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#### **Flashpoints**

Baghdad (particularly Sadr City), Mosul, Kirkuk, Najaf.

**The following highways and routes should be considered extremely hostile:**

- The route to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) is extremely dangerous. Restrictions are sporadically applied to this route.
- The Baghdad to Amman Highway remains particularly dangerous and should be avoided if at all possible. 'The Group of Death' has issued a video warning in which it threatens to cut off Highway 10, the major supply route between Amman and Baghdad.
- In the south of the country, carjacking and banditry are rife on the following routes: Safwan to Basrah, Nasiriyah to Basrah and Hamza to Diwaniyah.
- Roads in the vicinity of Najaf, Karbala and Kufah are likely to become increasingly dangerous because of the ongoing situation in Najaf and Kufah
- The roads from Baghdad to Fallujah have reopened although they remain extremely dangerous. A number of checkpoints have also been erected on the routes and are being manned by both Multinational Forces (MNF) and the Iraqi police.
- The route from Syria to Mosul in the north of Iraq has also proven dangerous in the past few weeks
- The road between Beiji and Tikrit was the scene of an attack in recent days

While these routes have been highlighted, it should be noted that transit throughout Iraq is **dangerous** and no route can be guaranteed as being safe.

#### **Projections**

In what may prove to be a provocative move, a senior aide to Moqtada al-Sadr was killed on 31 August as he travelled from Najaf to Baghdad. Given that in the past the mere arrest of Sadr's aides has induced violence that has lasted for several weeks it is highly possible that violence in Shi'a-dominated areas of the country will be renewed, particularly by Mehdi Army Militiamen who are not loyal to the cleric.

While Ansar al-Sunna has remained relatively quiet in recent months, the execution of the 12 Nepalese hostages earlier this week might be indicative of a resurgence in their and other Sunni insurgent groups' activity. The group gained notoriety for the twin suicide attack in Erbil in February 2004 that killed over 100 people. It has influence in Fallujah and Ramadi where its name has been printed on Islamist propoganda material. The group is also closely affiliated to Ansar al-Islam based in the north of the country.

The son of Abdullah Azzam, the teacher and friend of Osama Bin Laden, has warned that Muslims from all over the world have travelled to Iraq to carry out their "duty" of defensive Jihad against the US and MNF in country. Huthaifa Azzam has also stated that he was welcomed along with many of his fellow fighters by the former Iraqi leader when it became clear that military action was going to be carried out against Saddam's regime. Comments passed by the infamous militant's son suggest that

they were allowed entry into the country by the former regime (although they were monitored and controlled by it). The decision of Azzam to reveal such information at this time might be an attempt to bolster the Sunni Islamic resistance in Iraq at a time when the Shi'a militants have been grabbing all the headlines. Furthermore, it is not impossible, nor improbable that the adding of the voice of the son of such a prominent figure as Abdullah Azzam will inspire further violence by the Sunni insurgents in the coming days.

With regard to kidnapping, Australia's comments (detailed below) in support of the French may make Australian nationals in Iraq more vulnerable to potential seizure by militants seeking to test Australia's no negotiation policy. The seizure and threatened execution of two French journalists, demonstrates that despite France's opposition to the US action in Iraq, its citizens are still at risk of kidnap and execution as are the nationals of other countries that opposed the conflict. As detailed in the Iraq Security Briefing of 31 August, given President Putin's move to allow arms sales to the Iraqi government it is likely that Russian citizens operating in Iraq will be at an increased risk of attack and/or kidnap.

### **Summary**

In comparison to the weekend period and the brutal events of earlier this week, the past 48 hours have remained relatively quiet. Nonetheless, attacks have persisted in the form of drive-by assassinations, kidnapping and clashes. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have remained a favoured means of attack together and the usual array of weaponry has been in evidence in recent days including Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Mortars, Rockets and small arms fire.

**Kidnapping remains a significant risk to all personnel operating in Iraq.**

### **Areas of continued concern**

- **It is feared that mosques are potential hot spots for demonstrations, and possibly suicide and other explosive attacks in the coming days and weeks**
- **Hotels remain at risk of attack, particularly those providing residence to Western personnel, including those in the 'Green Zone', despite increased security**
- **All facilities relating to the energy industry in Iraq remain at risk of attack, including offices and vehicles**
- **Police stations, local government and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) facilities continue to be the target of demonstrations and suicide attacks**
- **The homes and offices of those involved in the political development of Iraq, those of personnel involved in the former regime (i.e. low level Ba'athists) and those of tribal leaders are believed to be under an increased risk of attack or assassination**











**The following other buildings and facilities are consistently at risk:**

- **Any building, element of infrastructure or machinery involved with the reconstruction effort (particularly the energy industry)**
- **Coalition facilities of all nationalities (inhabited by contractors, NGO workers, diplomatic and military personnel)**
- **Civic buildings, particularly police stations, diplomatic offices and those of NGOs and media organizations**
- **Any convoy/vehicle carrying personnel from the media/NGOs or indeed contractors and diplomatic staff is at risk of attack at all times**

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#### AKE risk ratings

	1-9	Generally stable and secure
	10-19	Instability
	20-29	Hostile
	30-39	Highly unstable
	40-49	Widespread militancy
	50-59	Low intensity conflict
	60-69	Advanced guerrilla war/civil war
	70-79	Limited conventional war
	80-89	Regional war
	90-100	Total war (sub-nuclear)

For more in-depth analysis of the security situation in Iraq as well as other world hot spots see [Global Intake](#), AKE's online strategic information and intelligence tool.

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