

LATEST SECURITY REPORT FROM CENTURION ADVISORS IN IRAQ

October 23rd 2003

GENERAL

Attacks continue at an increasing level against Coalition forces with results ranging from minor injuries to fatalities. These are being reported every day mostly from media personnel and security advisors on the ground. The fatality rate is increasing.

Armed attackers continue to use hit and run tactics, making their rapid escape by motorbikes and other vehicles after firing RPGs and small arms.

Threats have been issued to areas such as pipelines, rail facilities, hotels, major roads and infrastructure occupied by Westerners.

The increase of attacks and IEDs remains high in Baghdad. In Basra, criminal activity resulting in local kidnappings, fire fights between criminal groups and general attacks on Coalition forces is on the increase. Smuggling remains high throughout Iraq.

FLIGHTS

Flights are being conducted on a daily basis from Amman to Baghdad. This assists in the speed of entry to and exit from Baghdad, and also reduces the threat of ambush incurred when travelling on the road from Baghdad to Amman. There are baggage restrictions and the flights are usually full so advance booking is strongly recommended.

If using flights the continuing threats will be:

- Potential carriage of explosive matter on board aircraft, unless security is of a high calibre, prior to embarkation of all personnel and baggage.
- Baggage handlers' "contamination" which is serious due to poor and inadequate security.
- Surface to air missile attacks. These could occur from anywhere within a radius of three miles (five km) around the airfield, depending on weapons system used.

CONVOY – VEHICLE SECURITY

Attacks against Coalition forces' convoys and military patrols continue, again on a routine basis every day. Attacks are initiated with either/or IEDs and with RPGs followed by small arms fire. The size of groups attacking these convoys is reported to be anything from two to seven men using one to three vehicles.

Convoys are restricted due to ongoing threats but the increased frequency of air travel between Baghdad and Amman makes taking the plane a good alternative.

Recent incidents:

- A white Toyota vehicle carrying four males attacked and fired on a civilian vehicle driven by a local Iraqi. The driver received a gunshot wound to the face.
- A military convoy was attacked to the southwest of Baghdad airport, resulting in injuries to the armed personnel.
- A convoy was ambushed near Tikrit initiated by an IED followed by small arms fire.
- A convoy operating near Kirkuk was under attack from IEDs as it approached Kirkuk airfield. One vehicle was damaged and five soldiers were injured.
- A small mobile Coalition patrol was attacked by an IED in the vicinity of Fallujah. Six soldiers were wounded.
- A vehicle was damaged by a round fired from an anti-tank weapon. A soldier was wounded and the vehicle was severely damaged.

- A Coalition transportation patrol was struck by an IED on one of the main supply routes into Baghdad. Two soldiers received minor injuries.

- A military convoy was attacked near Al Amiriyah as an IED detonated, injuring one soldier and damaging the vehicle.

- Small arms attacks on convoys near Ramadi continue. These reports are increasing due to the security forces now patrolling the area, which previously was devoid of any security forces.

- Four soldiers were wounded near Fallujah as their convoy was attacked by IEDs.

- A food supply vehicle was attacked north of Habbaniyah whilst delivering food to Coalition forces, injuring one Iraqi, one female employee of the food company and one soldier.

- A convoy was attacked near Mahmudiyah, wounding two soldiers, again involving an RPG and followed up by small arms fire.

- Numerous ammunition trucks from Coalition forces have been involved in attacks ranging from petrol bombs to RPGs.

- A fuel convoy was attacked southwest of Fallujah wounding one soldier.

A small point that is constantly reported: the loss of vehicle keys. Get spare keys cut for each vehicle and secure them in the bureau office.

There have been reports of similar incidents of attackers trying to scale walls and infiltrate the compounds of several locations. Fortunately the security guards have spotted these personnel and have managed to ward them off, usually in a fire fight. This can be reduced by installing barbed wire.

IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)

A military vehicle struck an IED resulting in three soldiers being evacuated with numerous injuries.

Numerous soldiers have been killed by IEDs exploding on recognised routes used by Coalition forces.

Searches by Coalition forces have uncovered artillery rounds which were cut open. Explosives and wires, all components of constructing potential IEDS, were found.

The trend of using "daisy chain" IEDS, both hidden and exposed, along the sides of roads continues. Most are backed up by secondary devices which are usually detonated to cover the perpetrators' escape.

A soft-skinned military vehicle hit an IED and one of the soldiers received shrapnel injuries.

IEDs are also being thrown at security forces from within crowds. There have been several injuries from these attacks. In one such attack 13 soldiers were injured.

A patrol found an IED and as the ordnance team was trying to disarm the device, a second device exploded injuring two soldiers who were providing security.

Security personnel reported individuals planting a suspected IED near a checkpoint. Security forces gave chase as the device exploded but caused no injuries.

An IED exploded killing two civilian Iraqis and damaging one vehicle.

