



# Field Report: IRAQ

July 22, 2004

Centurion Risk Assessment Services

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## GENERAL SITUATION

Following the handover, the Iraqi Government has implemented security measures and is trying to curb attacks by insurgents. It has announced that new security laws are being implemented and 25,000 Kurdish Peshmerga militiamen are being deployed. The new government has announced an amnesty for attackers if they wish to use it; some have, as in some high-risk areas the violence has subsided.

Insurgents are still attacking oil and electricity stations and pipelines. Coalition forces believe inside information has been given to the insurgents as the attacks were precise and well planned.

Insurgents are now primarily composed of Baathists and Sunni Muslim extremists located in Samara, Fallujah, Baghdad and Ramadi areas.

Arab tribal leaders are being hired to assist in protecting local pipelines and other infrastructures.

Targeting of local officials continues with daily attempts on the lives of personnel associated with the new government. Some have been caught up in IED attacks and others in drive-by shootings and even a deliberate attack on a person's home.

The insurgents' plan seems to be to try and disrupt the new government as much as possible, by preventing the formation of the government and killing members as soon as they are appointed.

There have been reports that there may be an offensive in the form of a ground attack in the city and surrounding areas. This follows information given when attackers have been questioned.

Infighting between Islamic extremists and Moqtada al-Sadr's organisation seems to be spreading daily.

Reports also state that the area around Samarra north of Baghdad is where attackers receive training and organise their logistics.

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*Many thanks to Centurion advisors, media and others in Iraq for providing information for this Field Report.*

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This falls in with other reports that incidents around Samarra have declined in comparison with other areas, due to insurgents keeping a low profile whilst training. Hostile forces continue to attack targets of opportunity throughout Baghdad and other major cities and towns in Iraq.

Within five days there have been eight attacks on senior Iraqi government officials, some resulting in fatalities. One attack included the head of the Iraqi Olympic committee.

There have been reports that there may be an offensive in the form of a ground attack in the city and surrounding areas. This follows information given when attackers have been questioned. Infighting between Islamic extremists and Moqtada al-Sadr's organisation seems to be spreading daily.

Continuing attacks on Coalition forces will inevitably make them more jumpy and uneasy.

- ***Be very careful when approaching or dealing with Coalition forces, approach with caution and ensure that you make them aware that you are unarmed and pose no threat. Place your hands in the air if ordered to do so and obey all instructions.***

## VEHICLE & ROAD SECURITY

Turkish oil tanker drivers were attacked on the road between Samarra and Balad causing a vehicle to turn over and killing two of the drivers. The main road from Taji to Samarra is fraught with attacks and should, where possible, be avoided.

All vehicle travel in Iraq remains dangerous due to the high incidence of IEDs. Vehicle bombs continue to be planted, especially in the Green Zone, which is a cause of concern as security should be at its best in this area.

A Turkish truck company's convoy consisting of flatbeds carrying Coalition force equipment was ambushed on the road between Kirkuk and Tikrit but the drivers managed to escape.

The latest car bomb, estimated to contain 500kg of

explosives, killed 10 people and wounded 40 others. Collateral damage to surrounding buildings and vehicles was severe. Most of the casualties were reported to be local police and from the National Guard.

Grenades are still being thrown at Coalition convoys, and attacks, even on a small scale, are still being carried out on the congested routes in and around Baghdad.

Attacks on known routes in Basra are more frequent. Attackers there usually want the vehicles so tend to use small arms to stop the vehicles and not RPGs or IEDs.

## AIR TRAVEL/AIRPORT ROAD

The road to the airport remains heavily patrolled by Coalition forces. However, as previous reports have stated, IEDs are still common in this area. If travelling frequently along this route, change your timings, alter your route where possible, change vehicles, keep a low profile and above all remain vigilant and aware.

There are threats that insurgents will be targeting aircraft in the near future.

## KIDNAPPINGS

Kidnappings and abductions still occur throughout Iraq, targeting anyone from middle class locals to the more rewarding targets such as Westerners.

The body of a local police chief murdered after being taken hostage was found at a local market.

Latest kidnaps include Bulgarians, an Egyptian, Pakistanis and workers from the Philippines.

