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AKE Bespoke Intelligence Reports

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Flashpoints

Baghdad (particularly Sadr City), Najaf, Mosul, Kirkuk, Baiji, Latifia

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. Indeed, '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.
- 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

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

It is likely that the increase in significant insurgent activity against Multi-national Forces (MNF) and Iraqi security forces will continue and possibly escalate in the immediate future. US air raids against al-Zarqawi-linked insurgents in Fallujah appear to be doing little to secure the area and discourage further militant attacks. The reach of the Sunni insurgents is far and it is most probable that a linked group was responsible for the suicide vehicle bombing in Mosul (detailed below). Supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr believe Sunni extremists were behind the assassination of one of the radical cleric's aides last week. Sadr followers have posited that a campaign is underway against the cleric and his supporters in an attempt to provoke a civil war within the country. Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi planned this in a document discovered in February this year.

Kidnapping remains a major problem, and one that may significantly increase if the ransom demanded by the groups holding the two French journalists (detailed below) is paid.

Worryingly, the Black Banners group, responsible for the kidnapping of the seven employees of a Kuwaiti trucking company (now released), has issued a videotape requesting the Association of Muslim Scholars to issue a fatwa (religious edict) permitting the kidnapping of foreigners. In particular, the group mentioned foreigners assisting the reconstruction effort and MNF. It is unlikely that the Association will issue such an edict, although it is possible that another cleric will. Fatwa's require religious legitimacy and therefore require to be called by a credible religious figure. Saddam Hussein issued fatwas and even made a call to Jihad during his rule but lacked the religious

credibility for the call to be successful. There are a number of clerics associated with militant groups operating in Iraq. Although not a cleric, fatwas issued by Osama bin Laden are taken seriously (at least by militantly minded followers). It is most likely that the Association of Scholars will reflect upon the practice of kidnap and report that it requires careful consideration. Meanwhile, there is nothing to stop a cleric such as Sheikh Abdullah al-Janabi in Fallujah, or another like-minded individual in Iraq or elsewhere permitting the act per an edict, for the numbers of kidnappings in Iraq to spiral out of control.

The transitional government's ban on Qatari-based media company al-Jazeera has been extended and searches have been carried out on the station's facilities in Iraq. Al-Jazeera described the extension as 'reminiscent of the way certain other regimes have behaved'. It is possible that Western and foreign journalists may be targeted by those individuals or groups angered by the government's decision and the lack of Arab reporting in and from Iraq.

Summary

As anticipated in previous AKE Iraq Security Briefings, the situation in Fallujah remains volatile and it has become increasingly clear that the city and neighbouring Ramadi are tinderboxes of Sunni resistance and extremism involving both indigenous and foreign insurgents. US, Multi-national Force (MNF) and Iraqi forces have been the focus of a number of attacks in recent days, as has the Iraqi police force which was the focus of a vehicle-borne suicide attack on 4 September.

IEDs have remained a favoured means of attack, and as noted above, suicide attacks have been utilised in recent days. Also witnessed over the weekend period and early part of this week have been the use of Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Mortars and Small Arms Fire (SAF).

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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