



Field Report: IRAQ

April 30, 2004

Centurion Risk Assessment Services

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Welcome to our latest security Field Report from Centurion advisors in Iraq, now presented in a new, interactive format. Click on the green section headings, at left, to go straight to that item. We hope you find this new format easier to use and, as always, look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Paul Rees

Director

General situation

Assaults on civilians and contract personnel continue to increase, with attacks from vehicle car bombs and suicide bombers. Attacks against personnel employed by Coalition forces have extended to areas where once there was no violence reported. These attacks continue to be fraught with fatalities and serious injuries.

Attacks continue to be mainly directed at Coalition forces, with intense battles in Najaf and stand-offs in Fallujah.

Some of the worst fighting in Fallujah since hostilities began three weeks ago took place this week, even though a ceasefire was supposed to be in place.

Weapons and munitions are still being smuggled to fighters in the main areas, even with the Coalition forces' security cordons set up. Numerous casualties and fatalities have mounted on both sides and will increase with the "threat" of the Coalition hand-over.

Public support has swung away from the Coalition forces and the insurgents are enjoying a lot of support, even from the moderate Shi'ites who see only sensational pictures from the media portraying heavy military tactics against innocent people.

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

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VEHICLE SECURITY

Some companies have suspended convoys on the main highways due to continuous threats and attacks. Continuous assessments need to be made of the situation, especially on the main routes in and out of Baghdad including the road to the international airport.

Companies are also using armoured saloon-type cars rather than the armoured vehicles that bear resemblance to the forces' vehicles, thus reducing attacks on themselves.

Car hijackings continue to increase with daily occurrences being reported by most personnel throughout Iraq. These often take place with the use of vehicles overtaking the target vehicle, then slowing to a halt, thus forcing the target vehicle to slow. Other hijackers' vehicles then move in and block the way, making escape virtually impossible.

Remain alert and very calm, comply with hijackers' wishes

If this does occur, the advice is to remain alert and very calm. Remember, these hijackers are armed and will use their weapons if needed.

If you are stopped, comply with their wishes. After all, they may just make a quick search and be on their way. However, expect the worse, so remain calm and listen to their commands. Do not argue; do not antagonise them. If they tell you to vacate the vehicle – do so. In several recent incidents the hijack victims have told the truth about who they are and who they work for. After some shouting and searching the victims were released and told to go on their way.

However, expect problems if the target vehicle has Americans on board or if someone is carrying a weapon. This will increase the risk to the occupants and may well result in severe injuries or fatalities.

Terrorists have been known to stop vehicles, find satellite phones and then accuse the occupants of being spies and insinuate that they are talking to helicopters and aircraft who then target their houses.

For clients using armed advisors or security personnel on board vehicles with their crews it is strongly recommended they assess their vehicle procedures and if necessary drop the weapon role or use additional vehicles as back-up. **This is a serious threat to safety from the armed assailants to any personnel travelling in Iraq.**

Join large convoys to reduce the risks

Armed hijackings are still reported on the usual route between Baghdad and Amman, even with the more commonly seen Coalition forces setting up "snap" roadblocks or cordons. The attackers immediately depart until they hear that the forces have left the area. They then return and continue their attacks and ambushes. The road from the city to the airport continues to be attacked and fraught with problems from small arms attacks to pre-planned IEDs (improvised explosive devices).

These areas should be avoided at all costs until security measures from the Coalition forces improve on a more continuous basis. This obviously increases the problems of movement in and out of Baghdad especially when changing crews, etc.

Personnel travelling to and from the airport are taking a chance and on most occasions get through without any serious problems. Ideally, to cut down on possible attacks, personnel and organisations should liaise with each other and make one convoy run with as many people as possible, hopefully reducing the increased risks to them if travelling as individuals. The road to the airport remains a high risk. It is recommended to try and parallel around to the north to get to the airport.

People have been using the minor roads but have reported "local police" stopping all vehicles. People have noticed that these "local police" do not have any IDs and are not in uniform. These minor roads are obviously busy and become choke points ideal for would-be attackers or kidnappers.

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Several convoys have been attacked, both civilian and military, by the normal means of IEDs followed by RPG rounds and small arms fire, usually from AK-47s.

Trucks have been stolen on numerous occasions, ranging from stores trucks, munitions trucks and fuel trucks. Even with armed security from the Coalition forces on board, the attackers are still capable of halting these convoys.

