2004 and 2008. Leveraging plausibly exogenous variation in the allocation of detainee release payments, I document a robust, negative association between counterinsurgent compensation for wrongful detention and insurgent violence. The violence-reducing effects of detainee release payments were greatest in Sunni and mixed sectarian areas; for the types of insurgent attacks, most prone to civilian informing; and when detainee release was complemented by other population-centric reforms. These results suggest that post-harm mitigation helps shift civilian perceptions, inducing civilians to share more information with counterinsurgent forces.

Keywords

counterinsurgency, aid, insurgency, post-harm mitigation, Iraq, detention

Introduction

How does detention shape insurgent violence? Both historical and modern counterinsurgents have used mass incarceration to quell rebellion (Benard et al. 2011;

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Khalili 2003; Willardson 2016). But recent evidence also suggests that detention may exacerbate militancy. As it rose in Iraq and Syria in 2013–14, the Islamic State (IS) recruited disaffected Sunnis alienated by unfair prosecutions in the Shia-dominated Iraqi justice system, and swelled its ranks with imprisoned fighters and criminals freed in a series of jailbreaks as it seized towns and cities (Peritz 2019).[1] Today, prolonged imprisonment of thousands of suspected IS fighters in Kurdish prisons poses a lingering security challenge.

Mass detention is often a source of violence-inducing grievances. If counterinsurgents detain innocent individuals, use abusive interrogation tactics, and build corrupt criminal justice institutions, incarceration may inflame rather than quell rebellion. As Staff Major General Khadim Muhammad Faris al-Fahadawi al-Dulaymi, a deputy commander in the al-Anbar Operations Center, noted of Coalition efforts in Iraq: "…people saw the Americans trash houses and arrest innocent people, while the insurgents—the bad guys—were moving about freely…innocent people were attacked and arrested and humiliated, so people lost confidence in the Coalition forces" (Montgomery and McWilliams 2009, 264, 266). From this perspective, counterinsurgent campaigns may benefit from efforts to reform detention practices, for example, by releasing low-risk detainees, punishing abusive guards, increasing procedural transparency, and providing services in prisons (Meriwether 2018). These measures are intended to complement broader population-centric efforts to cultivate civilian support and encourage information-sharing, thereby reducing insurgent violence.

In this paper, I study payments to detainees upon their release from counterinsurgent custody. Used by French, British, Israeli, Colombian, and American forces, among others, these payments, known as "detainee release" or "former detainee" payments, are intended to compensate innocent civilians wrongfully detained in counterinsurgent operations.[2] On the one hand, some policymakers and commanders view these payments as counterproductive (Benard et al. 2011, xvii). A survey of US Army and Marine officers in Iraq found that most did not make detainee release payments (Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction 2012), fearing wrongfully detained civilians were ripe for insurgent recruitment, so paid release could put cash in insurgents' hands. As Deputy Commanding General for Detainee Operations (DCGDO) Douglas M. Stone, who advocated expanding the former detainee payment system in Iraq in 2007, noted, "As a general rule of thumb, divisions don't want anyone let back out" (Bowman 2008).

I argue that detainee release payments signal a counterinsurgent's intent to mitigate civilian harm and govern well. As such, former detainee payments can reduce the alienation wrongfully detained civilians feel, fostering positive civilian perceptions of counterinsurgent forces (Brooks and Miller 2009). In turn, improved civilian perceptions facilitate information-sharing with counterinsurgents, degrading insurgent production of violence (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011; Kalyvas 2006). This argument builds on recent evidence suggesting that counterinsurgents can mitigate the negative impacts of indiscriminate violence and accidental civilian killings by giving compensatory aid to victims (Lyall 2019; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Silverman 2020).

After wrongful detention, former detainee payments symbolize the perpetrator's intent to abide by the rule of law and behave fairly in relations with civilians. In turn, civilian perceptions of counterinsurgent forces update positively, constraining rebel production of violence.

I test this argument using data from the Iraq Reconstruction Management System (IRMS) (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011), which document millions of dollars in US payments to former detainees during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Paired with granular data on insurgent violence from the MNF-I SIGACT III database and Iraq Body Count (IBC) (Condra and Shapiro 2012), these data permit a micro-level test of how compensation to wrongfully detained civilians affects insurgent violence. Identification is facilitated by the fact that whether detainee release payments were made depended on bureaucratic constraints like the availability of reconstruction funds, and commander-level idiosyncrasies in the procedures in place at battalion-, brigade-, and division-level non-theater internment facilities (TIFs).

Several notable results emerge. First, former detainee payments are robustly, negatively associated with insurgent-initiated attacks on Coalition and Iraqi forces. This result suggests that fears about low-risk and innocent detainees joining the insurgency upon their release from custody are largely unfounded. Any violence-promoting effect of insurgent recruitment of former detainees is countervailed by a larger, violence-reducing effect of improved civilian perceptions of fairness in counterinsurgent detention practices. This finding accords with qualitative evidence compiled by Task Force 134 (Brooks and Miller 2009), the command responsible for detainee operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Second, the violence-reducing effects of former detainee payments are greatest in Sunni and mixed sectarian districts, where the population had more heterogeneous preferences and hence where more civilians could be swayed by abusive actions like wrongful detentions (Blair 2022; Condra and Shapiro 2012). Third, the violence-reducing effect of detainee release payments is driven mostly by reductions in direct fire and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. These are the types of insurgent attacks that are more sensitive to civilian informing (Blair and Wright 2022; Condra and Wright 2019), so this finding suggests detainee release payments reduce insurgent violence by increasing the flow of information from local civilians to counterinsurgent forces.

The contributions of this paper are threefold. First and most broadly, these results reinforce the notion that civilian agency in warzones represents an important constraint on armed actors (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011; Kalyvas 2006). Civilian loyalties shift both in response to violence and abuse and in response to efforts by armed actors to mitigate the effects of harm. In line with other research (Wood 2003), the evidence presented here suggests that civilians rationally update their beliefs about combatants. These results also provide additional support for information-centric theories of counterinsurgency (Berman, Felter and Shapiro 2018). Former detainee payments can incentivize civilian information-sharing and disincentivize insurgent collaboration by shifting local perceptions of counterinsurgent fairness. By compensating wrongfully detained individuals captured in Coalition operations, counterinsurgents can signal

their intent to govern lawfully and discriminate between civilians and insurgents, thereby cultivating popular support.

Second, this paper contributes to growing evidence that post-harm mitigation by counterinsurgents can blunt the negative impacts of abuses against civilians. Existing research focuses on how material compensation can mitigate the counterproductive consequences of indiscriminate violence and killing (Lyall 2019; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Silverman 2020). I show that compensation can also serve to mitigate the effects of less severe but more ubiquitous forms of abuse, like wrongful detention. Between 65% and 80% of all Coalition detainees were ultimately deemed innocent, suggesting wrongful detention directly affected well over 50,000 civilians during Operation Iraqi Freedom (Qureshi 2013), and indirectly affected some 500,000 civilians that were relatives or kin of innocent detainees (Azarva 2009, 9).

Similarly, this paper shows that even small compensatory payments can counteract negative effects of civilian abuse. Silverman (2020) studies condolence payments in Iraq, which were given to civilians in amounts up to $10,000, and Lyall (2019) finds similar effects for a program that paid just $195 per victim on average. Former detainee payments amounted to $6 per day in custody, and most recipients received less than $84, with none receiving more than $324.[3] If these small investments can be used to effectively mitigate the impacts of civilian harm, counterinsurgents can efficiently marshal positive effects of post-harm aid at low cost. Studying small compensatory payments also helps shed light on the precise mechanisms linking post-harm aid and insurgent violence. Material compensation could reduce insurgent violence by raising the opportunity costs to recipients of participating in militancy, or by signaling the benign and benevolent intent of the perpetrator. That even very small indemnities can effectively negate the impacts of civilian abuse suggests that compensatory payments operate symbolically, signaling counterinsurgents' intent to behave lawfully.

Further, little existing work studies how post-harm compensation affects insurgent tactics. Examining differential effects of aid across tactics also helps shed light on how post-harm compensation effects violence. If compensation reduces attacks that require less military skill, this suggests that aid mainly reduces the willingness of wronged civilians to engage in discrete acts of retributive violence (Lyall 2019), but may not alter the broader landscape of civilian informing. By contrast, I show that compensation in Iraq reduced the types of insurgent attacks that are more prone to civilian informing. This suggests post-harm aid mainly reduced insurgent violence by increasing the willingness of civilians to collaborate with counterinsurgent forces. Future work should continue to explore how post-harm compensation affects insurgent tactics because these results bear critically on theoretical debates about opportunity cost-centric versus information-centric models of (counter-)insurgency.

Third, this paper reinforces the notion that counterinsurgency continues "inside-the-wire." Detention operations should not be a strategic afterthought, but rather, can affect battlefield violence in important ways (Azarva 2009; Benard et al. 2011; Brooks and Miller 2009; Teamey 2007; Willardson 2016). While US officials in Iraq began to recognize the strategic relevance of detainee operations after the Abu Ghraib torture and

abuse scandal (Meriwether 2018), little existing scholarship empirically examines how detention affects conflict dynamics. Future work should generalize the approach taken here and explicitly consider the role detention plays in counterinsurgency.

Policy implications of this research are clear. Military forces have a normative duty to avoid abusive detention practices like interning innocent civilians and torturing suspects. But this normative duty is complemented by a strategic imperative. Rather than contributing to violence, as some policymakers believe, releasing low-risk detainees and indemnifying those wrongfully detained for their plight can reduce insurgent violence. Policymakers have both normative and strategic incentives to mitigate the abusive detention practices to the greatest extent possible. Relatively modest investments in compensation for wrongful detention have important negative effects on insurgent violence.

Information and Civilian Abuse in Counterinsurgency

Civilian support is vital to combatants in asymmetric conflicts (Galula 2006; Kalyvas 2006). Rebels need civilian support—and attendant resources and information civilians can provide—to sustain their campaigns against militarily superior government forces. Governments need civilian support—and attendant information—to track and degrade mobile insurgent foes. With greater civilian support, counterinsurgents receive more quality tips (Shaver and Shapiro 2021), hold superior information about the capabilities and behaviors of their adversaries, and can more effectively apply force selectively to disrupt attacks (Schutte 2017) and deter collaboration with the enemy.

