



25 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 been subject to 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 recognised by US President George W Bush in his speech of 24 May the security situation in Iraq is highly likely to worsen prior to and immediately after the handover of power to an interim but sovereign Iraqi government on 30 June. Coalition plans to push on with the handover, no matter what the cost in lives and damage to infrastructure, is unlikely to convince elements hostile to the Coalition to cease their attacks. Furthermore there is likely to be increased political stability not only because of militant attacks but also as Iraqi politicians jostle for power and influence in the new Iraqi administration, expected to be named later this week. Targeted assassinations against leading international, national and local political figures can be anticipated (as has been seen in Iraq in the past week). Personnel are advised to be cautious and vigilant if in the presence of political notables.

Attacks on security forces (including CF, Iraqi security forces, and private security contractors) will also increase in an effort by hostile elements to derail the political process. Attacks on significant infrastructure sites are likely (particularly related to oil production and shipment).

The raid on the residence of Ahmad Chalabi could be embarrassing for the US and potentially destabilising for the CPA. Chalabi's close links to the US' Iraq policy-making process in the run up to the war is well documented. Reasons for raiding his residence can only embarrass those figures seen close to Chalabi, most notably so-called neo-cons within the Pentagon. One US media report has claimed that US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld had not been informed of the raid in advance.

The raid could also be destabilising for the CPA ahead of the 30 June handover of power. It is claimed Chalabi was seeking to undermine the current and proposed Iraqi administrations. The raid yesterday will only encourage him to carry on doing so. One Interim Governing Council member Salama al-Khafaji, a Shia member of the council, claimed that he would resign unless Chalabi received a public apology. The new head of the IGC Ghazi Ail al-Yawer claimed he was astonished at what had happened. Perhaps of more

concern are attempts, already underway by Chalabi, to cast himself as a victim of US aggression. Immediately after his residence was raided he called for Iraq to be re-liberated, "Let my people go," he said. "It is time for the Iraqi people to run their affairs." He further claimed he was the US' best friend in Iraq and that "if the CPA finds it necessary to direct an armed attack against my home you can see the state of relations between the CPA and the Iraqi people." He even alleged a valuable edition of the Koran had been damaged in the raid.

### Summary

The controversy over the US attack on the village of Makr Al-Deeb looks set to continue with publication of video footage apparently showing the wedding shortly before the US attack. Exactly what occurred is not expected to be unravelled for some time and even then it will be keenly disputed. The incident has been widely reported in the Arab media as an attack on a wedding party and tragic images of young children being laid to rest have been distributed across Iraq and elsewhere in the region. The popular perception within Iraq will be that of anger and increased frustration (possibly hostility amongst some elements) towards the Coalition.

The confrontation with Moqtada al-Sadr and his loyalists has continued in the past few days. The CPA has discussed the terms it would consider negotiating with al-Sadr. CPA spokesman Dan Senor claimed that the only deal that could be concluded with al-Sadr would involve his surrender to face charges for the murder of Shi'a cleric Abdel-Majid Khoei, who was stabbed in April 2003. CF strategy in the last few days would support the notion that they are growing tired of the confrontation and are seeking a swift resolution. Further confinements on the cleric's movement have been instituted and an attack on a convoy of Sadr supporters may have been an attempt to permanently eradicate Iraq of the firebrand cleric.

The controversial raid on the residence of Ahmad Chalabi on 20 May might create further problems for the US and CPA in the near future. There have been suggestions Chalabi had been working to undermine the CPA and Interim Governing Council. However, the charges that he had supplied sensitive information to Iran are disturbing. Chalabi and Iran have both denied these allegations.

As if to underline the worsening relations with Iran, on 23 May foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi claimed Iran had issued a formal warning to the US with regards its policy in Iraq. It is particularly concerned with actions in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. The warning was passed through the Swiss embassy in Tehran because the US does not have representation in the country.

In addition to the above incidents, 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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	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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