Numerous and various vehicles continue to be stolen and fitted with IEDs ready for deployment against the Coalition forces. When operating in vehicles near the Coalition forces, identify your vehicle in some manner with either **TV** or **Press** taped on the roof and sides.

AIR TRAVEL

The threat of attacks on all aircraft including fixed-wing and rotary aircraft continues, and this will remain a major threat to everyone travelling on internal flights. However, due to the main overland routes being under attack or cordoned off by the Coalition forces, air travel may be the only option at present.

Coalition aircraft including Apache helicopters are still being brought down on occasions by sustained small arms fire and these aircraft are partially armed, so soft-skinned aircraft won't stand much chance if heavy gunfire is used.

If and when these attacks on aircraft occur, they will be totally unexpected so the decision to travel on aircraft to speed insertion in and extraction from Baghdad is down to the individual's personal risk assessment, weighing up the odds to either travel by road – which could involve ambushes or robbery and also potential injury to all passengers travelling from Jordan to Baghdad.

Again, this is down to the individual's assessment with the advisor's advice, but remember it may be worth ceasing rotations and delaying travel until another day. Assess the threat frequently, adjust your plans, and remember plans need to remain very flexible in the current volatile situation.

Internal flights have lifted the baggage allowance but seats are hard to obtain with so many people using aircraft rather than the roads. Booking well in advance is recommended.

KIDNAPPINGS

Due to the number of kidnappings over the last four weeks, please see Annex A at the end of this report for detailed advice about what to do if you fall victim.

Kidnappings continue, with targets mainly being anyone who looks to be non-Iraqi. The risk of being taken if in the wrong place at a specific time is bad luck. However, there are groups in Iraq selecting targets, due to the victim's routine. If they see that you have a set routine, making you an easy target, then be prepared to be lifted.

Several Westerners have been released after being taken at gunpoint, and most of their ordeals amounted to death threats as being suspected spies.

Reports continue to state that some local police are cooperating with armed assailants and setting up vehicle checkpoints. On stopping vehicles, they then hand all occupants across to armed hijackers.

In most follow-up reports hostages have stated that they appear to have been taken to a rural area, placed in a room blindfolded and then questioned for several hours. The hijackers shout at them and accuse them of being spies for the US forces. The hijackers also bombard the hostage with religious questions about God, the Bible and their beliefs.

On all reports that our advisor has had the privilege to be present at, victims state that they all stuck to the truth and told the hijackers which religion they believed in, no matter what verbal threats they received from the hijackers.

In all cases the victims said they themselves remained calm, (even though it was a frightening experience), remained polite, answered all questions and stuck to the truth.

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IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)

These continue to be hidden alongside roadsides and in numerous shapes and disguises. As usual, utmost vigilance is required. Do not take anything for granted in any shape or form, even attractive items – leave them all well alone.

Daily incidents are being reported of military vehicles getting caught up in IEDs. Remember, these can be detonated from a long way off if remotely controlled and if the media/NGOs are part of that convoy, you may be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It has been reported that some vehicles are travelling around with their windows down. Be aware that there was an incident recently when a grenade was thrown through one of the windows as the vehicles had to slow down to negotiate a contra-flow system. When approaching these potential areas, it is advisable to wind up all windows and lock all doors until speed is increased.

Be vigilant at all times and never take anything for granted.

OTHER INCIDENTS

Hand grenades continue to be used on open vehicles, and are also being thrown from heights on to passing Coalition patrols.

Fuel trucks have been attacked and left at the side of the roads. The fuel has been stolen and sold, allegedly with local police cooperation.

The recent shooting of a white South African security person was fairly significant as this person, while out shopping in the district of A'Damiyah – a bad area – should not have been there in the first place. Other foreigners use Iraqis to shop for them in areas such as these, reducing the personal risk to themselves.

Incidents regarding illegal fuel smuggling continue and are continually reported throughout the country.

Trucks with ammunition continue to breach the Coalition forces' cordons and vehicle control points in order to re-supply the armed groups. Several vehicles that have been spotted have been detained and found to be carrying anything from small arms to large artillery shells.

Police stations continue to be targeted by armed attackers, resulting in numerous deaths in each incident.

PERSONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

Westerners have been restricted recently to their bureaus and hotels and not allowed out due to the threats on the streets. Stringers and locals have been collating pictures and news stories around the country and at present that seems to be working, especially in places such as Fallujah, where they are able to blend in where a Western face would incur risk.

Evacuation plans should be up to date, in place and tested in case of emergencies.

On-site awareness and first aid training should be implemented and all equipment should be checked on a regular basis.

Some of the following information has been published before but we believe with the increase of “new” Westerners going into Iraq afresh it needs to be repeated:

When living in this environment it is necessary to follow a few basic rules so that all working and living in Iraq remain as secure and as safe as possible. The advice is not designed to make your life more difficult.

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Awareness:

- Do not become complacent about your surroundings.
- Avoid setting patterns.
- Avoid cafes, restaurants and places frequented by other Westerners.
- Do not wear clothing with media logos (unless the situation allows).
- Do not discuss plans in local places.
- Be sensitive to local customs and habits.
- Always be observant for people following you either on foot or in vehicles.
- Always expect the unexpected.
- If it looks suspicious, it probably is.
- When visiting bomb threat areas, always be aware of secondary devices; if possible, film and report from a distance.
- Do not pick up any attractive item unless you have just dropped it – it could be an IED.
- Do not take any unnecessary risks.
- Be aware of all personnel approaching you even with a friendly attitude.
- Plan all news gathering operations and ask your security advisor for input – DON'T BE PROUD!

With ongoing attacks on all Coalition forces and anyone from the Western world, including locals seen assisting and being employed by the media, incidents have not decreased.

With the increasing attacks on the known stretches of highway it is seriously worth considering NOT using those routes but seeking alternatives where possible.

All personnel deploying or deployed in Iraq should be medically trained and conversant with all items in the first aid kits carried.

What is of concern to everyone staying or accommodated in the areas of the main hotels is what will happen on the proposed handover date of June 30? Do the Americans hand over and pull out of the complex?

No one knows for sure but advice is:

- Be prepared for worsening events.
- Ensure you have an evacuation plan.
- Ensure all emergency drills and procedures are rehearsed and adhered to.
- Ensure each person has an emergency grab bag with the essentials.
- Have a safe house to go to in case of emergencies (these safe houses can be provided for all media, NGOs and aid companies) so all may have access to others bureaus and houses in cases of emergencies.
- Have transport ready, fuelled up and kitted out with essentials like food, water, first aid kits and spare fuel in case of long journeys to escape potential trouble.

No one knows from one day to another where trouble will erupt next. Even with their contacts on the ground, that applies to our advisors just as it does to anyone else. After the violent events of the past four weeks, the feeling seems to calmer. But no one knows for sure, so be prepared!

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INCIDENT

An incident occurred in the Fallujah area involving four members of a company (two Iraqis and two Westerners) who were forced to slow their vehicle down to walking pace due to heavy pedestrian traffic. Once these four people were spotted in the vehicle, 20 heavily armed men surrounded the vehicle and took all four prisoner.

They were taken to a building in Karmah and the two Westerners were interrogated together and then separately. There was an English-speaking person along with the armed group who translated what the two Westerners said. The translator was told to say that if any of the party turned out to be American then all four would be killed. It was also stated that if any weapons were found then this would be taken as proof that they were spies.

Both Westerners denied being American and they also claimed to be married and were allowed to stay together. The main reason for the survival of the captives was the strength and courage of the two Iraqi employees. The driver, who was from the general area, was able to discuss the local leaders and events and told the armed assailants that he was a taxi driver showing the two journalists what the American forces were doing to innocent people of Fallujah. The armed captors were prepared to phone around and check any of these stories given by the captives.

About 45 minutes later the group moved everyone to another location due to shelling in the immediate vicinity. At the new location there was more questioning but this was in a more friendly and subtle manner. This went on for approximately three hours before they were finally released.

Due to good staff, their identities and a plausible cover story all of them survived and were released.

If you have any safety information or hear of events that have occurred in Iraq and feel it may assist others, please e-mail us and state whether you wish your name to be used with it or not.

APPENDIX: ADVICE ON KIDNAPPINGS

HOSTAGE TAKING/ABDUCTION

Risk

Every hostage or kidnapping situation is different. There are no hard and fast rules to follow on how you should cope, react or behave. However, there are a number of advisory measures that you can apply to minimise the effects of detention and enhance your ability to cope and see the incident through, hopefully to a successful release.