In the competition between rebels and counterinsurgents, civilians hold agency (Wood 2003). Individuals can choose to share or withhold information and resources. Agency means that civilians can punish malfeasance by supplying information about the perpetrator to its adversary (Condra and Shapiro 2012). Although armed actors may be able to deter civilian collaboration through indiscriminate violence (Lyall 2009), this violence is generally counterproductive in the long-run. Where actors engage in indiscriminate violence, civilians are unable to avoid being harmed whether or not they defect, and so hold a greater relative payoff of collaboration (Kalyvas 2006).

Ample evidence supports this theoretical proposition. In Vietnam, Viet Cong control increased in localities bombed indiscriminately by American forces (Kocher, Pepinsky and Kalyvas 2011). In Israel, precautionary demolitions of Palestinians' houses led to an increase in suicide terrorism (Benmelech, Berrebi and Klor 2015). In Afghanistan, indiscriminate violence increased collaboration with the perpetrators' adversary, especially when indiscriminate violence was perpetrated by ethnic out-groups (Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013). In Iraq, insurgent-perpetrated collateral damage reduced insurgent attacks (Condra and Shapiro 2012) and increased tip flows to counterinsurgents (Shaver and Shapiro 2021).

Mitigating the Effects of Civilian Abuse

Apart from violence and coercion, combatants in armed conflicts also use service provision to manipulate civilian behavior and cultivate loyalty (Weinstein 2007; Wood 2003). By providing aid and services, armed actors can secure voluntary civilian compliance with their objectives, trading welfare-enhancing governance programs for information and support (Berman, Felter and Shapiro 2018). The positive effects of aid on civilian collaboration and informing are largest when service provision is conditional and meets local needs (Berman et al. 2013), and when projects are secured by counterinsurgent forces (Sexton 2016). Above all, aid represents a signal to civilians about how providers are likely to govern if they win the conflict. For counterinsurgents, this means service provision signals competence and resolve, and bolsters perceptions of legitimacy (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011; Condra and Wright 2019).

Because civilian abuse is counterproductive, while service provision can help cultivate civilian support, counterinsurgents often use targeted aid to mitigate the effects of abuse.[4] The logic is that providing material compensation after civilian abuse has occurred can help offset the negative effects of harm by signaling to civilians that abuse was unintentional, and that the party that engaged in misconduct intends to govern in a manner that respects civilians' lives and rights. If post-harm mitigation succeeds, combatants may be able to blunt the effects of abuses.

A small existing literature studies post-harm mitigation efforts undertaken by counterinsurgents after indiscriminate violence and civilian killings. In Afghanistan, Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013, 693) show that efforts to provide aid to victimized civilians reduce civilian support for the aid provider's adversaries. When NATO troops provided payments to civilians who suffered physical harm or property damage, payments offset the negative effects of harm on attitudes toward NATO by shifting victimized civilians attitudes away from support for the Taliban. Similarly, Lyall (2019) shows that payments to victims of civilian casualty incidents through the Afghan Civilian Assistance Program reduced Taliban attacks against ISAF for up to 2 years. Complementary findings emerge from Iraq, where Silverman (2020) shows that cash transfers and in-kind assistance to civilian victims of Coalition attacks are associated with a reduction in local insurgent violence. Extending this literature, in this paper I study counterinsurgent compensation for another form of civilian abuse—wrongful detention by counterinsurgent forces.

Detention and Policing in Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgents often rely on detention to suppress rebellion (Khalili 2003). In Algeria, French troops forced two million Algerian civilians into "regrouping camps." Israeli forces have used barriers and checkpoints to isolate Palestinian communities, and imprisoned thousands more militants. In Afghanistan and Iraq, US forces have built an array of prisons, complemented by a global network of detention facilities to hold the thousands of individuals captured since 2001 (Klaidman 2012).

The imperative of detention in conflict environments is obvious. Counterinsurgents can use detention as "a nonlethal means of separating insurgents from the general populace and thereby securing the populace" (Teamey 2007). Existing research highlights this role. Beliefs that police are fair and impartial can improve civilian perceptions of governmental legitimacy, and help forge social bonds between security forces and citizens (Karim 2020). Provision of security and perceptions of legitimacy are enhanced particularly when police are well-resourced and trained (Blair, Karim and Morse 2019), and representative (Nanes 2020).

But policing and detention also have adverse consequences in counterinsurgency (Galula 2006; Khalili 2003). Contact with security forces and criminal justice institutions is a form of civic education. Individuals learn about their governments and political membership through interactions with these institutions. Negative contact reduces civic involvement and trust in government (Lerman and Weaver 2014). In turn, even brief incarceration reduces political participation (White 2019b) and employment (Dobbie, Goldin and Yang 2018), and these effects can spillover to relatives and friends (White 2019a).

Apart from adverse political and economic consequences of detention, moreover, prisons can also exacerbate militancy. Exposure to hardened peers can increase detainees' "criminal capital," increasing recidivism and fostering gang organization (Bayer, Hjalmarsson and Pozen 2009). Particularly when formal institutions are weak, prison gangs often extend their reach beyond prison walls (Lessing and Willis 2019). In US detention facilities in Iraq, AQI filled a comparable role, instructing detainee-cum-recruits in bomb-making, meting out punishments in Sharia courts, and orchestrating attacks outside the prisons' walls (Bowman 2008).

Detainees are also ripe for radicalization. Social alienation spurs feelings of anger and hopelessness that militant recruiters can exploit (Trujillo et al. 2009). Co-location of low-risk and innocent detainees with high-level Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) operatives in US internment facilities in Iraq saw hundreds of previously moderate Sunni detainees radicalized (Benard et al. 2011). As Major General Douglas M. Stone noted, "If you were looking to build an army, prison is the perfect place to do it…. This used to be a jihadi university that was just breeding more terrorists…" (Weiss and Hassan 2015).

The Challenge of Wrongful Detention

One of the greatest challenges facing counterinsurgents engaged in policing operations is wrongful detention. Given the socially alienating and potentially radicalizing effects of incarceration, detaining innocent individuals can fuel insurgency. The risks of wrongful detention are especially severe when counterinsurgents use abusive interrogation tactics (Galula 2006; Meriwether 2018, 87) and house innocent or low-risk detainees alongside militant leaders (Benard et al. 2011). As Staff Brigadier General Nuri al-Din Abd al-Karim Mukhlif al-Fahadaw, the head of the Directorate General of Intelligence and Security for Anbar Province, explained, "The problem we had was that even an innocent person who was arrested during that time, he went to jail, and after a

year they released him. His mind was changed to be with al-Qaeda" (Montgomery and McWilliams 2009, 196–197).

Beyond the individual, alienating consequences of wrongful detention, abusive counterinsurgent detention practices also feed into insurgent propaganda, expanding the network of potential recruits. Apart from detainees themselves, family members, tribal kin, and other civilians who observe or hear about wrongful detentions lose confidence in counterinsurgent forces (Kilcullen 2010, 68). By highlighting counterinsurgents' inability to precisely target militants in raids, insurgents can propagandize wrongful detention (Teamey 2007, 117). Poor information is often the cause of mistargeted counterinsurgent raids and wrongful arrests (Galula 2006, 87). In Iraq, many individuals were arrested after neighbors with personal grievances falsely identified them as insurgents (Brooks and Miller 2009, 132). Al Qaeda in Iraq facilitators in the Iraqi police also deliberately passed false information on innocent civilians to Coalition forces, hoping that wrongful detention would radicalize innocents into supporting AQI (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity 2007). Ironically, wrongful arrests often further exacerbate counterinsurgents' information problems, reducing civilian willingness to inform on insurgents, undermining counterinsurgents' abilities to discriminate between civilians and insurgents, and driving cycles of wrongful detention, social alienation, and militancy.

Mitigating the Effects of Wrongful Detention

The preceding discussion outlines the parameters of the theory. One of the paramount challenges facing counterinsurgent forces is detention. Abusive practices like wrongful arrests and incarceration are at least as common as collateral damage. Wrongful detention spurs social alienation, leading civilians to negatively update beliefs about counterinsurgents. Insurgent violence should increase in turn, as civilians reduce collaboration with counterinsurgents.

However, counterinsurgents can use compensation to mitigate the negative impacts of civilian abuse. In the context of wrongful detention, "former detainee payments" are the most common tactic of post-harm mitigation (Benard et al. 2011). The aim of these payments is to release innocent detainees and provide them with cash to compensate for wages lost during detention. By releasing wrongfully detained individuals and providing monetary compensation, counterinsurgents may be able to reduce the alienation innocent detainees and their kin and community members feel. Compensation serves as an informative, costly signal of counterinsurgents' intent to govern lawfully, and to mitigate civilian abuse. If successful, former detainee payments, then, should reduce insurgent violence by increasing civilian willingness to collaborate with counterinsurgents.

H1: Detainee release payments are associated with a reduction in insurgent violence.

This expectation accords with the conclusion of some MNF-I officials in Iraq, who realized that "the number of released detainees who return to the insurgency is less than the number of insurgents created due to detainee alienation, even where there are high numbers of released detainees. Thus, the benefits from lower detainee alienation offset the risks of released detainees rejoining the insurgency…" (Brooks and Miller 2009, 132).

Notably, this hypothesis contrasts with a prevailing view among some policymakers and military commanders that detainee release is likely to exacerbate insurgent violence. According to this alternate perspective, detainee release is viewed as dangerous because detainees are ripe for insurgent recruitment, and may harbor pro-militant sentiments while feigning moderation in order to secure release from internment (Brooks and Miller 2009, 131). If this is the case, detainee release risks bolstering insurgent ranks; more troubling, release with compensation risks fueling insurgent violence by swelling insurgent ranks and putting cash in rebel coffers, enabling insurgents to engage in more complex and resource-intensive attacks. This alternate view that detainee release is counterproductive provided justification for the mass detention of thousands of individuals with dubious insurgent links in Iraq and Afghanistan (Qureshi 2013), as well for the broader global internment program centered on Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp (Klaidman 2012).

Detainee Operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom

In this paper, I study payments by the US military to detainees held and then released from non-TIFs in Iraq. These former detainee payments were paid to individuals captured in counterinsurgent operations and held for at least 24 hours in Coalition custody before US forces determined that they could not legally be held longer because there was no probable cause to suspect the individuals had engaged in criminal or insurgent activity. Recipients were held in battalion-, brigade-, or division-level internment facilities. Individuals transferred to the custody of Task Force 134, the command responsible for detainee operations, were held at TIFs, and were ineligible for payments.[5]

When the US invasion of Iraq began in March 2003, the detention mission focused on holding enemy prisoners of war (i.e., Iraqi soldiers). As conventional combat operations ended and the insurgency rose, detainee operations were re-tooled. On 18 June 2003, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order #3 established Coalition forces' authority to incarcerate "security internees" and criminals (Benard et al. 2011). Units needed probable cause to hold suspects but had wide latitude in justifying detention for security reasons. Troops could hold anyone that they reasonably believed had engaged in violence, possessed important information, or interfered with Coalition operations (Multi-National Forces–Iraq 2004). In practice, this meant that virtually any military-age males could be detained (Chesney 2011). Table 1 describes demographic characteristics of insurgent suspects detained by US forces. Notably, most detainees were young, less-educated Iraqis with families and military backgrounds.

