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## Flashpoints

Baghdad, Baqouba, Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi, Najaf, Kirkuk, Mahawil

**The following highways and routes should be considered extremely hostile:**

- The Baghdad to Amman Highway remains particularly dangerous and should be avoided if at all possible. Indeed, 'The Group of Death' has issued a video warning in which it threatens to cut off Highway 10, the major supply route between Amman and Baghdad.
- The route from Saudi Arabia to Baghdad has been dangerous in recent days
- The route from Syria to Mosul in the north of Iraq has also proven dangerous in the past week
- 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.
- 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.

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

Sources indicate that the Imam Ali Mosque in the holy city of Najaf has been damaged in clashes between the US military and militiamen of the Mehdi Army. The extent of the damage to the Mosque that contains the shrine to the Prophet's Cousin and son-in-law is not clear as at the time of writing, nor is it clear who caused the damage. US and other Multinational Force (MNF) members are likely to be blamed for the attack. If the damage is confirmed it will have serious implications for security in areas of Shi'a dominance. Violence witnessed earlier this year between CF and the Mehdi Army might be repeated. Reports of significant activity in the Sadr City district of Baghdad suggest that potentially large-scale violence can be anticipated in the Iraqi capital. This may take the form of demonstrations or gatherings that are likely to focus on the International Zone (formerly the Green Zone).

It has been revealed that a small UN group will attend the forthcoming national conference that was postponed until mid-August amid security fears. The Conference will appoint the new interim Iraqi assembly and was scheduled to begin on 31 July. It is highly likely that the conference will be the focus of a large-scale prestige attack by groups operating within Iraq. The presence of the UN at the conference (to be protected by the MNF) together with increasing tensions between the MNF and the militiamen loyal to the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr are likely to only further increase the potential of attack and/or demonstration focussing on the conference. There are many capable hostile elements within Iraq although the most obvious at this time are those led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the al-Qaeda figurehead in Iraq. The delegates to the conference will select between 80 and 100 temporary or interim members of the National Assembly. The National council, once appointed will have a number of powers, including the veto over legislation. It will also have budgetary powers and act, in effect, as the Iraqi parliament. Despite the importance of the conference, a number of influential groups and individuals including Moqtada al-Sadr have refused to co-operate.

Allegations of increased communication between Musab al-Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden suggests that further large-scale attacks are planned. While details of the intelligence obtained by the US are unclear at this time, it is plausible that increased al-Qaeda-linked activity will occur. Furthermore, the anniversary of the attack against the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad will pass on 7 August and given that the Jordanian King has indicated his support of a Saudi initiative to create an Islamic Military force to deploy to Iraq, Jordanian targets and personnel in Iraq are at a greater risk of attack.

### Summary











The past 48 hours have witnessed significant violence throughout Iraq ranging from armed clashes to vehicle-borne suicide attacks. An increase in tensions between the followers of Moqtada al-Sadr and the MNF is apparent. Police stations and personnel have remained favoured targets of insurgents with attacks and assassinations leaving several dead in the past two days. In addition, rocket and mortar attacks have been evident, as has the use of Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Small Arms Fire (SAF), and the preferred Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

A message posted on an Islamist website has denied responsibility for the co-ordinated attacks on several churches in Baghdad and Mosul on 1 August. The statement read that, "If the mujahedeen had wanted to target those churches, they would have made them disappear from the face of earth and nobody would have come out alive." The statement appears to have been signed by three separate groups including The Islamic Army Brigades, The Shura Council of Jihad and the Jihad Battalions. The Jihad Battalions, reported to be based in Fallujah, is a group known to be made up of Sunni Muslims with links to al-Qaeda. It has sworn on several occasions not to carry out attacks on Iraq's emerging political figures. While little is known of the Islamic Army Brigades, it is thought that a group with a similar name is also operational in Fallujah too. Shura refers to the consultative council and may simply refer to a collection of religious and tribal resistance leaders, which may however indicate greater co-ordination and co-operation between groups.

**This is an abridged version of the AKE Iraq Security Briefing. For subscription information please contact [intel@akegroup.com](mailto:intel@akegroup.com) or +44 (0)20 7816 5454.**

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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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