



20 May 2004

### **Flashpoints**

**Baghdad (Sadr City, Green Zone), Najaf, Fallujah, Nasiriyah, Amarah, Kufah, Kirkuk, Karbala, Basrah, Baqoubah, Mukaradeeb (near al-Qaim) and Ramadi**

**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, Najaf and Karbala should be avoided as should those around al-Kut.

Amarah is likely to witness further attacks and travel on roads to and from the city should only be undertaken with caution.

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**

As details emerge surrounding the apparently accidental targeting of a wedding ceremony along the Syrian border, Iraqi hostility can be anticipated. The incident could not have come at a worse time for the Coalition and will help reinforce a growing discontent amongst some Iraqis over security and instability in the country.

Similarly the standoff between Coalition Forces (CF) and supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr, the assassination of Ezzedine Salim and the prisoner abuse scandal all combine to strongly suggest the security environment within Iraq will greatly worsen in the run up to the 30 June handover.

In recent days there have been further signs that support for the Coalition effort in Iraq from within the Coalition itself is faltering. Both Poland and Italy have given mild rebukes for US policies pursued in the country.

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 period the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad will be marked by all Muslims; Shi'a Muslims will also celebrate the birth of Ali. Heightened religious fervour during this month (particularly on 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.

## Summary

The 19 May attack, apparently on a wedding party in Mukaradeeb near the town of al-Qaim, on the Syrian border may have killed in excess of 40 people. If a wedding party was accidentally struck, the tragedy of the incident and the high death toll will likely lead to hostility in the region.

On 19 May Jeremy Sivits, the first US soldier to be tried in relation to the Abu Ghraib prison scandal was given the maximum sentence of one year at a court martial in Baghdad. After completing his sentence he will be discharged from the military. Three other soldiers accused of abuse will have their cases heard on 21 June.

On 18 May a group linked to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the assassination of Ezzedine Salim on 17 May. The claim by Jama'at al-Tawhid and Jihad was posted on an Islamist website and dated 17 May. The statement boasted that, "Another lion from the Jama'a al-Tawhid and Jihad has removed the rotten head of those who betray God and sell their religion to the Americans and their allies." On 17 May a group calling itself 'Arab Resistance Group - al-Rashid Brigades' also claimed responsibility.

Media reports from Iraq claim that four men have been detained over the murder of US citizen Nicholas Berg. It is believed that none of the four are Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who is the prime suspect. US authorities believe al-Zarqawi carried out the killing of the 26-year-old in addition to other atrocities in Iraq.

In addition to the above, attacks and violent incidents have persisted with ambushes and hijackings, as well as the commonplace 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 occurred, perpetrated by insurgents, while 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.

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## 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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