Table 1. Characteristics of Detained, Street-Level Insurgent Suspects from Al-Anbar Province.

	Year			
Summary statistics	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total suspects	4279	5407	6986	1705
Age				
Mean	30	30.4	29.4	28.8
Median	28	28	27	27
Education				
None	0.100	0.091	0.072	0.073
Elementary	0.361	0.387	0.366	0.356
High school	0.382	0.378	0.380	0.384
Some college	0.046	0.046	0.102	0.116
College graduate	0.110	0.098	0.080	0.071
Occupation				
Unemployed	0.066	0.054	0.052	0.040
Student	0.059	0.057	0.060	0.074
Self-employed	0.050	0.060	0.063	0.061
Blue collar/ laborer	0.206	0.237	0.278	0.309
Shepherd/ farmer	0.167	0.197	0.142	0.132
Driver	0.116	0.124	0.146	0.152
Local security	0.055	0.050	0.043	0.044
Police/military	0.083	0.024	–	–
Merchant	0.030	0.034	0.039	0.056
Other	0.168	0.163	0.177	0.132
Military experience	0.585	0.585	0.522	0.438
Marital status				
Single	0.417	0.399	0.428	0.462
Engaged	0.009	0.006	0.007	0.007
Married	0.571	0.593	0.565	0.531
Widowed	0.003	0.001	<0.001	0
Iraqi citizen	0.929	0.983	0.994	0.993
Foreign nationalities	Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia	Jordan, Syria, and Kuwait	Egypt, Syria, and Sudan	Egypt and Syria
Tribal affiliations	Fahad, Jumayli, and Albu Eissa	Albu Eissa, Jumayli, and Mohamdi	Mohamdi, Fahad, and Albu Eissa	Fahad, Albu Eissa, and Ubaydi

Note: CENTCOM provided aggregated, declassified data on the characteristics of street-level, suspected insurgents held by Coalition forces in Anbar Province between 2004 and 2007. Mean characteristics are presented. Foreign nationalities and tribal affiliations reflect the most frequently reported. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Detained suspects were held in collection points maintained by capturing units, typically companies or battalions, for interrogation, and then forwarded to brigade- or division-level holding facilities. Doctrinally, suspects could be held in these non-TIFs for up to 30 days, but in practice, some individuals were held as long as 54 days. More than 61% of battalions and virtually all brigades maintained holding areas for internment and interrogation (Inspector General of the Department of the Army 2004, 28–29). About 80% of all suspects captured were released from non-TIFs and never held in TIFs (Qureshi 2013, 277), meaning the vast majority of US detainees were eligible for former detainee payments. Coalition Provisional Authority officials first proposed compensation to unjustly incarcerated detainees in the wake of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal in April 2004 (Qureshi 2013, 255), but commanders did not make widespread use of these until 2006. Delays in providing compensation to released detainees mainly reflected commanders' fears that compensated release could fuel the insurgency.

Detainee operations in Iraq evolved dynamically. The first major shock to the system was the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal (Meriwether 2018). After Abu Ghraib, the military issued new guidance for interrogation procedures, and expanded construction of prison facilities in Iraq. Civilian leaders in the United States were eager to pass control over detainee operations to Iraqi forces to avoid further embarrassments like Abu Ghraib. In response, Coalition forces increased spending on detention facilities throughout 2005 and 2006. This reflected a deliberate strategy that sought to increase the housing capacity of detention centers in preparation for an increase in detainees corresponding with the surge, which began in January 2007.[6]

The surge represented the second major shock to US detainee operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom (Willardson 2016). During the planning stages for the surge and for the first 5 months after it began, Task Force 134 was headed by Major General John D. Gardner. Thereafter, from June 2007 to June 2008, the Task Force was led by Major General Douglas M. Stone. These two commanders massively overhauled the US detention system in Iraq in order to create synergies between detainee operations and the broader population-centric counterinsurgency effort (Benard et al. 2011; Willardson 2016). Generals Gardner and Stone pioneered an approach to counterinsurgency "inside-the-wire" that saw detention procedures drastically reformed. Among the key reforms were policies aimed at separating moderate and Salafi inmates, providing educational, vocational, and religious instruction to detainees, and allowing family visitation (Brooks and Miller 2009).

Above all, detainee release was expanded between 2006 and 2008, as Task Force 134 officers realized the "warehousing" model of incarceration was fueling civilian grievances over wrongful detentions. Outside internment facilities, grievances translated to insurgent violence, and inside internment facilities, grievances manifested in large-scale riots. As General Stone noted, there was a dire need for "balancing risk of releasing terrorists against lengthy internment of innocent civilians" (Benard et al. 2011, 69). To alleviate violence-inducing grievances stemming from wrongful

detention, Task Force 134 facilitated the release of thousands of innocent and low-risk detainees from both TIFs and non-TIFs.

Data

Former Detainee Payments

To understand how former detainee payments affect insurgent violence in Iraq, I leverage project-level data on US payments to detainees released from non-TIFs. These data are extracted from reconstruction project files compiled from the US Army Corps of Engineers' Gulf Region Division's IRMS, which lists the start and completion dates, construction costs, project descriptions, and funding sources for 73,600 individual projects undertaken by US forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011). Funds for former detainee payments were disbursed to commanders under the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), so allocation was controlled at the unit level. Because detainee release payments were disbursed from CERP in bulk, the IRMS records a total of 212 lump sum withdrawals for detainee payments. Funds from these lump sum withdrawals were then allocated by commanders to thousands of detainees upon their release. The IRMS captures the range of dates during which commanders obligated funds from bulk withdrawals to detainees, allowing me to measure spending on former detainee payments at the district-month level.[7] The data record several million dollars in commander spending on detainee release payments between 2006 and 2009. These compensatory payments represent roughly 218,000 detainee-days that wrongfully interned individuals spent in Coalition custody. Figure 1 depicts spatial and temporal variation in spending on former detainee payments.[8] Spending on detainee release was concentrated in the districts comprising Baghdad and the southern Belts, as well as in the Sunni Triangle, Mosul, and Kirkuk.

Insurgent Violence

To assess the effects of detainee release payments on insurgent attacks, I use geocoded event data on the incidence of violence. Specifically, I capture the intensity and tactics of insurgent violence against US and Iraqi government forces using data from the MNF-I SIGACT III database (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011). Significant activity (SIGACT) events data are collated from significant activity reports filed by Coalition forces, and provide a rich set of information about the location, date, and type of insurgent activity.

Because I am interested in insurgent violence, I focus on the set of SIGACTs that capture insurgent-initiated attacks. The data distinguish direct fire, indirect fire, IED, and suicide attacks. Direct fire attacks are those in which insurgents engaged Coalition and Iraqi forces within the line-of-sight. These events generally entail higher levels of insurgent coordination and risk and thus represent a good proxy for conventional attacks (Blair 2022). By contrast, indirect fire incidents are those in which insurgents

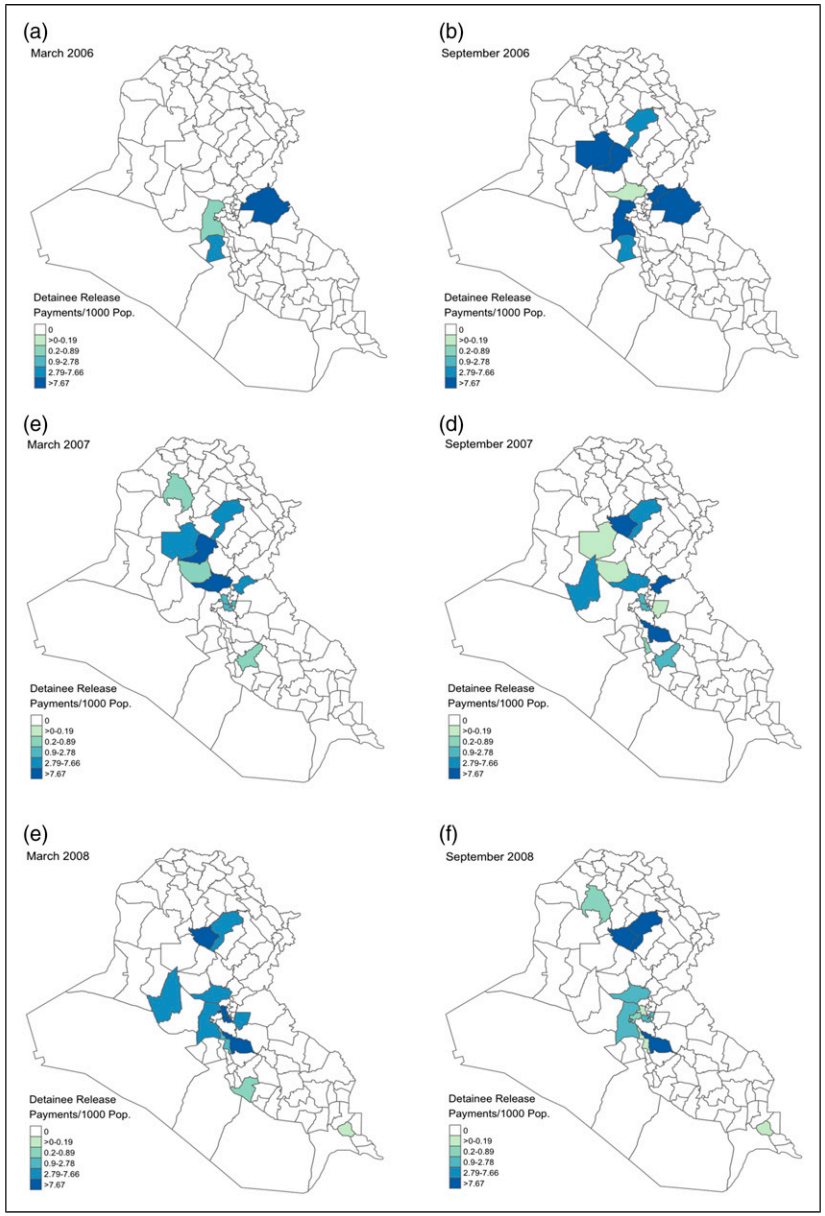

Figure 1. District-Level Former Detainee Payments, March 2006–September 2008: (a) Former detainee pay in March 2006; (b) former detainee pay in September 2006; (c) former detainee pay in March 2007; (d) former detainee pay in September 2007; (e) former detainee pay in March 2008; and (f) former detainee pay in September 2008.

engaged Coalition and Iraqi forces at long-range beyond the line-of-sight. Most indirect fire events are mortar and rocket attacks, and require less insurgent coordination and far less physical risk than direct engagements against Coalition forces. Improvised explosive device incidents refer to attacks or attempted attacks using IEDs, and suicide attacks are suicide bombings.

