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AKE Bespoke Intelligence Reports

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Flashpoints

Baghdad (particularly Sadr City), Tal Afar, Samarra, Najaf, Mosul, Kirkuk,

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

A statement posted on an Islamist website on 9 September by a group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Tawhid and Jihad claimed that four mujahadeen were 'martyred' in the US raids against Fallujah. It pledged "a strong response". It is likely that the Sunni insurgency will gather momentum in the coming days and weeks in the form of continued resistance and potentially spectacular attacks. These could well be against embassies, domestic governmental facilities and other targets of foreign (particularly Western) interest.

A group calling itself the al-Hussein Islamic Brigades published a statement on an Islamist website on 7 September warning Turkey and Jordan of serious reprisals if the countries refuse to close their embassies in Iraq and leave the country. The group claims to be operational in Iraq. Later in the statement the group also called upon the Shi'a ulema to issue a fatwa calling for Jihad. Despite the warnings of 8 September, the Jordanian government has refused to close its embassy in Baghdad. The Jordanian Embassy was the target of a massive attack in August 2003 that resulted in several deaths.

The three Kenyan citizens who spent 42 days as hostages of the Black Banners group in Iraq have arrived back in Kenya. The men brought with them a warning for Kenyan nationals working or thinking of working in Iraq, that any other Kenyan national caught in the country will simply be beheaded.

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. Fatwas 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.

Summary

The situation in Iraq remains volatile. Attacks have taken place throughout the country although the south has been less hostile than elsewhere. Incidents of violence have involved the use of rockets, mortars, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), and small arms fire (SAF). IEDs have once again been a favoured weapon of the insurgents.

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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