



13 May 2004

Flashpoints

Baghdad (Sadr City), Najaf, Fallujah, Kufah, Kirkuk, Karbala, Basrah, Baqoubah,

The following highways and routes should be considered extremely hostile:

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 Coalition Forces (CF) and the Iraqi police. There is however no access to Fallujah from the main Highway.

The Baghdad to Amman Highway remains particularly dangerous and should be avoided if at all possible.

Routes in the vicinity of Najaf , Kufah and Karbala should be avoided as should those around al-Kut

The route from Baqoubah to Mosul has experienced a number of attacks over the past 48 hours and should be considered dangerous

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 month of Rabi'al-Awwal (also known as the month of birth or Shahr al-Mawhid) has begun across the Islamic world. During this month the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad will be marked by all Muslims, however, Shi'a Muslims will also celebrate the birth of Ali. The celebrations are not an official Islamic festival but are entrenched culturally. Nonetheless, heightened religious fervour during this month (particularly between the dates of 2, 12, 13, 14 May dependent on lunar calendar) may induce violence by some radical elements of society. Cultural and religious awareness should be practised.

The kidnapping of two Russian citizens and the killing of Nick Berg and reaction they have prompted may prove to be a prelude to another spate of kidnappings. Given the threats made by Moqtada al-Sadr, his aides and those purportedly made by Osama bin Laden (all detailed in AKE Iraq Security Briefing of 11 May) it is highly likely that this may be the case. Furthermore, the statement released with the footage of the aforementioned execution should also be taken as a threat of further action of this kind: "You will not receive anything from us but coffins after coffins ... slaughtered in this way."

At a meeting held at the fringe of a conference currently underway in the Jordanian capital Amman, parliamentary speakers from both the Saudi Kingdom and Iraq purportedly called for the unity of the Islamic world to "confront the occupiers and the the enemies of Islam effectively to acheive Islamic unity at a global level." It is possible that a statement of this kind could encourage further Extra Territorial Elements (ETEs) to enter Iraq to assist insurgents. Indeed, in the past 48 hours five Saudi nationals were arrested near the border town of al-Salman. Despite the claim of the men that they were in Iraq to purchase livestock, intelligence received suggests that their business in Iraq was terrorist-related. They men were carrying a Thuraya phone.

Sources suggest that a new style of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) has been used on at least three

occasions in Iraq. The devices are hidden inside cement bags which are then said to be hardened with water, dropped in front of moving convoys or planted on busy routes. They are then detonated by remote control. At least two of the devices are believed to have been detonated by car alarm detonators.

Summary

The news coming out of Iraq over the past 48 hours has been some of the most disturbing yet. The lull in kidnappings (despite the continued holding of a number of foreign personnel, including three Italian citizens) has been broken with the seizure of two Russian contractors and of course, the kidnapping and execution of the US citizen, Nick Berg. In addition to this, attacks and violent incidents have persisted with ambushes and hi-jackings taking place, the usual tactic of planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) which are detonated remotely or on contact and thereafter followed up with Small Arms Fire (SAF). Rocket and mortar attacks have also taken place, perpetrated by insurgents while the CF have used increased force against Moqtada al-Sadr and his militia, the Mehdi Army in the holy cities of Najaf, Karbala and the surrounding area.

On 13 May Moqtada al-Sadr pledged to maintain the fight against the US and Coalition and stated that his militia would not be disbanded and that he was prepared to die as a Martyr. Sadr's pledge followed the announcement that a meeting between tribal, political and religious leaders on 11 May had resulted in a multi-point plan to see an end to the fighting between Sadr's militia and the CF. A number of demands were made by the representatives of the radical cleric including the release of several aides held by CF. However, al-Sadr made clear that he is not prepared to disband his militia until "the occupiers leave Iraq", and even then there is no guarantee.

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)

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