SIGACT data are not ideal for measuring insurgent violence against civilians because SIGACTs are only recorded when Coalition troops witness or engage in a given event. To operationalize insurgent civilian victimization, I study geocoded data from two alternate sources: Iraq Body Count (IBC) and the World Incidents Tracking System (WITS). Both datasets provide information on the date, location, attack type, weapon type, and casualties caused by non-state groups against civilians. From IBC, I use three measures: lethal insurgent incidents, lethal sectarian incidents, and lethal unknown incidents. The first measure records the number of events where insurgents kill civilians in the course of combat operations against Coalition or Iraqi forces. The second measure records the number of events where militants kill civilians outside the course of combat. The third measure records the number of events where individuals are killed by unknown perpetrators. From WITS, I use one measure, total incidents, that records the number of insurgent-initiated attacks against civilians in a district-month. These outcomes are normalized by population.

Covariates

Control variables come from a variety of sources. To measure district population, I use estimates from World Food Programme surveys conducted in 2003, 2005, and 2007. Following Berman, Shapiro and Felter (2011), I use voter returns from the 2005 parliamentary election to capture the sectarian composition of each district. If a Shia, Sunni, or Kurdish party secured at least 66% of the vote share in a district, it is defined as homogeneous and controlled by the respective sect. If not, the district is coded as mixed sectarian. Sunni and Shia vote share by time fixed effects capture temporal variation across sectarian areas. In different specifications, I also control for reconstruction spending, condolence payments, coalition- and insurgent-caused civilian casualties, and the presence of coalition maneuver battalions, among others. Variable definitions and descriptive statistics for all covariates are provided in Tables A3 and A4 of the appendix.

Determinants of Spending on Detainee Release

My empirical strategy leverages spatio-temporal variation in spending on detainee release payments. The identifying assumption is that month-to-month changes in spending on former detainee payments within districts are conditionally independent of insurgent violence. Two features of the process by which decisions over former detainee payments were made lend credibility to this assumption. There was idiosyncratic, unit-level variation in (1) the propensity of units to keep suspects in non-TIFs

versus TIFs and (2) whether and how much units would spend on detainee release versus on other reconstruction activities. Both of these processes introduce useful variation—detainees could not receive release payments if they were transferred from capturing units to TIFs, and the ability of and amount capturing units could pay released detainees was contingent on the availability of additional CERP money after funding for higher priority reconstruction projects had been disbursed. I describe plausibly exogenous sources of variation in both processes below, and validate these expectations empirically by studying the correlates of spending on detainee release payments. This strategy mirrors approaches taken by Sexton (2016) and Silverman (2020).

Theater Internment Facility Usage

US forces in Iraq relied on a two-tiered detention system. Brigades, battalions, and divisions maintained facilities where local suspects could be interrogated and temporarily held. Additionally, the Coalition maintained larger TIFs, where suspects deemed security internees could be held for the longer term. Military guidelines dictated that only detainees released from non-TIFs could be given former detainee payments. These payments amounted to $6 in Iraqi dinars for every 24 hours spent in custody, with payments authorized by the commander of the capturing unit (United States Forces–Iraq 2010).

All individuals observed engaging in violence against Coalition or Iraqi forces were taken to TIFs; however, capturing units had discretion to hold other suspects, like military-age males captured in the vicinity of arms caches, in non-theater internment for up to 30 days (Multi-National Forces–Iraq 2004). Whether local units held suspects in non-theater internment versus forwarding them to TIFs depended on several factors, including the availability of detention/interrogation personnel (e.g., military police and interpreters), and the procedures individual commanders established for managing detainee operations at non-theater facilities.

First, units that deployed with military police and interpreters were substantially better equipped for holding suspects locally. As a result, these units were less likely to forward detainees to TIFs. Interpreters proved particularly critical. Category II interpreters were Arabic-speaking US citizens attached to Tactical Human Intelligence Teams (THTs). Doctrine mandated that detainees should be debriefed and interrogated at non-TIFs by THTs with Category II interpreters because Category I interpreters—local nationals without security clearances—were of uncertain trustworthiness (Inspector General of the Department of the Army 2004, 35). While units had ready access to Category I interpreters, shortages in the availability of Category II interpreters meant many units did not always have the capacity to interrogate detainees properly. One commander estimated that Category II interpreters were only available to debrief 10% of suspects at the point of capture (Inspector General of the Department of the Army 2004, 34). In turn, backlogs in the number of never- or improperly interrogated detainees in non-theater internment increased pressure on commanders to forward detainees to TIFs (Chesney 2011, 582). The availability of police and interpreters was

dictated by longstanding deployment and rotation plans established in the Defense Department (Center for Army Lessons Learned 2008), and was not tied to local conflict dynamics in Iraq. Some personnel shortfalls were alleviated after the surge, which saw additional police and Category II interpreters deployed.

Second, units also differed in the procedures in place at non-TIFs. While some units sent nearly all detainees to TIFs, others vested determination over whether and where detainees should be held with judge advocates or intelligence officers, and still others implemented formal review boards. This procedural variation meant some units ultimately sent most detainees to TIFs, while others sent very few. Nor was this variation a strategic response to conflict dynamics; instead, it reflected idiosyncracies between individual commanders. For instance, one officer responsible for the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment's internment facilities "regularly sent units back" to gather evidence and statements to justify holding detainees, and often released detainees he believed were innocent. In the same area of operations, other commanders eschewed detainee release, and instead forwarded most suspects to TIFs (Chesney 2011, 581–582). This variation reflected simple personal differences in the extent to which commanders enforced detention operation standards.

It is reasonable to wonder whether units deploying with military police and Category II interpreters, and units whose commanders adhered more closely to doctrine, are comparable to units without police or interpreters, and with less-doctrinaire officers. Quantitatively, I take a number of steps detailed below to rule out confounding stemming from unit differences in TIF usage. In particular, I show that similar results hold: (1) when controlling for the lagged share of emplaced IEDs found and cleared before detonation—a close proxy for counterinsurgent quality and tips (Blair and Wright 2022); (2) in the post-surge period (Figure 3), when shortages of police and Category II interpreters were largely rectified; and (3) I conduct a bounding exercise to assess sensitivity to omitted variables (section A7).

Qualitatively, evidence suggests that differences in unit-level access to military police and interpreters chiefly affected functional decisions about detainee operations, but not the broader success of the counterinsurgent effort (Center for Army Lessons Learned 2008). In particular, even when units lacked Category II interpreters, they invariably had access to and developed close ties with numerous Category I interpreters, who knew local areas and helped US forces exploit intelligence from interviews and interrogations. This fact mitigates concerns that units with Category II interpreters and military police were more likely to spend on detainee release and more effective at suppressing rebel violence.

Spending Priorities

The primary constraint on detainee release spending was the process determining whether capturing units sent detainees to TIFs or held them in non-theater internment. However, spending on detainee release payments was also determined to a lesser extent by the availability of CERP funds.[9] The allocation of CERP funds across districts was

subject to numerous bureaucratic obstacles, like idiosyncratic, unit-level payment schedules. Commanders in Iraq used CERP funds for dozens of reconstruction programs ranging from former detainee and condolence payments to water, sanitation, electricity, and educational projects (United States Forces–Iraq 2010). Funds were allocated by commanders across project categories, and commanders varied in the types of projects they prioritized. A survey of officers found that only about 10% prioritized CERP funds for detainee release payments (Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction 2012).[10] As a result, some detainees were not compensated simply because no funds were left over from higher priority projects (Silverman 2020, 10) and because commanders held idiosyncratic, personal preferences for other CERP uses.

So what factors *did* affect spending on detainee release? Three elements stand out in anecdotal accounts. First, commanders typically spent more on detainee release payments as a goodwill gesture during holidays like Eid al-Adha (Qureshi 2013, 287).[11] Second, US commanders reduced detainee release spending when anti-AQI Sons of Iraq (SOI) militias were stood up. Once SOI were active, Coalition forces let these groups take the lead in identifying and arresting suspects during raids. Consequently, though more detainees were taken in, fewer were innocent because the SOI facilitated greater discrimination in captures (Montgomery and McWilliams 2009, 230). Third, detainee release payments were typically lower where US commanders spent more on governance programs, like the Community Action Program (CAP), which aimed at building resilient local institutions. The effect of local governance spending was two-fold. First, in areas targeted by CAP, local officials took greater responsibility for managing criminal justice efforts. In these districts, US forces "abandoned long- and medium-term detention in US military custody in favor of turning over all detainees to Iraqi control within 24 hours" (Chesney 2011, 597). In addition to broadening the Iraqi role in prosecution and detention, local governance programs also facilitated collaboration, improving the ability of US forces to identify innocent civilians at the point of capture. Second, to a lesser extent spending on local governance programs crowded out detainee release spending, given limited budgets for CERP and other conditional aid.

In Table 2, I explore the correlates of spending on detainee release payments, examining the first difference in per capita spending over district-months. Column 1 includes controls for expected correlates of spending (holidays, SOI, and local governance aid), as well as a range of security covariates. To account for different patterns of violence across sectarian areas, columns 2 and 3 add a set of year-specific quarter by Sunni and Shia vote-share fixed effects. Column 4 adds a control for the lagged share of emplaced IEDs that Coalition forces found and cleared prior to detonation. This variable is highly correlated with civilian tips (Condra and Wright 2019), and helps probe concerns that more effective units spent more money on detainee release. Finally, column 5 excludes district-months where British troops controlled detainee operations.[12]

Table 2. Correlates of Detainee Release Spending.

