



06 July 2004

Flashpoints

Baghdad, Fallujah, Basrah, Mosul, Samawah, Baqubah

The following highways and routes should be considered extremely hostile:

Much of Baghdad is currently locked down and as such some routes may be obstructed. Travel on Iraq's roads should be avoided in the coming days amid fears of large-scale attacks planned for what was scheduled to be the handover of power.

- The roads from Baghdad to Fallujah remain extremely dangerous. A number of checkpoints have also been erected on the routes and are being manned by both Coalition Forces (CF) and the Iraqi police.
- The Baghdad to Amman Highway remains particularly dangerous and should be avoided if at all possible.
- The route to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) is extremely dangerous. Restrictions have been applied to this route
- Routes in the vicinity of Najaf and Karbala should be avoided as should those around al-Kut 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 further 300 prisoners are scheduled for release from the notorious Abu Ghraib prison and from another prison facility near Umm Qasr this week. It is anticipated that family members will gather in large numbers outside the facilities in the hope that their relatives will be released. It is possible that a large gathering of highly emotional people could turn violent.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that insurgents have attempted to purchase chemical warheads from the Polish multinational contingent operating in Iraq. Polish Army intelligence indicated that the insurgents offered \$5000 for each of the 17 warheads that were recently discovered by Polish forces. The gas, cyclosarin is a nerve agent and was encased in Soviet-made warheads that are believed to be approximately 15 years old (most likely purchased from Ukraine). The comments from Polish military officials followed a denial of the discovery by multinational forces. It is of course disturbing that insurgent groups are attempting to secure Weapons of Mass Destruction. The most likely target of such weapons would be foreign personnel in Iraq. It should, however, be reiterated that the finding of the nerve agent has not been confirmed and so far, insurgent groups operating in Iraq are not thought to be in possession of such materials.

As detailed in previous Iraq Security Briefings, it remains highly possible that large-scale and/or co-ordinated attacks will take place in Iraq against prestige targets and also against those Iraqis viewed as co-operating with the multinational force and transitional government.

The call for resistance from the radical cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr is worrying. While his exact plans remain unclear, it is possible that he will once again attempt to seize control of Shi'a strongholds and holy places to demonstrate his strength and increase his power. It is evident that al-Sadr continues to harbour political ambitions, although he has repeatedly failed to pursue these through legitimate means.

Summary

While there has been no single major attack in Iraq in recent days, attacks and incidents of violence have been more or less constant and geographically diverse. Indeed, no one region of the country has escaped incident. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have remained a preferred means of attack, as have targeted assassination and drive-by shootings. Mortar and rocket attacks have also been prevalent.

Personnel and funding continue to enter Iraq bolstering insurgent groups in the country. Much of the assistance is believed to stem from neighbouring Syria where, according to media reports on 5 July, Fatiq Suleiman al-Majid, a cousin of the former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, is thought to be co-ordinating anti-Coalition efforts from his home. Other cousins of the former leader are also believed to be involved in the gathering of monies and personnel to hamper the work of the transitional government and multinational force in Iraq.

Organised crime continues to affect the lives of vast numbers of Iraqis. Kidnap for ransom in particular has been a problem for some time, particularly for those Iraqis perceived as wealthy. The children of many Iraqis in all the major cities, including Baghdad and Basrah have been targeted for kidnap and have thereafter been ransomed at sums well above what their families have the ability to pay. Organised criminal gangs are known to be behind the kidnappings and little has been done to deal with the problem, despite the establishment in July 2003 of a specialist police unit designed to tackle crimes of this nature.

A threat has been made on the life of the most wanted man in Iraq, Musab al-Zarqawi. A statement issued on a videotape which was released to al-Araqbiya and purportedly from a group calling itself the Salvation Movement demanded the immediate departure from Iraq of the militant leader. The statement further condemned his targeting of Muslims and the defiling of Islam.

The extent of Iran's meddling in neighbouring Iraq is becoming clearer. It is believed that Iran has provided certain Shi'a groupings within Iraq with money in attempt to gain influence and protect its interests there. Two Iranian nationals were arrested on 5 July in connection with an attempted car bombing although it remains unclear who the Iranians were working for. While it is possible that they could have been Iranian agents, it is more likely that they were employed by a Shi'a militia. Tehran continues to deny any meddling in Iraq, its favourite defence being that it is in its interests for a Shi'a government to rule following the elections scheduled for January 2005. Although Iranians are predominantly Shi'a Muslims (as are the majority of Iraqis) it should be remembered that Iranians are Persian while Iraqis are Arab; a significant difference that is often overlooked. Furthermore, the eight-year war between the two countries invokes nationalist sentiment among the Iraqi population to this day. It is unlikely that a shared religion can bridge the divide between the historic enemies.

Areas of continued concern

- **All facilities relating to the energy industry in Iraq remain at risk of attack, including offices and vehicles. Personnel are also at risk.**
- **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 .**
- **Police stations, local government and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) facilities continue to be the target of demonstrations and suicide attacks.**

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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	60-69	Advanced guerrilla war/civil war
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	80-89	Regional war
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