GENERAL SECURITY

If areas are not patrolled by Coalition forces the advice is to stay out of those areas as terrorists/ attackers are moving around at will and attacks on local civilians are being reported. If you need to go to these areas then extreme caution and awareness is advised at all times. Be prepared for the unexpected.

Security has been improved wherever advisors are assisting media and aid agencies. This includes improvements on cordons, guard booking in and out routines, correct search techniques, additional security equipment to assist in overall security, radios and base stations, search wands to assist in detection on personnel, improved lighting and security cameras.

Evacuation plans are implemented for each building and everyone should be aware of them.

Companies and individuals who originally deployed without the necessary equipment are finally operating with body armour, helmets and essential first aid kits. Centurion advisors are still conducting on-site first aid training. Our advisors are also conducting driver training for Iraqis employed by the media and aid agencies. This obviously improves driving skills as well as the evasive procedures in case of emergencies. Several re-assessments of residences have taken place and security in general has improved, obviously due to the threat increase on "easy" Western targets.

All site security should be taken seriously and amendments and improvements should be constantly checked.

Crews are looking at anti-stab jackets for wearing under garments when operating within crowds as the heavy high velocity jackets can be considered too high profile, making the wearer stand out. Anti-stab jackets can be worn under clothing and out of sight, still offering protection against low velocity rounds as well as knives and other sharp implements. This was considered and implemented after two media personnel were involved in a crowd disturbance and the local Iraqi policeman who was supposed to be their security was stabbed constantly and died of his injuries. **If advice is needed on these anti-stab/low velocity jackets, please contact us immediately.**

Vehicle first aid trauma packs should be seriously considered not just for small arms attacks by assailants but more for the RTAs (road traffic accidents) that are being reported on a daily occurrence from media and aid agencies. **Remember that additional training may be required in the use of the contents of the trauma pack.**

All personnel should know about the location and telephone numbers of local hospitals in case of emergencies.

Be aware of the need to check all ID/Press cards as there has been an increase of forged passes both of the CPA and Western military passes that can and will be used or ease of access. If you do not recognise someone in or around your location, do not be afraid to approach them to ask for an ID check. This alone could be the deterrent that is needed. If you feel that you do not want to be involved, then report your suspicions immediately to one of the advisors or the local security officials.

Some organisations are equipping local armed guards with radios so they have immediate contact with the organisation's staff in the offices in case of emergencies or warning of potential threats.

Remember: deterrence is one of the keys to security. If you have the deterrence in place potential attackers will seek easier targets.

Ramadan is around the corner so restrictions will be enforced by both the military and Iraqis and all should be respected. There will be increased tensions at this sensitive time in the Islamic calendar. Therefore it is advisable to liaise with Iraqis through fixers, etc and local security forces for all "out of bound areas", security threats, etc so as to avoid any potential incident during this period of heightened religious sensitivity.

Carrying large amounts of currency should be avoided. If unavoidable, money should be split and carried by several people in several places around the body and not left to one source. On three occasions in the last two weeks couriers have lost the whole amount to attackers.

Areas to be avoided are religious areas, civic buildings associated with the Interim Government, police stations and Coalition force bases.

Deterrent measures: Our advisors working for a media company have organised and implemented the following:

- Placing a three-metre blast wall around the residence.
- Constructing and implementing 10 concrete barriers to protect vulnerable areas of the residence with the aim of reducing the destructive effects of a vehicle bomb.
- All roads approaching the residence have been blocked/restricted and local armed guards deployed.
- The main entrance to the residence has a new chicane system, enhanced with speed bumps.
- Guard huts installed at all major approach routes, also ensuring that the guards have shelter instead of going away to seek shelter from the heat, etc.
- Limit on parking areas, basically away from the main residence, reducing blast damage areas.
- Implementation of security cameras covering the main areas.
- Security: Local guards armed with AK47 rifles, provision of search wands, torches, vehicle search mirrors, security vests and uniforms.
- Improved wages for local armed personnel. This has already improved their professionalism and security alertness. It also makes the local security personnel feel that they are an important part of a team.
- Re-training from our advisors to the local security in all aspects including first aid, actions and reporting in emergencies, evacuation procedures, how to use first aid equipment, how to use the search equipment, emergency procedures and priorities, trained in vehicle and personnel searching.
- Use and implementation of "Calthrop" chains or equivalent to be issued and trained in use of to the guards for vehicle restriction. These rip tyres and thus immobilise vehicles, reducing in speed any potential vehicle bomb threat reaching the residence especially with the chicane system.

KIDNAPPING

This may become an issue if other security is enforced by Coalition forces to reduce threats of attacks to Western personnel. However, personnel are vulnerable in individual vehicles. Most media and aid agency vehicles look too military in appearance and could become potential targets of opportunity.

Reports say that a civilian vehicle carrying supplies was attacked and hijacked by ten armed personnel near Basra. The two personnel were kidnapped and one was released. Most attacks, as reported previously, have been criminally motivated.