	Δ Spending on Detainee Release per 1000 Pop.				
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Expected correlates					
Eid al-Adha	**1.015****	**1.017****	**1.016****	**1.018****	**1.389****
	(0.498)	**(0.500)**	**(0.500)**	**(0.500)**	**(0.667)**
Sons of Iraq	**−0.463***	**−0.425**	**−0.375***	**−0.376***	**−0.444***
	(0.275)	**(0.258)**	**(0.222)**	**(0.221)**	**(0.265)**
Community Action Program	**−0.001****	**−0.001****	**−0.001****	**−0.001****	**−0.001***
	(0.001)	**(0.001)**	**(0.001)**	**(0.001)**	**(0.001)**
Ashura	−0.285	−0.279	−0.273	−0.273	−0.337
	(0.422)	(0.425)	(0.429)	(0.430)	(0.520)
Hajj	−0.292	−0.294	−0.301	−0.303	−0.443
	(0.203)	(0.207)	(0.212)	(0.210)	(0.285)
Security conditions					
Non-Detainee Small CERP	−0.000 1	−0.000 1	−0.000 1	−0.000 1	−0.000 1
	(0.000 1)	(0.000 1)	(0.000 1)	(0.000 1)	(0.000 1)
Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs	−0.066	−0.067	−0.068	−0.068	−0.071
	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.051)
Coalition Maneuver Battalions	0.092	0.092	0.101	0.101	0.126
	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.101)
Coalition CIVCAS Incidents	−0.375	−0.381	−0.372	−0.371	−0.392
	(0.297)	(0.293)	(0.292)	(0.293)	(0.312)
Provincial Reconstruction Team	0.069	0.052	0.045	0.045	0.091
	(0.105)	(0.102)	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.156)
Civil Military Operations Center	0.389*	0.365	0.384	0.386	0.391
	(0.232)	(0.236)	(0.248)	(0.250)	(0.267)
Theater Internment Facility	−0.359	−0.346	−0.401	−0.401	−0.189
	(0.400)	(0.391)	(0.438)	(0.438)	(0.144)
IED Clearance Rate				−0.105	−0.131
				(0.214)	(0.250)
Constant	−0.074	−0.057	−0.081	−0.082	−0.107
	(0.085)	(0.089)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.164)
District FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific quarter FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific quarter × Sunni FE		Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific quarter × Shia FE			Y	Y	Y
Observations	3458	3458	3458	3458	2468

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Δ Spending on Detainee Release per 1000 Pop.				
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
R^2	0.036	0.037	0.040	0.040	0.044
AIC	19313	19310	19299	19301	14304
Sample	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	Excluding MND-SE pre-2008

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * p, < 0.1. District-clustered, robust standard errors in parentheses. Models are estimated in first differences, and scaled using population weights. Spending and violence covariates are per capitized. MND-SE covered districts in the following provinces: Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar. The unit of analysis is the district-month.

Results from Table 2 confirm the association between detainee release spending and factors suggested by qualitative accounts. Across columns, detainee release spending increased by 0.1–0.3 standard deviations during Eid al-Adha, the holiest holiday in Islam. As noted above, this reflected a deliberate strategy of US officers to garner goodwill. I find no evidence of similar surges in detainee release spending during other holidays and religious events like the Hajj or Ashura.

In contrast, both the stand-up of SOI and spending on CAP aid are negatively associated with detainee release payments. This finding aligns with arguments that efforts to empower Iraqi engagement in security and criminal justice management enhanced the discrimination of Coalition detentions, reducing the relative number of wrongful detentions, and hence the overall amount spent on detainee release. In addition, both SOI and local officials trained through CAP worked with US commanders to identify innocents among groups of detainees, reducing the amount of time wrongfully detained individuals were held (and consequently the amount of former detainee pay for which they were eligible).[13]

Results yield weak evidence of an association between short-term trends in violence or counterinsurgent quality and detainee release spending. Coefficients on Coalition collateral damage, maneuver battalions, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), and Civil Military Operations Centers (CMOC) are small and imprecisely estimated. Other forms of small CERP spending are negatively associated with detainee release spending; however, this correlation is statistically indistinguishable. Given the modest size of detainee release payments relative to other reconstruction programs, it is unsurprising that the CERP availability was only a weak constraint on spending. Estimated coefficients on the SIGACTs per capita term are negative, suggesting that detainee release spending may have increased after reductions in insurgent violence. A number of tests elaborated below help build confidence that the possible association between lagged violence and detainee release spending is not a major inferential threat. Above all, the differenced estimator I use, along with district-specific trends and controls for changes in lagged insurgent violence, help account for bias from trends in

violence that could affect former detainee payments. Using project-level records, I also find no evidence that violence trends affected spending implementation timelines (Figure A5).

Estimation

I estimate the effect of detainee release payments on insurgent violence using a panel data strategy pairing first differences and fixed effects. The panel covers 104 Iraqi districts across all months from 2004 to 2009.[14] Differencing helps control for district-specific trends in potential confounders, while district, month, and month by sect fixed effects absorb factors correlated with changes in detainee release spending and insurgent violence.[15] I estimate the following least-squares equation

$$Y_{j,t} - Y_{j,t-1} = \alpha_j + \beta_t + \delta\left(\text{Detainee Release}_{j,t} - \text{Detainee Release}_{j,t-1}\right) + \gamma\left(X_{j,t} - X_{j,t-1}\right) + \epsilon_{j,t}\theta$$

where j indexes districts and t indexes months. $Y_{j,t} - Y_{j,t-1}$ are conflict-related outcomes. α_j are district fixed effects; β_t are year-specific month fixed effects; $X_{j,t} - X_{j,t-1}$ is a vector of covariates that varies across specifications; $\text{DetaineeRelease}_{j,t} - \text{DetaineeRelease}_{j,t-1}$ is the difference in per capita spending on detainee release payments in district j from month $t-1$ to month t; and $\epsilon_{j,t}$ are robust, district-clustered standard errors. Results are scaled using population weights because $\epsilon_{j,t}$ are likely to be heteroskedastic.[16]

Results

In Table 3, I estimate a series of OLS models for the effect of per capita spending on detainee release payments on insurgent-initiated SIGACTs. In column 1, I use a baseline set of covariates for trends in violence and counterinsurgent quality, as well as the core predictors of detainee release spending. In columns 2 and 3, I add year-specific month by Sunni vote share and Shia vote share fixed effects. These parameters help account for differences in insurgent violence across sectarian regions. In column 4, I control for lagged insurgent-initiated SIGACTs to capture short-term trends in violence, and in column 5 I add a spatial lag of violence to account for spatial autocorrelation.[17]

The primary threat to inference in my empirical strategy is endogeneity between counterinsurgent effectiveness and insurgent violence. As noted above, commanders varied in their propensity to make detainee release payments. One of the key constraints on detainee release spending was the availability of Category II interpreters who could debrief and interrogate suspects at non-TIFs. Absent adequate interpreters, many units forwarded suspects to TIFs, rendering those detainees ineligible for release compensation. One may worry that units with access to Category II interpreters (and hence better equipped to hold detainees and spend on detainee release) were more effective at suppressing insurgent violence for reasons unrelated to former detainee compensation.

Table 3. Detainee Release Spending and Insurgent Violence.

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTS per 100k Pop.							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Detainee release spending per 1000 Pop.	−0.103** (0.039)	−0.101*** (0.037)	−0.096*** (0.035)	−0.164*** (0.055)	−0.164*** (0.055)	−0.164*** (0.055)	−0.177** (0.069)	−0.174** (0.066)
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
District FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific month FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific month × Sunni FE		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific month × Shia FE			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lagged DV				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Spatial lag					Y	Y	Y	Y
IED clearance rate						Y	Y	Y
Province × DCGDO FE							Y	Y
Constant	0.879* (0.496)	0.651 (0.551)	0.583 (0.551)	0.635 (0.617)	0.623 (0.612)	0.621 (0.608)	0.589 (0.655)	0.825 (0.798)
Observations	3521	3521	3521	3458	3458	3458	3458	2468
R^2	0.120	0.219	0.283	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.326	0.345
AIC	24 481	24 062	23 759	23 224	23 226	23 227	23 187	17 007
Sample	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	All of Iraq	Excluding MND-SE pre-2008

Note: *** p, < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1. District-clustered, robust standard errors in parentheses. Models are estimated in first-differences, and scaled using population weights. MND-SE covered districts in the following provinces: Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar. The unit of analysis is the district-month. Covariates include: Coalition and insurgent collateral damage, Coalition maneuver battalions, spending on the Community Action Program, spending on small CERP, urban population share, unemployment rate, Theater Internment Facilities, Sons of Iraq, US Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and Civil Military Operations Centers. Spending and violence covariates are per capitized.

For instance, interpreters could improve the ability of Coalition units to extract information from civilian informants, reducing insurgent violence by increasing the discrimination and efficacy of counterinsurgent operations. To address this concern, I include a control for the lagged share of emplaced IEDs that were found and cleared prior to detonation. This measure is highly correlated with civilian informing, and so represents a useful proxy for counterinsurgent quality.

Finally, columns 7 and 8 introduce additional fixed effects and study different samples. The DCGDO was the head of Task Force 134, and different DCGDOs pursued different detainee release policies implemented at the national level (Benard et al. 2011). To account for differences in release policies directed by DCGDOs across Iraqi provinces—the spatial unit at which MNF-I planned security transitions—in column 7, I include province by DCGDO fixed effects. Column 8 excludes districts under British control before 2008, where British forces had chief detention responsibility. Full results are reported in Table A6.

Consistent with hypothesis 1, detainee release spending is robustly correlated with fewer insurgent-initiated SIGACTs. Taking results from the best-fitting model in column 8, increasing detainee release spending by $1 per 1000 district residents is associated with 0.174 fewer attacks per 100,000 district residents in a month. For the average district-month, this implies that each dollar in detainee release spending per 1000 residents averted 0.5 insurgent-initiated SIGACTs. Lyall (2019) estimates that about $2687 in spending on condolence pay prevented one insurgent attack in Afghanistan, while Silverman (2020) finds that about $1950 in condolence pay averted one insurgent attack in Iraq. Benchmarking my results against these established estimates reveals detainee release pay, while substantively meaningful, is somewhat less efficient at mitigating harm than condolence pay. This is unsurprising given the smaller amounts of money paid to former detainees than to victims of civilian casualty incidents.