Religious and political extremist groups are often relentless in the pursuit of their goals. The risk of abduction by terrorist groups has been heightened by media coverage of recent events, as shown recently in Iraq.

A broad risk assessment strategy will greatly enhance an individual's and/or group's ability to avoid being taken hostage.

Your only job is to survive in this situation.

Who are the victims?

Any Westerner operating and working in Iraq could become a hostage. The odds are usually extremely low. However, in Iraq at present anyone could be the next target.

Hostages can be taken depending on employment, location, and threats.

If you feel you are personally in danger of being kidnapped you should be cautious about being in areas where you are unprotected and vulnerable. Security personnel enhance the security to yourself, however all personnel remain vulnerable especially in a well planned, rehearsed armed kidnap by a large attacking force.

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Abduction

Shock of abduction is an immense psychological problem. It is an aspect that terrorists will try to maintain for as long as possible, and is commonly climaxed by being exposed to gunfire and violence.

Pre-Departure Checklist

For any Westerner travelling to Iraq it is strongly recommended to sort out the administration on the following prior to departure:

- Wills
- Emergency Financial Funding
- Current and correct insurance policies
- Benefits and how will they be paid
- Safe and secure repository for all important papers
- Power of attorney.

Family Preparation Checklist

- Talk to next of kin
- Actions family should take in the event of you being seized
- Coping strategies
- Role adjustment
- Independence increased
- Children's emotional problems
- Children's education
- Long-term hostage status
- Reactions of family to hostage statements
- Provisions to support family
- Family resources for support

Initial capture by abductors

No one can tell an individual whether he or she should resist or not if taken hostage. The decision rests entirely with each person's own calculated assessment of the circumstances. Resisting the attempt may be extremely risky. You may be injured or killed if you do attempt to resist armed individuals.

Therefore it is HIGHLY recommended that you **do not attempt to fight back** as the initial stage of the abduction is the most dangerous.

Physical takeover will be accompanied by

- Noise
- Commotion
- Possible shooting
- Physical abuse

or

- Whole event could be quiet and a simple announcement could be made from one person.
- For the first few minutes, try to stay calm as this is a crucial time.
- Encourage others to remain calm by talking to them in a soft manner.
- Kidnappers may also be nervous and possibly scared.
- Comply with captor(s) instructions.
- If shooting occurs, stay as low as possible.
- Remain alert at all times, even when the situation is really bad.

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Individual Kidnapping

Location of Capture:

- Private residence
- Place of business
- Public building
- Street, car park, café or restaurant
- Vehicle (stationary or moving)
- Rural and urban
- Domestic and/or foreign.

Moment of capture, could be:

- Hour; day or night
- Brief or protracted
- Witnessed or un-witnessed

In Iraq, from the latest reports, hostages have been taken off the street by passing vehicles or even stopped by local police at checkpoints and handed over to the terrorist groups.

Overpowering of Hostage

- Physical act
- Constructive act
- Planned/unplanned (usually planned, however in 50% of incidents it has been by opportunists)
- Resistance/non-resistance
- Violent/non-violent
- Injuries/no injuries depends on if you offer resistance
- Property (cameras, personal items) damaged/undamaged.

Mode of Seizure

- Can be by force
- By trickery and fear
- Use of firearms
- After use of explosives
- By use of other types of weapons
- Group action (reports mention that in some areas local police are stopping Westerners then handing them over to the terrorists)

The initial phase of the kidnapping provides the best opportunity to escape, if you make that assessment, remembering that you may be able to outrun the captors but you can't outrun a bullet. If they do capture you after your attempt to escape, be prepared for severe physical abuse.

If in a public area at the time of abduction, cause as much commotion as possible

You may be:

- Blindfolded
- Physically attacked (to cause unconsciousness)
- Forced to lie down
- Try not to struggle
- Calm yourself mentally
- Control your breathing
- Your body will be shocked, take control.

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- Concentrate on surviving
- Employ your mind by taking in information
- Try to memorise and picture the route being taken (most recent hostages believed they were taken to a rural area such as a farm)
- Take note of smells, time spent, use senses other than sight.

Shock of Capture

- Preserve the shock of abduction if possible
- Try to hide signs of inner tension, fidgeting and perspiration, etc.

Intimidation

Begins with abduction and includes the period of taking control and establishing authority. This can be one of the scariest moments, and confusing; stay calm.