There are reports that a foreigner believed to have business connections has been kidnapped in northern Iraq. These reports are unconfirmed.

There are personal locators on the market, which basically are tracking devices that are either worn or hidden in your equipment. These devices are tracked usually by software and laptop, back at your base location. They are not cheap, but if you are seriously worried about your teams or individuals on the ground then these should be given serious consideration.

Contact us for more details.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mentioned before, but worth repeating: if you are sending individuals or teams out on the ground, communications are essential. It is therefore recommended that all organisations should establish a communications system. This will include small hand-held radios, a base station and possible mobile repeaters in vehicle(s). Again, they are not cheap but they are essential and, of course, can be used worldwide on other operations and deployments.

OTHER INCIDENTS

- Mortar attacks have been reported from numerous areas. One involved several mortars being fired on a logistical base southwest of Hasan bin Mahmud.
- Several raids by Coalition forces have resulted in finds including arms, munitions and data which was being compiled by terrorist groups planning future raids.
- A separate raid resulted in the discovery of pictures of Osama bin Laden and of potential targets including bridges, along with wires and firing devices.
- A grenade was thrown from a passing vehicle on to a foot patrol wounding one soldier.
- Suspected grenades have been investigated near Al Damawah. They are presumed to date from the last Iraq war as they are believed to contain a chemical charge.
- An IED was found opposite the French embassy and was dealt with by security forces.
- Embassies and Western offices are still under threat from warnings and potential attacks including all Coalition forces' buildings both civilian and military.
- A patrol was attacked after responding to a grenade attack at a school. The attack was by a lone individual firing an AK47, but two males were detained.
- Iraqi border police were under attack from four personnel in two vehicles, resulting in one of the border police being killed.
- A military unit found two trucks which contained a total of 1,604 57mm rockets. Two Iraqi males were detained.
- Several attacks on the Coalition forces have occurred where drivers in saloon cars have deliberately driven into soldiers conducting tasks. One vehicle was stopped by small arms fire injuring the driver who was then taken away for questioning and then prison.
- Several demonstrations have occurred and passed with minor incidents. One resulted in a serious incident when a Coalition soldier was shot in the face at close range and died later from his wounds.
- Eleven mortar rounds were fired on a military base near Balad wounding two soldiers.
- An RPG was directed at the Iraqi Police in the centre of Baghdad, missed its target and hit an adjacent house.
- Reports state that five individuals attacked and killed two pipeline guards in the vicinity of Al Sadah.
- A tank struck a mine south of Baiji, one soldier was wounded and the tank received heavy damage.
- A grenade was thrown from a bridge on to a mounted patrol wounding one soldier.
- Local Iraqi workers, for example on the pipelines, have been threatened by armed gangs while being seen as assisting Coalition forces and Western business organisations.
- A large demonstration took place in Al Kut involving thousands of personnel when they protested against the privatisation of the company. Laws implemented by the interim government were denounced by the protestors. Warnings and threats have been issued to

other Western investors thinking of setting up in Iraq.

- There has been an increase in attacks from assailants using rooftops to target potential victims. These have been at night as well as during the daylight hours.

HOTELS

Reports continue to circulate around Baghdad that hotels where Westerners reside will come under attack either by vehicle bombs or RPGs. **All such reports are to be taken seriously until proved innocent. Security is being improved throughout residences where Western media and aid agencies are staying and working from. Advisors are implementing further security measures. These take time and money but will prove invaluable in the overall security of the properties. Security measures include the implementation of concrete security barriers restricting vehicle access. CTV and alarms are being installed in several buildings and many organisations are purchasing plastic screening for windows which reduces the overall blast fragmentation of glass, etc. Search mirrors are being used more to reduce the threat of vehicle bombs. Barbed wire and restrictive devices are being constructed especially on the walled surrounds and rooftops of residences.**

The popular hotels such as the Palestine Hotel are in high demand as security is improving not just by the advisors but also by Coalition forces. Therefore this provides better security to personnel residing in these locations but accommodation is limited.

SUMMARY

As always, areas can change without warning from being relatively friendly to becoming hostile in a very short time.

Even though most attacks at present are against Coalition forces, the “soft targets” such as aid agencies, NGOs and media organisations are on the increase.

Iraq is still and will remain a very unsafe place to be and the situation seems to be getting worse with every report we publish.

Again, the emphasis is on the growing concern that the attackers/terrorists do not particularly care who is in the immediate vicinity when the ordnance is fired.

It is imperative that security remains high and vigilance is increased for everyone’s security and safe deployment.

There has been a continuing trend in secondary devices being found after the initial IED explosion. Be aware of this growing trend, and stay away from the area. As mentioned previously, listen and adhere to the rules and laws implemented by Coalition force and the advice of your security advisors.

Do not become blasé about your security or the area that you may be working or travelling in.

Avoid complacency and remember to avoid routine, especially eating and drinking in the same places.

Many thanks to Centurion advisors in Iraq for providing information for this Field Report.