A number of other covariates in the models are also substantively important and shed light on existing theories of post-harm mitigation and violence. First, small CERP programs, which were conditional and attentive to local needs, exert a consistently large and significant negative effect on insurgent violence, corroborating a key finding of Berman et al. (2013). Second, results show a consistent negative association between insurgent collateral damage and insurgent violence, replicating a core result from Condra and Shapiro (2012).[18] Third, districts-months with operational SOI saw consistently less insurgent violence, as Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro (2012) find. Fourth, increasing district unemployment is correlated with more insurgent violence, in line with opportunity cost models of insurgent mobilization. Finally, the presence of TIFs is correlated with more insurgent violence. That violence is higher in districts with TIFs supports qualitative accounts about routine insurgent attacks on notorious internment facilities like Abu Ghraib (Montgomery and McWilliams 2009, 88–89). Overall, replicating these notable results from the literature lends confidence in the estimations.

A chief concern is that the level of detainee release spending correlates with decisions about the total volume of prisoner releases, which would raise additional endogeneity concerns.[19] Unfortunately, Freedom of Information Act requests to CENTCOM for data on the total number of detentions and detainee releases at the district-month level have so far been unsuccessful. Absent this data, I take four "next-best" steps to ensure the robustness of the core results. First, I estimate bounds to assess sensitivity to omitted variables bias. Results are unlikely to be driven by omitted variables (section A7). Second, using declassified documents from CENTCOM, I am able to back-out the approximate number of detainees held in non-theater internment in each Coalition command-month.[20] The negative effect of detainee release spending holds controlling for the estimated number of detainees in non-theater internment—that is, the number of detainees eligible for release and compensation—in each command-month (Table A8). Third, I verify that the core results hold when I focus solely on months corresponding to Islamic holidays, during which detainee releases, compensated or not, spiked nationwide (Table A9). Fourth, I re-estimate the main models replacing per capita detainee release spending with an indicator for whether any detainee release spending occurred (Table A10). This strategy only leverages variation in the extensive margin of spending. Once again, the core result holds, though estimates are modestly less precise.

Sectarian Heterogeneity

The nature of the conflict in Iraq varied by the sectarian composition of districts. A quasi-nationalist insurgency dominated in Sunni-majority districts, while mixed districts saw violence from the insurgency and the sectarian conflict that emerged between Sunni and Shia militias. Violence in Shia districts stemmed mostly from competition between Shia militias. Correspondingly, grievances related to US detainee operations varied across sectarian areas. Most Coalition detainees, particularly before the surge, were Sunni, fueling popular disaffection in Sunni districts at perceived anti-Sunni bias in detention policies (Willardson 2016). In Shia districts, detention was less common because violence was lower; moreover, many detainees, including known militia members, were released at the request of politically-connected local officials in these areas. In Shia districts, then, detention was a less significant grievance. To test for sectarian heterogeneity, I separately analyze the effect of detainee release payments in mixed, Sunni, and Shia areas. Results are presented in Table 4. Model parameters are the same as in column 8 of Table 3. The estimate from column 8 of Table 3 is repeated in column 1 of Table 4 for comparability.

Results show that the effect of detainee release spending is driven by compensation in mixed and Sunni districts. In mixed areas (column 2), the coefficient is large, negative, and precisely estimated, and remains so when I pool mixed and Sunni areas (column 3). The largest substantive effect of detainee release spending emerges in Sunni areas (column 4), where grievances over detention policy were most widespread. For the average Sunni district, an additional $1 of detainee release spending per

Table 4. Sectarian Heterogeneity in the Effect of Detainee Release Spending.

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs per 100k Pop.					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Benchmark	Mixed	Mixed/Sunni	Sunni	Shia	Interacted
Detainee release spending per 1000 Pop.	**−0.174****	**−0.203*****	**−0.203*****	**−1.351***	**−0.034*****	**−0.190*****
	(0.066)	**(0.062)**	**(0.060)**	**(0.651)**	**(0.009)**	**(0.069)**
Detainee release spending per 1000 Pop. × Sunni						**−1.388*****
						(0.456)
Detainee release spending per 1000 Pop. × Shia						**0.148***
						(0.076)
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
District FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific month FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year-specific month × Sunni FE	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Year-specific month × Shia FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lagged DV	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Spatial lag	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
IED clearance rate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Province × DCGDO FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	0.888	0.488	2.430*	1.112	0.052	0.867
	(0.803)	(0.837)	(1.229)	(1.536)	(0.032)	(0.798)
Observations	2468	821	1205	384	1263	2468
R^2	0.345	0.412	0.394	0.474	0.464	0.347
AIC	17 007	5899	8830	3007	4998	17 004
Sample	Excluding MND-SE pre-2008	Mixed areas	Mixed/Sunni areas	Sunni areas	Shia areas	Excluding MND-SE pre-2008

Note: *** p, < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1. District-clustered, robust standard errors in parentheses. Parameters follow those in column 8 of Table 3. Year-specific month × Sunni vote share fixed effects are omitted in column 4 because the Sunni vote share does not vary across Sunni districts.

1000 district residents reduced violence by approximately two attacks. Finally, there is much smaller effect of detainee release spending in Shia areas (column 5).[21] Similar results emerge in column 6, which fully interacts the measure of detainee release spending with indicators for Sunni and Shia districts. Substantively identical results also emerge when the sectarian composition of districts is defined by the influence of armed groups operating there, rather than party vote shares (Figure A11). The effect of detainee release spending is strongest in districts influenced by AQI and Sunni

Rejectionist groups (mixed and Sunni areas), and is absent in Jaish al-Mahdi (JaM)-influenced districts (Shia areas).

In mixed areas, there were more "fence-sitters" weighing collaboration. Hence, counterinsurgent abuses like wrongful detentions could sway relatively more civilians against the Coalition in these areas, while compensation could help Coalition forces regain supporters. The fact that the results are driven by mixed and Sunni areas suggests that the reduction in insurgent violence stemming from detainee release spending is likely driven by an informational mechanism, whereby counterinsurgent attempts to mitigate harm yield more civilian informing on insurgent activities. Similarly, detainee releases in mixed areas, which involved both Sunni and Shia suspects, are likely to have been more effective in signaling counterinsurgent impartiality (Willardson 2016, 280). A similar dynamic explains the negative effect of detainee release in Sunni areas. By compensating detainees in Sunni districts, US forces helped counter Sunni perceptions of unfairness.

The smaller effect of detainee release in Shia areas could result because conflict and grievances in Shia areas differed from Sunni and mixed areas, or because Shia detainees comprised a smaller share of overall detentions and releases. It is difficult to fully unpack precisely why former detainee payments were less effective in Shia areas, but exploratory tests are suggestive. I re-estimate column 5 of Table 4 while exploiting analytic weights for the total number of Shia detainees and for the ratio of Shia to Sunni detainees (Table A12). If the weak effect in Shia areas owed merely to the smaller number of Shia detainees in Coalition custody, we would expect the effect of detainee release spending to grow as the number of Shia detainees grew. Instead, the effects remain similar in magnitude or become even weaker, suggesting the small effect of detainee release spending in Shia areas owed more to differences in the nature of violence and grievances in these districts.

Tactical Heterogeneity

Examining tactical heterogeneity in responsiveness of insurgent attacks to detainee release spending can also shed light on the mechanisms by which compensation reduces insurgent violence. Lyall (2019) shows that condolence payments reduce insurgent violence primarily by reducing low-skill attacks perpetrated by revenge-seeking individuals, but not by incentivizing civilian informing on complex insurgent attacks. In contrast, other evidence suggests that civilians may inform on insurgent activities after suffering indiscriminate insurgent violence (Condra and Shapiro 2012) or when they perceive counterinsurgents as seeking to mitigate harm (Condra and Wright 2019). To understand whether detainee release spending chiefly reduces violence by undercutting retributive attacks by released detainees, or by incentivizing collaboration with counterinsurgents more broadly, I estimate separate models for the effect of former detainee payments on different insurgent tactics, and consider tactical variation across different sectarian areas. Models in Figure 2 below follow the specification in column 8 of Table 3.

In the top panel of Figure 2, I disaggregate insurgent-initiated SIGACTs into four types of attacks: direct fire, IEDs, indirect fire, and suicide bombings. Direct fire and IED attacks require extensive preparation and coordination and hence are more vulnerable to civilian informing. Indirect fire attacks entail lower risk for insurgents because they can be perpetrated at long-range. Similarly, suicide attacks are typically immune to informing because they are perpetrated by small, motivated teams or individuals. If detainee release spending reduces insurgent violence by dampening retributive violence perpetrated by wrongly detained individuals, the observed reduction in SIGACTs should be driven by a reduction in lower-risk indirect fire incidents. However, if the reduction occurs because compensation improves civilian perceptions of counterinsurgents and incentivizes civilian informing, then the reduction in SIGACTs should result mostly from reductions in direct fire and IED attacks; I may also observe insurgents engage in more suicide attacks in response because these are less sensitive to informing.

In line with the informational mechanism, results in the top panel of Figure 2 suggest the effect of compensation is driven by reductions in direct fire and IEDs, and to a lesser extent in indirect fire. I also observe a modest but statistically significant increase in suicide bombings in response to detainee release spending ($p = .062$), consistent with an insurgent shift into activities less prone to civilian informing. Although indirect fire attacks are decreasing in compensation, the magnitude of this effect is significantly smaller than the magnitude of the effects on direct fire and IEDs ($p < .05$). These effects are all greatest in mixed and Sunni districts and null in Shia districts. These findings represent strong suggestive evidence that the effect of detainee release spending on insurgent violence operates mainly by encouraging civilians to inform on insurgents.

In the bottom panel of Figure 2, I broaden the analysis to insurgent-perpetrated civilian victimization. These models assess whether detainee release payments also affect violence against civilians. Evidence from WITS and IBC show that payments are associated with reduced civilian victimization. In particular, detainee release spending is associated with fewer WITS attacks against civilians and fewer unknown killings. Compensation had no distinguishable effect on sectarian killings in the full sample, though this effect masks divergence across sectarian areas. These results indicate insurgents reduced *deliberate* civilian victimization in the face of detainee release spending. This is exactly what we would expect if insurgents attempted to counteract the local population's increasingly positive views of counterinsurgent forces owing to post-harm mitigation by reducing counterproductive civilian victimization (Blair 2022). The reduction in unknown killings may also reflect less civilian collaboration with militants, and in turn a reduced ability of groups to identify targets for intimidation and selective violence. By contrast, the null effect on sectarian killings indicates that detainee release spending operates, as the theory expects, by altering insurgents' ability to produce violence, but not by shifting intercommunal relations.

