



22 April 2004

Flashpoints

Baghdad, Fallujah, Basrah, Najaf, Karbala, az-Zubayr

The following highways and routes should be considered extremely hostile:

US forces banned civilian traffic on a number of main routes in Iraq on 18 April stating that any non-CF military vehicle will be fired upon if it travels upon the routes that have been labelled 'free-fire' zones. The routes covered by the ban include the Highway to Turkey, Highway 10 to Jordan and Highway 8 to Kuwait. The ban on civilian vehicles will have a major effect on the situation in Iraq making transit to some parts of the country almost impossible (the whole point of the exercise). In this regard, the closure of the routes could antagonise an already inflamed situation.

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

Reports on 20 April suggest that the Italian authorities are prepared to pay a ransom for the release of the three remaining Italian hostages. It is unclear as to whether any monetary demands have been made by the captors in addition to their demand for apologies and the withdrawal of the Italian forces from Iraq. This move on the part of the Italians whether payment is actually made or merely offered sets a dangerous precedent and is likely to encourage further incidents of kidnap, if not by those of religious motivation, by those motivated by money.

If, as suspected, the attacks in Basrah (detailed below) were the work of al-Qaeda and al-Zarqawi northern Iraq may be the next area to be targeted, particularly Kurdish cities such as Kirkuk. Zarqawi warned there would be attacks on both Iraq's Shi'a and Kurdish populations.

The month of Rabi'al-Awwal has begun across the Islamic world. It is also known as the month of birth (Shahr al-Mawhid). During this month the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad will be marked by all Muslims, although 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 12, 13, 14 May dependent on lunar calendar) may provoke violence by some radical elements of society. Cultural and religious awareness should be practised by personnel.

It should be reiterated that on 14 April, a letter was circulated in Baghdad addressed to families in the city. The letter warned Iraqis not to leave their homes, attend university, school, work or open their businesses between 15 and 23 April because the 'Mujehedeen Companies for God, Victory and Success' would be transferring the resistance from Fallujah to Baghdad in order to free Baghdad from 'the darkness of the occupier'.

Summary

Throughout Iraq attacks have persisted over the past 48 hours. The devastating blasts in the southern city of Basrah (detailed below) of 21 April illustrate that even areas that are usually less eventful in terms of violent incidents and attack have not escaped the attention of insurgents. Indeed, it is possible knowing the reaction such an attack would invoke that it was carried out in Basrah. Elsewhere in Iraq attacks have also continued to involve the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Small Arms Fire (SAF), Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), rockets and mortars. Furthermore, the US forces are still amassed on the outskirts of both Fallujah and Najaf where negotiations with the Sunni and Shi'a

insurgents respectively have proven largely fruitless. A number of foreign nationals also remain in the hands of their captors. The attacks on police stations and training facilities demonstrate the continued risk to Iraqis that are viewed to co-operate with the Coalition. US officials have estimated that approximately 10 per cent of newly trained police officers are now working against the Coalition.

The discovery of armaments in the Sunni triangle suggests the presence of Former Regime Loyalists (FRPs) who may include members of the former Iraqi intelligence service M-14. Sources indicate that members of such an agency were highly trained and could possibly be providing assistance to insurgents throughout Iraq, particularly in Fallujah and elsewhere in the Sunni triangle. Indeed, comments by Paul Wolfowitz in recent days suggest that M-14 may have been involved in producing suicide vests even prior to the commencement of the Iraq war.

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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	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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