The latest hostage incidents include six threatened with execution if companies working for Kuwait do not pull out and cease operations. This seems to be the trend with the majority of hostages being taken. Some countries and companies refuse totally to cease operations in Iraq, resulting inevitably in the death of that hostage.

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Two kidnappings have occurred recently against local families, with the sons being held. Reports state these kidnappings are money-related.

A group calling itself "Islamic Army in Iraq" has threatened to behead its hostages if their countries do not withdraw and cease working with Coalition forces.

An insurgent group said it had taken two Kenyans, three Indians and an Egyptian hostage. "The Holders of the Black Banners" said they had taken the six truckers hostage and would behead one of them every 72 hours if their nations did not pull out of Iraq and the company they work for did not close its branch in Iraq. The deadline started from 8 p.m. Wednesday, it said.

"We have warned all the countries, companies, businessmen and truck drivers that those who deal with American cowboy occupiers will be targeted by the fires of the Mujahedin," the group's statement said. "Here you are once again transporting, goods, weapons and military equipment that backs the U.S. Army."

## IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)

Daily IED attacks continue, varying from suicide bombers to well-planned, planted devices.

Roadside bombs continue to be used by local insurgents and they are killing and wounding people on a daily basis. Some of the IEDs that have exploded and ones that have been found and defused are a lot larger than previously used.

**The insurgents are using ribbons, hanging large stones or attaching shoes off road-side cables to mark the location of a possible IED. Vigilance and keen observation skills are required in order to by pass these areas safely.**

IEDs are being stored in any vehicle that can possibly be used for the attack - from saloon cars (which would be very hard to spot and search) to large fuel tankers. A fuel tanker fitted with an IED makes a very large bomb. These will, as usual, target official residences, Coalition forces' positions, the

Green Zone and concentrated areas where personnel and traffic are possibly queuing for documentation, jobs or passports.

Four masked attackers planted explosives at five alcohol shops after blocking off a road. Once they detonated them they killed a local taxi driver who happened to be passing at that time.

Coalition forces reckon only 50% of IEDs are successful as they are either detonated too early or too late.

Reports indicate a definite increase in smuggling weapons and munitions, etc in all areas and especially with the capture of smugglers transporting TNT and other explosives. Some 1,500kg of TNT and 6,000 phosphoric capsules and electric devices were found in one shipment destined for the use of IEDs. Most of these supplies are reported to be coming in from Iran into the north east of Iraq.

**Most IEDs are still being disguised as anything from drink cans, wrecked cars, gas cylinders, inside "false" rocks, strapped to bridge supports and buried in the road.**

## BUILDING SECURITY

**Westerners residing in the area around the hotel complexes will soon be without security when the resident security firm moves out.**

**The Mayor of Baghdad wants the removal of all concrete security barriers on roads, thus opening all the roads around the hotels.**

**This is a drastic move and will increase the overall threat to the hotels and all residing in the immediate area. Security companies are looking at alternatives.**

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## OTHER INCIDENTS

There has been a major sweep for criminals and terrorists throughout local areas netting approximately 500 people suspected of crimes ranging from kidnapping to murder.

A local translator working for the US forces was found stabbed and dumped in a river.

Petty crime is on the increase in and around Basra. With frequent attempts to hijack vehicles, most drivers speed through the area to avoid any attempted attack. These criminals are reported to hide under bridges and are said to be tipped off by roadside vendors that a convoy is passing.

Attackers continue to target such places as police stations and government offices. Numerous arrests have proved to be successful after tip-offs from locals, resulting in the seizure of IED-making kit. Those arrested all had attack plans with them.

Forty-seven people were arrested for possessing false passports. All were thought to be attempting to leave the country for training in order to return and carry out terrorist attacks in Iraq.

The discovery of a 94mm LAW (Light Anti-tank Weapon) is very significant as these weapons are far more lethal and newer than RPGs.

Power and fuel locations and sites in Baghdad look as if they will come under threat and possible attack over the next few months to cause popular dissatisfaction with the government.

Attacks in Mosul are still common with the latest attacks against the Coalition forces and National Guardsmen. IEDs are common incidents in Mosul as roadside bombs continue to be detonated. Police stations are still being targeted.