I also observe a positive effect of detainee release spending on insurgent killings, in which rebels inadvertently kill civilians during attacks on Coalition and Iraqi troops. This result is consistent with the aforementioned insurgent shift into attacks that are less

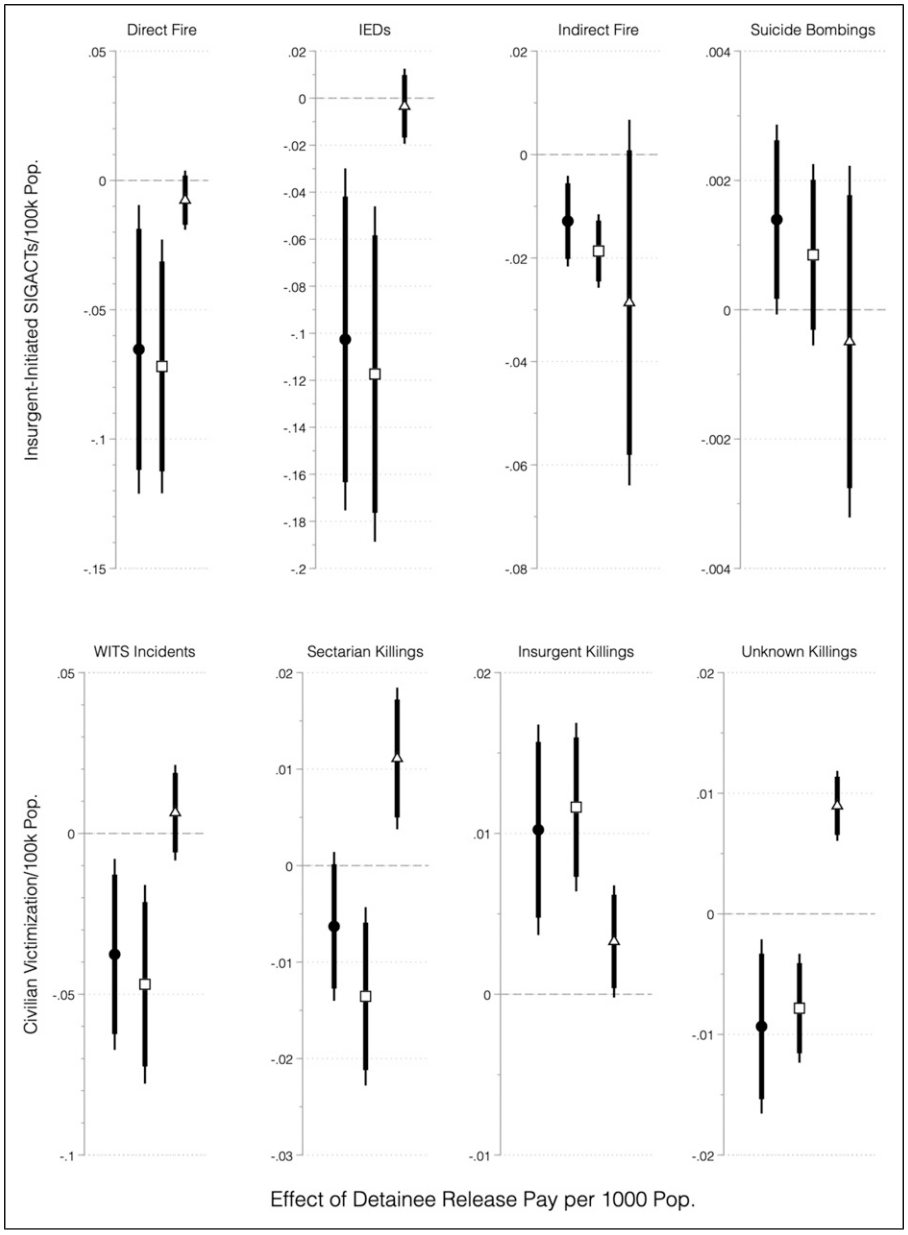

Figure 2. Tactical Heterogeneity in the Effect of Detainee Release Spending. *Note:* Bars are 90 an 95% confidence intervals. Black circles denote estimates from the full sample. White squares denote estimates from mixed and Sunni districts. White triangles denote estimates from Shia districts. Parameters follow those in column 8 of Table 3. Y-axes are scaled differently for clarity.

prone to civilian informing but also less discriminate, like suicide bombings. Collateral civilian damage is more likely in these sorts of attacks, so the positive association between former detainee payments and insurgent killings is consistent with the tactical heterogeneity outlined in the top panel of Figure 2.

Temporal Heterogeneity

Did the effectiveness of detainee release spending vary over time? One of the main shocks to Coalition detainee operations was the troop surge, announced in January 2007. The surge led to a massive increase in the detainee population in Iraq as increasing troop strength led to more counterinsurgent raiding. The surge also contributed to pacification efforts by facilitating penetration into contested and insurgent-controlled communities. In turn, increased troop presence enhanced commanders' knowledge of local needs and priorities and improved the Coalition's ability to protect informants (Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011).

In the left panel of Figure 3, I test whether spending on detainee release payments varied in effectiveness before and after the surge. Although the violence-reducing effect of payments was somewhat larger after, the difference relative to the pre-surge period is not statistically distinguishable ($p = .172$). One possible reason is that the efficacy of detainee release spending was less contingent on commanders' knowledge of local needs than other forms of small CERP spending. Specifically, while the efficacy of CERP spending on service projects hinged on understanding the specific preferences of local communities (e.g., a health clinic in one village and a school in another), releasing innocent detainees was a self-evident civilian desire (Teamey 2007).

To probe how the surge affected the relationship between detainee release spending and violence in greater depth, I also disaggregate the overall measure of insurgent-initiated attacks into constituent tactics (Figure A13). If detainee release spending incentivized civilian informing and the surge improved the capacity of troops to protect informants, then the negative effect of detainee release spending should be greater after the surge than before for the types of attacks most vulnerable to civilian informing (IEDs). Encouragingly, the negative effect of detainee release payments on IEDs was significantly larger after the surge than before ($p = .028$). Opposite effects emerge for suicide attacks, which were more immune to informing. Detainee release was associated with more suicide bombings before the surge ($p = .057$). The effect of detainee release on direct ($p = .616$) and indirect fire ($p = .888$) did not vary between the pre- and post-surge periods.

The other major shock to Coalition detainee operations stemmed from shifts in command of Task Force 134. The head of Task Force 134, the DCGDO, was the commander responsible for Coalition detainee policy. Seven DCGDOs held command between 2003 and 2009, and three—Major General John D. Gardner, Major General Douglas M. Stone, and Rear Admiral Garland Wright—oversaw detainee release spending in the period I study.[22] Policies on internment and release shifted with DCGDOs. Gardner and Stone are credited with leading reforms to hasten release and

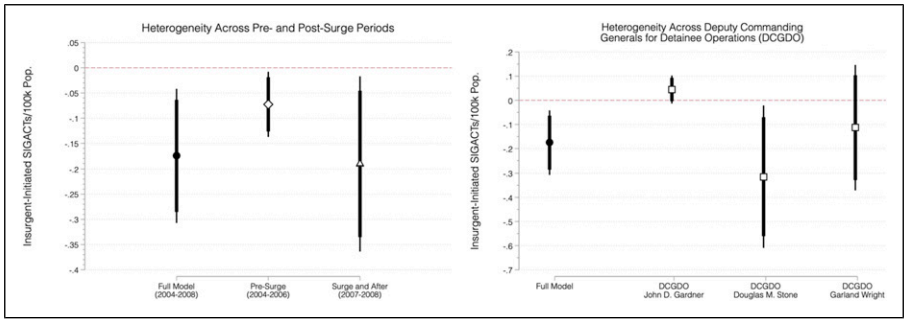

Figure 3. Effects of Spending on Detainee Release Across Time Periods. *Note:* Bars are 90 and 95% confidence intervals. Model parameters correspond to column 8 in Table 3. Y-axes are scaled differently for clarity of presentation.

improve conditions within internment facilities (Benard et al. 2011). Collectively, they pursued counterinsurgency "within-the-wire," a population-centric approach to detainee operations that sought to prevent radicalization of detainees in internment facilities and to counteract negative Iraqi perceptions of US internment prevailing after the Abu Ghraib scandal (Willardson 2016). Especially under Stone, greater efforts were made to expedite the release of wrongfully detained individuals (Qureshi 2013).

In the right panel of Figure 3, I test for heterogeneity in the efficacy of detainee release payments across the tenure of DCGDOs. The effect of detainee release is precisely estimated and negative under DCGDO Stone, the most ardent supporter of population-centric detainee operations. Estimated effects are negative but much smaller and imprecise under Wright. These results suggest that the effectiveness of detainee release spending varied across different DCGDOs. More broadly, these findings indicate that detainee release spending is most effective at reducing insurgent violence when used in tandem with other reforms that reinforce civilians' perception that counterinsurgents are seeking to mitigate harm.

Robustness

The analyses show that former detainee payments in Iraq are associated with reduced insurgent violence, and that this effect is greatest: in mixed sectarian and Sunni areas; for direct fire and IED attacks, which are more prone to civilian informing; and when US commanders placed more emphasis on broader detention reforms. Together, these results strongly suggest that detainee release spending reduces insurgent violence by positively shifting civilian attitudes toward counterinsurgents, encouraging greater collaboration. To verify the robustness of these core, findings I conduct a number of additional tests.

A central threat to inference in my empirical framework is endogeneity between changes in spending on detainee release and changes in insurgent violence. It is possible that results are driven by natural fluctuations in the time series of detainee release spending and insurgent violence. To allay this concern, I use a standard placebo test and show that future changes in detainee release spending are largely uncorrelated with current changes in insurgent violence (Table A14).

A second concern is that detainee release spending reflects counterinsurgent expectations of trends in insurgent violence. Suppose US commanders correctly anticipated a reduction in insurgent violence. This could lead troops to increase detainee release spending because an expected reduction in insurgent violence attenuates concerns that released detainees will join the insurgency. Although I find no significant association between past insurgent violence and current detainee release spending (Table 2) and control for trends in insurgent violence in districts and surrounding areas in the main regressions (Table 3), several additional tests bolster confidence that anticipation is not biasing the results.

First, neither past nor future changes in insurgent violence predict current changes in spending on detainee release (Table A15). Second, similar results emerge when I introduce a series of analytic weights exploiting variation in the intensive margin of violence. The results are robust to upweighting districts with more current violence (Table A16), more past violence (Table A17), and more future violence (Table A18). These models attribute less weight to less violent districts, where counterinsurgents may have anticipated fewer future attacks. Third, I use coarsened exact matching to study the effect of detainee release spending, comparing district-months with similar histories of violence (Table A19).[23] Across these additional tests, the negative association between detainee release spending and insurgent violence holds.