Usually the most terrifying and violent stage for the hostage and also remembering that the hostage-takers' adrenalin will be at a high and they will also be on edge and possibly scared.

The abductor(s) may be most violent and brutal during the initial effort to gain rapid control.

Intimidation will fade when:

- Abductors have control (usually done by hooding and silencing their victims).
- They are unchallenged, and their plan is unfolding with few complications.

Captors may separate individuals from the group. Reasons are:

- Citizenship
- Sex
- Race
- Beliefs

Violence

Acts of violence to hostages with or without apparent causes will usually occur. Acts may consist of:

- Yelling
- Screaming
- Shoving
- Ordering
- Hitting
- Beatings
- Torturing
- EVEN Murder

Acts of violence for following reasons:

- Make seriousness of the situation vividly apparent to the hostages.
- Prevent counteraction by hostages.
- Serve as an example of what will happen if you do not comply.
- Reduce their own tensions/frustrations.
- Public showing on video, TV etc, if demands are not met.

Additional Actions

- Passports may be confiscated and inspected.
- Luggage and personal possessions will be ransacked and searched.

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Additional Actions

- Passports may be confiscated & inspected.
- Luggage and personal possessions will be ransacked & searched.
- The reasons for your abduction may not be apparent at this stage, but as mentioned already, anyone in Iraq is vulnerable.
 - If ordered or forced to maintain a body position, e.g. lying face down on the floor, talk yourself into relaxing into the position (you may be there for some time).
 - Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for a long ordeal (a shorter period is a bonus).
 - Do not attempt to hide your passport or belongings.
 - If addressed by abductors, respond in a regulated manner, and be polite. You will obviously detest them at this time, but remain polite!
 - Use the time to observe characteristics and behaviour of captors.
 - Allocate nicknames to individuals, remember what you have been advised from the training you have received.
 - Notice their dress, facial features and temperaments (observe discreetly).
 - If singled out, be responsive, polite, but do not volunteer information.

Roles of a Hostage

Hostages play certain roles that are crucial and specific to each stage. Played properly, these will enhance the chance of survival.

It will improve treatment, and enable the hostage to cope better with the stress of captivity.

Conditioning

Captors will know from the outset that all captives will be unwilling to cooperate, so therefore captors will attempt to change the captives' minds by a process called conditioning.

Aims of Conditioning

Process is to weaken the hostage by making them worry and feel insecure.

Cutting them off from support usually from colleagues and from friends, the process is normally by blind-folding them and placing them in separate rooms (however, from recent reports 80% of all captives have been in same room).

Reducing and lowering the captives' physical and mental condition (this will inevitably take time).

Process of Conditioning

Conditioning process may be applied to hostages through their surroundings, by direct assault on their minds and physical pressures, or by a combination of all three.

Self Induced Pressure (on hostage)

- Fear of the unknown
- Torture
- Feeling of failure
- Worry of family
- Guilt
- Mistrust of colleagues
- Loneliness
- Lack of guidance
- The possibility of death.

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System Induced Conditioning (forced on hostages)

- Unaccustomed to routine
- Discipline
- Diet
- Physical tiredness
- Confinement
- Filthy, squalid conditions
- Lack of news
- Atmosphere of ruthlessness
- Deprivation of sleep
- Mental fatigue

Physical Conditioning

- Torture
- Physical discomfort
- Handcuffing
- Trussing
- Caging
- Made to sit or stand in uncomfortable positions for long periods
- Deprived of water and food (when fed, food may look disgusting, but take what you are given)
- Lack of medical attention

Stages of adjustment to captivity

1st stage (seconds to minutes):

- Startle and panic (enforced by gunfire, shouting and abuse)
- Victims immediately feel intensely fearful
- Defenceless
- Confused
- State of panic
- Leads to frozen fright (attempt to try and overcome).

2nd stage (minutes to hours):

- Startle and panic fade rapidly
- Gives way to denial
- Numbing
- Sense of disbelief
- Intimidation
- Kidnappers establish their authority and control by violence and beatings.

3rd stage (hours to days):

- Hostages may have few feelings due to last stage
- Become extremely wary
- Acutely vigilant
- Attentive to small details

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4th stage (days to weeks):

- Captors will attempt to make you comply
- Require information for exploitation/propaganda purposes
- Captive should develop a more sophisticated, flexible resistance posture
- Boredom will develop, and abductors may also be bored, so remember to comply with their instructions, as you do not want to give them any excuse to start taking their frustrations and boredom out on you.