Reports of foreign fighters from Chechnya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Afghanistan continue. There is concern, especially in the south, where some are believed to be moving towards the Basra area.

A Jordanian truck driver was ambushed and killed in the Fallujah/Ramadi area. He was shot, severely beaten and his eyes were removed.

Some 25,000 Peshmerga are reported to be going to Mosul, Kirkuk and Baghdad to consolidate security against terrorist actions.

Weapons and munitions are continually being smuggled over the Iraq/Iran border to the Basra area. These include AK47s, RPGs, ammunition and IED equipment. It is unclear whether they are for commercial use or for terrorist operations.

RPGs are still being used extensively throughout either as back-up firepower to the initial IED detonation or to instigate ambushes on convoys.

A pipeline from Kirkuk to Turkey was severely damaged by an explosion, resulting in a large fire and cessation of the flow of oil.

There are numerous reports that Islamic extremists, Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters are increasingly at odds with each other.

Italy has again been threatened with car bombs if Italian troops are not withdrawn.

Several Iraqis who were working for Coalition forces have been found dead, with one or two eyes gouged out and their hands severed.

Reports state that four tons of explosives, 20 missile launchers and 550 other weapons were confiscated during a week-long search.

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## PERSONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

Reports from several sources indicate that Haifa Street in Baghdad should be avoided at all costs as there is a high risk to civilians as well as Coalition forces.

**Terrorist surveillance is still at a high with numerous daily reports from many clients and sources stating they are being followed or they are aware of deliberate surveillance by people on foot or in vehicles.**

**NGOs, aid agency staff and workers remain exposed in the Kirkuk and Irbil areas, from Islamic extremist groups, especially as these people have "low key" security status.**

Due to the increase of IEDs and other explosions in and around concentrated areas in built-up regions, it has been advised that if any Westerners are travelling in these areas, they should think about wearing an **ear defender** (foam insert into ear) on your ear towards the exterior of the vehicle and also some form of **eye protection** (in the form of safety glasses).

The reason for this is because most injuries are sustained by passers-by or Westerners who are not directly involved with the explosion, but are in the general vicinity and suffer injuries to the ears and eyes caused by the loud detonation and also from fragmentation/shrapnel injuries to the eyes and face.

In such incidents like IEDs injuries are also occurring to personnel travelling with their arms outside the windows. Keeping your arms inside the vehicle will lessen the likelihood of these injuries.

**Impersonation is rife in Iraq at present with the object of trying to lure Westerners into ambushes or kidnappings. Check all people out as much as possible and check IDs before meeting with Iraqis or personnel either to enhance the situation in your specific area or to conduct a report. Do not be tempted to stop off at roadside cafes, street vendors for soft drinks or any other produce.**

There was a recent incident where a Western media person did this and as the person walked out from the café three terrorists approached the café owner and asked him what religion the person was and where they were from. The café owner obviously knew the person was an American but told the terrorists the person was from Lebanon. Quick thinking by the café owner possibly saved the life of the American but this shows that you just don't know who is watching you.

**Be aware that if setting up to film or report you need to have an increased awareness all around you including above you.**

Recently, a film crew were establishing themselves in order to report after an incident when a grenade was deliberately dropped on them from above. One of the crew suffered injuries from shrapnel in the face, shoulder and legs and is in hospital being treated for these wounds. The rest of the crew managed to flee and seek immediate cover before it exploded. **Once work is completed, stay in your residence and do not go out at night.**

The overall feeling is that fighting will increase now the handover has been completed in order to disrupt the government and undermine local rule. As with all built-up areas, the potential for a close quarters attack using small arms, RPGs and grenades remains very high.

**Specific threats remain and include:**

- **Assassination**
- **Hostage taking**
- **Threat and attacks against infrastructures**
- **Assassination against Iraqi politicians from large scale attacks and ambushes**
- **Criminal activities**
- **Assault against any foreign company and workers**
- **Rocket, mortar, small arms and IED attacks**
- **Attacks against Kurdish political groups.**

*The help of Centurion advisors, media personnel and others in Iraq for contributing information for this Field Report is very much appreciated and essential for the safety of all operating in Iraq.*