Other empirical choices also warrant attention. For instance, the main analyses scale estimates by district population, cluster standard errors by district, and study all months from 2004 through 2008. None of these choices is consequential for the results. The association between detainee release spending and insurgent violence remains precisely estimated and negative when I: omit population weights (Table A20), use time-varying population weights (Table A21), allow for clustering within provinces (Table A22), and allow for clustering within MNF-I divisions (Table A23). In addition, substantively identical results emerge when I drop months before March 2006 when the first detainee release payment was recorded (Table A24), drop districts where no detainee release payment was ever recorded (Table A25), and scale regression estimates by the number of detainees in Coalition custody (Table A26).

Finally, it is important to probe the results for influential observations that could be driving the average negative effect of detainee release spending on insurgent violence. To do so, I take a number of additional steps. First, the main analyses omit a number of outlier district-months with extremely large changes in detainee release spending. This choice is inconsequential (Table A27). Second, I verify that no individual province (Figure A28) or district (Figure A29) where detainee release spending occurred is solely driving the results. Third, in addition to outliers, I can iteratively exclude other

district-months where there occurred large changes in detainee release spending (Figure A30). Fourth, I re-estimate the core models while subsetting to districts within each of the 11 provinces where detainee release spending was observed (Table A31). I find a precise, negative effect of detainee release spending on insurgent violence in six of the 11 provinces, raising confidence that the overall findings are not merely driven by a small number of district-months.

Conclusion

In the course of counterinsurgent operations, tens of thousands of individuals are often captured and held by government forces on suspicion of being or aiding rebels. Even under the best circumstances, some individuals will inevitably be wrongfully detained. Wrongfully detained individuals are ripe for rebel recruitment, and may engage in retributive violence against counterinsurgent forces. This concern has fueled broader fears among some policymakers about releasing any detainees captured in counterinsurgent campaigns. Can compensating wrongfully detained individuals undercut retribution-seeking and enhance civilians' perceptions of counterinsurgent forces? Building on a growing body of evidence about post-harm mitigation, I argue that small payments to wrongfully detained individuals upon their release from custody can reduce violence by signaling a counterinsurgent's intent to behave fairly, attenuating potential retributive violence by inducing aggrieved civilians to positively update their views of counterinsurgent forces, increasing information-sharing.

Using granular micro-data on insurgent violence and former detainee payments made by US forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I show that compensating wrongfully detained individuals upon their release from custody is associated with a substantively large decline in insurgent violence. Consistent with the informational mechanism, whereby compensation induces positive updating and encourages civilian informing on insurgent activities, the effect of compensation is greatest in areas where more individuals can be swayed by abuses or post-harm mitigation, and where individuals perceive existing criminal justice institutions as biased. Similarly, compensation to former detainees reduces insurgent violence mainly by reducing direct fire attacks and IEDs—attack types that are more sensitive to civilian informing. Indeed, compensated detainee release induces insurgents to substitute into tactics that are less prone to exposure, and to be less discriminate in executing attacks. The violence-suppressing effects of former detainee payments are greatest when paired with other counterinsurgent reforms that positively reshape civilian perceptions of detainee operations.

Policy implications of these findings are clear. Apart from collateral damage, counterinsurgents can use compensation to mitigate the negative impacts of more quotidian forms of harm like wrongful detention. Rather than detaining suspects of questionable guilt in harsh conditions for long periods of time and at high cost, policymakers should prioritize identifying innocent and low-risk detainees. Releasing these detainees with even very modest restitution can help shift civilians' perceptions,

increasing collaboration and reducing violence. Detainee release payments are both normatively and strategically preferable to prolonged incarceration.

This research also highlights a number of promising avenues for future scholarship. First, more work should study whether and how counterinsurgents can mitigate harm caused by less severe but more common forms of abuse. For instance, additional studies could examine attempts to mitigate harm from mistargeted house raids and demolitions, exposure to contamination from spent shells and heavy equipment, or even checkpoint-induced delays and alienation. Second, additional studies are needed to isolate the mechanisms linking post-harm mitigation and reduced insurgent violence. While I offer suggestive evidence that civilian informing is the mechanism, Lyall (2019) finds evidence that compensation mostly reduces mobilization of aggrieved individuals but does not encourage broader collaboration. Reconciling these contrasting findings is critical for theoretical accounts about opportunity costs and high-risk mobilization, as well as for debates over information-centric versus resource-centric counterinsurgency. Finally, my findings echo Willardson's (2016) call for greater appreciation of the role detainee operations play in counterinsurgency. Rather than a strategic backwater, prisons are another battlefield in insurgent conflicts.

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Supplemental Material

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Notes

1. IS's prison origins are deeper still. Many of the group's leaders, including Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, were interned in US prison facilities during Operation Iraqi Freedom, where members of AQI, IS's predecessor organization, actively recruited, trained, and governed "inside-the-wire."
2. Historically, payments to innocent detainees have been used by French forces in Algeria, British forces in Northern Ireland, American forces in Vietnam, and Colombian forces in the war against FARC. Recently, US troops used "former detainee payments" in Iraq and Afghanistan. US policy dictates that these payments are not admissions of fault or moral/

legal responsibility, but instead "are expressions of sympathy for wages lost during detention and to provide urgently needed humanitarian relief to individuals and their families" (United States Forces–Iraq 2010, B-12).

3. These figures are calculated according to data reported in a declassified slide deck (Multi-National Forces–Iraq 2006) and a report by the Inspector General of the Department of the Army (2004). Upon release, former detainees were paid $6 per day in custody provided they were never deemed a "security internee" and transferred to a Theater Internment Facility. Most detainees were transferred to a Theater Internment Facility or released within 14 days (14 x $6 = $84). The longest a detainee is reported to have been held without transfer to theater internment was 54 days, making the maximum possible detainee release payment $324 (54 x $6 = $324).
4. As Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013) note, insurgents may also use aid as post-harm mitigation. Because I focus on how counterinsurgents mitigate the effects of wrongful detention, in this paper, I emphasize the use of aid by *counterinsurgents* to mitigate civilian abuse. Nevertheless, there is evidence that AQI also made payments to families of individuals detained by the Coalition, including individuals who were recruited into AQI while detained (Bahney et al., 2013).
5. TIFs included Camp Cropper, Abu Ghraib, Fort Suse, Camp Bucca, and Camp Taji. Another facility, Camp Ashraf, was a Temporary Internment and Protection Camp housing exiled fighters of the People's Mujahedin of Iran, rather than a TIF. Only non-TIF detainees were eligible for former detainee payments. Individuals in TIFs could receive like-kind rewards (e.g., cigarettes) for information that contributed to Coalition operations or force protection. Individuals in Theater Internment Facility Reintegration Centers (TIFRIC), camps attached to TIFs where low-risk detainees could receive education and vocational training, could receive payments for labor completed at the TIFRIC (United States Forces–Iraq 2010).
6. Figure A1 shows US spending on detention facilities over time.
7. Following Berman, Shapiro and Felter (2011), I assume a constant spending flow between project start and completion dates. This is a conservative approach in differenced models.
8. Figure A2 shows spending on former detainee payments over time by district.
9. Commander's Emergency Response Program availability was a lesser constraint given the small sums involved in detainee release relative to the large budget allocated to CERP.
10. Although former detainee pay was less frequently used than other CERP categories, it was fairly well-supported among commanders that used it. 11% of commanders that made detainee release payments viewed these as one of the three most effective uses of CERP. This level of conditional support for detainee release pay was roughly equal to the conditional support for condolence payments (Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, 2012, 9).
11. The United States followed a similar policy in Vietnam, releasing more prisoners during Tet.
12. British forces controlled detainee operations in Multi-National Division South-East (MND-SE) until the end of 2007. During this time, a division-level non-theater internment facility was maintained by British troops at Camp Shaibah. US forces took responsibility for detention in MND-SE from January 2008.

13. The negative correlation between both SOI and CAP and detainee release spending should bias against finding that detainee release payments reduce insurgent violence because it suggests better counterinsurgents (i.e., those operating with local support) spend less on former detainee compensation.
14. Using months helps capture the immediacy of the detainee release payment process. There was no drawn-out claims process because former detainees were paid directly upon release from commanders' bulk CERP funds on hand. Districts are the most granular spatial unit available. Many insurgent groups in Iraq were organized along district lines and managed finances at the local level (Bahney et al. 2013), making it is possible to identify how detainee release affected insurgent violence in discrete districts.
15. For similar estimations, see Berman, Shapiro and Felter (2011); Silverman (2020).
16. The main results exclude nine outlier district-months, where several extremely large disbursements of detainee release pay are recorded. This choice is inconsequential for results.
17. Spatial autocorrelation could result from, for instance, alliances between militant cells across districts (Blair, Horowitz and Potter 2022; Blair et al. 2022).
18. Estimates are somewhat imprecise, but this is unsurprising given that these collateral damage events are surrounded by more endogeneity.
19. I thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this point.
20. I combine monthly data on the nationwide detainee population, data on the share of all detainees originating in each command, and periodic, command-level reports on the share of detainees held in non-theater internment (versus TIFs) to estimate the approximate number of non-TIF detainees (i.e., detainees eligible for release pay) in each command-month.
21. I do not estimate a model for Kurdish areas because there is no detainee release spending recorded in these regions. This reflects both reduced insurgent activity in Kurdish regions and the fact that Kurdish security forces had greater responsibility for detention in their areas of control.
22. Between March 2003 and December 2009, the seven DCGDOs were Brigadier General Janis Karpinski (June 2003–April 2004); Major General Geoffrey D. Miller (April 2004–November 2004); Major General William Brandenburg (November 2004–December 2005); Major General John D. Gardner (December 2005–May 2007); Major General Douglas M. Stone (May 2007–June 2008); Rear Admiral Garland Wright (June 2008–September 2009); and Lieutenant General David Quantock (September 2009–).
23. See Condra and Shapiro (2012) for a similar approach. I specifically match district-months on: the 6-month lagged moving average of insurgent-initiated SIGACTs per 1000 district residents split into five bins along the 10th, 33rd, 66th, and 90th percentiles; and six categorical variables for trends in insurgent control coding whether the difference in attacks per capita was increasing (1), the same (0), or decreasing (−1) in the six preceding months.

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