5th stage (weeks to months):

- Isolation or solitary confinement proves difficult to handle due to:
 - Loss of freedom
 - Your future
 - Loss of contact with loved ones
 - Everything you value in life
- Watch out for signs of depression and despair.

6th stage (months to years):

- Final stage of adjustment
- Begin to realise and accept that rescue is not imminent
- Living from day to day
- Small things take on great importance
- Make daily events such as eating, cleaning, toilet functions, etc. longer to complete to pass time
- Establish and stick to a schedule
- Boredom will result
- Despair will result.

Options open to the captors when questioning

- Conceit
- Monotonous
- Self-justification
- Apparently foolish behaviour
- Revenge
- Show of knowledge
- Rewards
- Appeal for help
- Dilemma questions
- Confirmation
- Guilt complex
- They will also use material found in your possessions, letters from loved ones, pictures of your family, etc to try to intimidate you and threaten you.

Methods of Questioning

- Deprivation of sleep
- Constant alertness
- Humiliation
- Isolation
- Harassment (latest reports from freed hostages state that most questions to them were about religion. One person was even tested on questions relating to the Bible).

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Hostages will normally:

- Appreciate exoneration from guilt
- Appreciate flattery
- Forget lessons in security and training
- Appreciate kindness and respond to it
- Seek comfort
- Feel the urge to confess
- Rationalise acts which he or she feels guilt
- Resents having a colleague bullied
- Show difference to a superior authority
- Moral will be affected.

Do not sign anything.

If Interrogated

- Retain a sense of pride
- Be cooperative
- When asked a question, answer it as truthfully as you can and stick by your answer
- Do not antagonise your interrogator with obstinate behaviour, remembering you are a civilian and not a military person, you have nothing to hide and no state secrets to protect.

Additional Points

- If kept alive you may be needed for negotiation and bargaining to obtain ransom or exchange of prisoners or for demands.
- One of your colleagues may be shot. It will be painful, emotional especially if they make you witness the incident.
- The captors' behaviour may change for the worse especially in the demanding stage of things with the Coalition forces, etc.
- Settle into the location/positions quickly and try to relax. You need your strength and wits about you at all times.
- Keep your mind active by remaining alert and observant, try to look for the time on assailants' wrist-watches, try to pick up any familiar words, etc.
- Exercise your memory, think positive, pleasant thoughts, think about survival and seeing your family again
- Keep track of time if possible.
- Look for patterns of behaviour from your captors, who is the "bully", who is the "nice guy" (without getting caught!)
- Identify weaknesses or vulnerabilities.
- If there is an opportunity to escape it is up to you as individual whether to take it or not, remembering that escape for yourself may result in severe torture or death to your colleagues.
- Remain cooperative.
- Attempt to establish rapport with captors or guards (if the "friendliness" is right).
- If a level of communication is achieved, try asking for items that may increase your personal comfort, e.g. food, water, etc, but DO NOT push your luck!
- Make them aware of your needs, e.g. water, etc.
- Stay physically active, even if your movement is extremely restricted, just like the passenger aircraft advice, move your feet, ankles, legs, etc.

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If there are other hostages present try to establish communication, but do not get caught! (If working together for a long time, cough as you would normally do, colleagues will recognise this and find it a comfort).

If you are hostile to the captors this inevitably will lead to physical abuse, torture or prolonged capture.

Think positive.

Maintain your dignity and do not compromise your integrity.

Communication - this means:

- Talking
- Listening
- Moving
- Gesturing
- Smiling
- Nodding

(only when assailants “promote” you to).

Enduring Captivity - Overview

Fear and Anxiety

● Fear can result in paralysis and inappropriate reaction – try to stay on top of things and above all, stay alert.

Boredom and despair

- Two worst psychological problems of long-term captives.
- Imagination can become your worst enemy - leads to excessive, non-productive worry.
- Dwells on catastrophic outcomes.

Guilt

- Emanates from feelings and failure (try to ignore it).
- Based on irrational belief.
- Produces self-recrimination, negativism and depression.

Fatalism

● Individuals are not usually aware that their attitudes are affecting events around them (get rid of them and think positive and survival)

Pain

- Results from high stress load (and not forgetting beatings if advice above is not heeded!)
- Usually psychosomatic unless there is actual injury.
- Pain often abates or disappears when the stress level has been lowered.

