

In examining the al Anbar case, this chapter is organized into five sections. The first examines the networked nature of the Iraq insurgency. The second section explores the shifting tide against AQI. The third section outlines the fight against al Qa'ida, especially by local tribes. The fourth section examines the U.S. role in countering al Qa'ida, especially the role of U.S. military forces. And the final section offers conclusions on military force and the end of terrorist groups.

## **A Networked Insurgency**

The Sunni insurgency in Iraq was, for many years, a complex and difficult-to-penetrate endeavor. What was remarkable about the Sunni insurgency (especially compared with other insurgencies) was the extent to which its components defied identification and categorization. Within a few months after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the insurgency had organized itself as a tacit alliance of Ba'athists, salafists, nationalists, sectarians, and criminals. The insurgency had no leadership, much less one that could be identified and targeted. By 2004 salafists, notably those associated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had taken a prominent role in the fighting. This was especially true in Fallujah, a city in al Anbar province. Figure 5.1 highlights Al Anbar and neighboring provinces.

Several snapshots of the period suggest the difficulty of clearly deducing who was who in the insurgency. In a 2003 memo to Secretary Rumsfeld, Paul Bremer, the administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, noted that the threat to U.S. forces came from several sources. The first were elements of the former regime, including Ba'athists, Fedayeen Saddam, and intelligence agencies. They focused their attacks on three targets: coalition forces; infrastructure; and employees of the coalition, including Iraqis. "To date," Bremer wrote, "these elements do not appear to be subject to central command and control. But there are signs of coordination among them." The second threat was Iranian subversion: "Elements of the Tehran government are actively arming, training and directing militia in Iraq. To date, these armed forces have not been directly involved in attacks on the