



23 September 2004

#### **AKE Bespoke Intelligence Reports**

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#### **Flashpoints**

**Baghdad (particularly Sadr City), Mosul, Kirkuk, Fallujah**

**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.**
- **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**

The British Foreign Office has warned that there is a specific threat of kidnap against personnel in the al-Mansour area of Baghdad between 2100 and 0000 hours local time. Intelligence suggests that a dark grey Mercedes and a BMW may be used by insurgents, both have tinted windows and are thought to be very like those used by the insurgents who seized the two US and one British citizen last week. The Foreign Office has reiterated that while there are specific times detailed above the attacks may not fall within the time frame given.

US and Iraqi raids in Sadr City are likely to invoke further violence that has the propensity to spread to other Shi'a dominant areas of the country, particularly the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala but also the south of the country.

The execution of the three Kurdish hostages detailed below is likely to induce a significant increase in ethnic tension and violence in the north of the country. Given the known connection between the Army of Ansar al-Sunna and the al-Qaeda network, it is very possible that the executions were the latest in a string of events that have been carried out by al-Qaeda-linked groups and those linked to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who pledged to invoke civil war in Iraq per his February memorandum which was intercepted by security services. The memo specifically detailed the Kurdish population as a target of this aim.

## Summary

Attacks and incidents of violence have persisted nationwide over the past 48 hours. Several vehicle bombs and vehicle-borne suicide attacks have caused a number of casualties and targeted assassinations have also been carried out. Clashes between insurgents, both Sunni and Shi'a in the Iraq capital have persisted and raids on the al-Sadr stronghold of Sadr city have persisted with the assistance of military aircraft. Insurgents have utilised a wide range of weaponry in recent days including the persistently favourite Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), rockets, mortars and small arms fire (SAF).

### Kidnapping – an update

Al-zarqawi's remaining hostage has issued a personnel appeal on the demand of his captors to British prime minister, Tony Blair. The second US hostage, Jack Hensley has been executed by the Tawhid and Jihad group. Despite the emotional plea from Bigley, it remains likely that he too will be executed. While on 22 September there were conflicting reports that one of the female Iraqi prisoners, Rihab Taha would be released, US sources have commented that the former weapons expert would not be released imminently.

Italy remains optimistic that despite the claim of the Islamic Jihad organisation that it has executed the two Italian hostages that it is holding. The group announced the executions on an Islamist website after the Italian government failed to meet the group's demands: withdrawing its MNF contingent from Iraq. Given current events in Iraq and the fact that the group itself threatened to kill the two NGO workers without further warning if its demands were not met it is possible that the claim could be true. Further threats were made against Italy, both against its interests in Iraq and on its sovereign territory. Italian intelligence sources are believed to have made some indirect contact with the group holding the women in recent days giving hope that the women were still alive. It should be remembered that there has been some ambiguity as to which group is actually holding the women or, indeed, if the two groups that have claimed the abduction are one and the same.

An Australian hostage rescue team has been deployed to Iraq following claims that Australian nationals had been seized by insurgents there. The Australian authorities have stated that while the kidnap claim could well be real, it is looking more likely that it was a hoax. Nonetheless, the body of a blonde-haired man was discovered north of Baghdad on 16 September; although the identity of the body has not yet been revealed, the initial evidence suggests the man is of foreign origin. The body was found in the River Tigris near Yethrib village. Australian authorities are believed to be considering increasing the security surrounding their nationals operating in Iraq.

On 22 September, Vinsan, a Turkish construction company pledged to cease its operations in Iraq if it will save the lives of its ten employees seized by insurgents. On 18 September, a group calling itself the Salafist Brigades of Abu Bakr al-Seddiq released a tape which was broadcast by al-Jazeera in which it threatened to kill ten hostages if Vinsan, a Turkish- and US-based company ceases its operations in Iraq within 72 hours.

Three Lebanese men and their Iraqi driver were abducted on 17 September according to the Lebanese Foreign Ministry. The men are all believed to have been employed by a travel agency in Baghdad. They were snatched as they travelled on the notorious highway between the Iraqi capital and Fallujah. AKE's Iraq Security Briefing of 16 September warned that Lebanese nationals were at increase risk of kidnap and attack following a threat made against them by the 1920 Revolution Brigades.

Video footage of three hostages being decapitated was released only a few hours after Prime Minister Allawi's vow that elections in Iraq would go ahead as planned. In a clearly political move, the three Iraqi Kurds are believed to have been killed near Mosul where their bodies were found. The men are all thought to have been members of the KDP peshmerga. The executions have been claimed by the Ansar al-Sunna Army. The group has claimed responsibility for numerous other attacks and executions, most notably the execution of 12 Nepalese nationals in August this year. In February this year, the group claimed responsibility for two attacks in Erbil against Kurdish Targets. It is believed to be an offshoot of Ansar al-Islam, and is therefore highly likely to have ties to al-Qaeda.

The group has been evident in Iraq since 3 November 2003 although little information regarding it has been forthcoming.

#### 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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