Psychiatric Symptoms

- Overwhelming fear of going crazy (especially if aggression is continuous).
- Severe depression (possibly due to guilt, etc)
- Auditory and visual long term hallucinations.

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Belief Systems

- Positive mental attitude
- Knowledge - other hostages, believe in their survival as well as yours.
- Beliefs
- Religious values – instilled by your true religion (in two recent cases in Iraq this has secured the release of two hostages).

Stockholm Syndrome

Occurs when captive, due to close proximity and constant pressures involved, begins to relate to, and empathise with the captors, usually after a long period of captivity. In some cases, results in the captive joining and participating in the activities of the group.

Play the “GREY PERSON”

- The best policy for any hostage is to concentrate on becoming a nonentity.
- Do not stand out to the captors.
- Do not be unresponsive.
- Avoid any action or activity, which may bring attention from the captors.
- Maintain a low profile.
- Comply with orders from hostage takers.

Rescue

- By rescue team (possible only if location is known to rescuers – do not count on it)
- By negotiations (will be rare in Iraq – do not count on them)
- Hijackers may surrender (not in Iraq)
- Hijackers may abandon their mission (not in Iraq)

If rescued by rescue team:

- Initial rescue will be noisy
- Chaotic
- Possible shooting
- Possible use of stun-grenades
- If shots are heard drop to the floor and stay there
- If instructed by rescue team to move, do so quickly
- Put your hands in the air or behind your head
- Do not make any sudden moves
- Expect to be treated roughly and hands to be tied
- You will be treated like this until determined by the rescue team that you are the hostage.

Cost

- Psychological cost to hostage
- Psychological cost to intimates of hostage
- Psychological cost to community
- Economic cost to hostage
- Economic cost to intimates of hostage
- Economic cost to community
- Economic cost of response
- Damage to international relations

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Aids to Surviving

- Religious faith
- Pride
- Personal honour
- Integrity
- Discipline
- Loyalty
- Physical fitness
- Mental fitness
- Self-discipline
- Knowledge
- Belief

Tips

- Be patient
- Remain calm
- Try not to show fear
- Do not be confrontational
- Cooperate with captor(s)
- Do as you are told
- Comply with reasonable demands
- Do not act as captor(s) accomplice
- Make mental pictures of your captor(s), weapons and any other information
- Do not be a hero (definitely not worth it)
- Do not act tough
- Do not antagonise the captor(s)
- Do not succumb to their obvious attempts to make you lose your temper
- Do not display emotions
- Do not get involved in arguments
- Be humble, submissive, mild, and polite
- Try to obtain the captors' respect
- If you have strong accent (other than American), use it to your advantage. This happened with a person who had a very dominant Irish accent, it assisted his release.
 - You may be asked to read aloud a statement, for political use on TV networks, if you decline they may force you to read the statement with the threat of physical abuse or shooting.
 - Be certain that you can explain every item in your possession.
 - Do not carry any items that may call into question your motives or status. (A Western civilian passenger in a local vehicle was stopped and searched, and found to be in possession of a Coalition pass. This person was severely beaten, and taken away being accused of being a spy).
 - If a hostage knows and understands the methods likely to be used, the purpose of those methods and the effects, he or she will be better able to resist them.
 - Never beg, plead or cry.
 - Do not make threats against your captors or indicate that you would testify against them.
 - Do not get caught studying your captors features, dress and routines.

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Remember

- Play the “grey person” straight away.
- Knowledge dispels fear.
- Kidnappers can kidnap anyone, anytime, anywhere.
- The attackers wish to appear omnipotent and invincible (especially where religion is concerned).
- Their aim is purely to exploit their prey.
- A “Proof of Life” can be implemented but this method is usually used when ransoms are being sought but may be of some use in Iraq if adapted and amended.

Conclusion

Kidnappers in Iraq are not usually organised criminals, they are obviously heavily into the religion and are propelled forward by this into their criminal/terrorist actions.

Survival as a hostage can depend on your own personal traits and characteristics.

Are you healthy, fit, patient, strong willed, self-confident, resourceful, compassionate, etc?

As the hostage, you are in charge of your own safety and security, you only have one chance.

It is imperative that you remember these basics.

If more details are required, please contact Centurion.