

## **LATEST SECURITY REPORT FROM CENTURION ADVISORS IN IRAQ**

July 29 2003

### **GENERAL**

In the days since the last report Iraqi attacks continue to become more active and creative with new methods of attacking coalition forces including IEDs (relate to last week's report), RPGs, grenade attacks, open shootings, vehicle jacking, vehicle ambushes, etc.

The level of sophistication of these continuing attacks has heightened awareness throughout, especially as the attackers are using devices like 'floating IEDs', and using motorcycles for immediate attack and fast withdrawal.

Attacks have been concentrated on the UN, NGOs, media and business personnel as well as coalition forces. There appears to be no real political agenda; most seek monetary gain.

Former Ba'ath and other anti-coalition groups remain the primary threat as well as ongoing opportunists trying to gain from criminal activities.

The current trend of attacks against coalition forces is to bring their vehicles to a halt by the use of RPGs and then the use of IEDs to hit the main body and back-up personnel arriving a short time after. (The IEDs are made up of mortars and artillery shells).

There is an increase of the use of grenades being dropped from buildings onto forces patrolling the ground below, causing a real problem.

A report suggests there is outside assistance that has been brought in to help in the training and planning of operations against coalition forces.

With these attacks, embedded media personnel are likely to increase injury to themselves if patrolling with coalition forces and attacks continue, especially as most of them are surprise attacks.

Reports suggest that the incidents a month ago were between 6-10 per day. Reports now state there are 25-30 incidents a day, predominantly against coalition forces, however 25-30% of attacks are directed at the media from different factions.

Ambushes remain the primary method of attack against coalition forces, using mainly RPGs and grenades. Attacks are not just in isolated incidents as the trend is to hit coalition forces wherever there is an opportunity.

Security forces are advising all personnel to consider their movement details and priorities prior to working in and around Baghdad especially in high-risk areas.

### **CONVOYS**

Convoys to and from Baghdad to Jordan are still being stopped and three more vehicles were stopped and robbed in the last 24 hours.

We had an incident involving one of our guys who was stopped along this route and all that was taken was \$14 as the occupants in the vehicle had the forethought of hiding additional monies/valuables in amongst the furnishings of the vehicle. The attackers were angry at the lack of rewards – however no injury or abuse was directed at the occupants of the vehicle. It was reported that if any of the passengers were armed it could have caused severe consequences. They felt that the incident threat level was reduced as no weapons were being carried and so the attackers found none on board.

Ambushes are continuing and becoming routine against coalition forces as with the use of RPGs or IEDs to disable the vehicle or patrol, which is inevitably followed by small arms fire.

Two Iraqis fired on a US patrol from a vehicle resulting in the US forces returning fire and

killing one attacker and injuring the other. As a US convoy travelled south out of Baghdad, the lead vehicle was approached from behind by two individuals in a white Nissan pickup. They opened fire on the lead vehicle killing one of the US occupants. In the same incident the following vehicle containing one Australian and one Canadian citizen crashed with the vehicle that was attacked, causing injury to them both.

The attacks happening on the Baghdad road seem to be on vehicles leaving Baghdad rather than vehicles entering Baghdad area, as was the routine weeks ago. Even cars driven by locals on this route are being targeted by the attackers, moving the trend to attack anyone that may seem to be an easy target, whereas before it was on Westerners/Western-owned vehicles only.

## **IEDs**

MPs were patrolling in vehicles when an IED detonated under the first vehicle. The blast blew two tyres and damage was caused throughout the vehicle. Four soldiers were injured.

A separate convoy was attacked by possibly three IEDs, resulting in eight US soldiers being evacuated to the local aid station.

A vehicle convoy was caught in an attack by the use of the IED being placed up a tree and aimed at the road. As the vehicle passed it was remotely detonated and two soldiers were wounded.

Another convoy was attacked with an IED injuring two soldiers. Again, this shows how the use of IEDs is becoming more frequent and the ease of how these are deployed and initiated.

US forces were refuelling at a water treatment facility when they came under attack from RPGs and IEDs.

An IED floated down a river hitting the bridge which US forces were guarding, rendering the bridge impassable until experts cleared the site.

**WARNING:** The Iraqi IEDs are becoming more sophisticated so caution and observation is essential for all travelling on foot or in vehicles.

The problem will be a 'follow on' similar to usual terrorists operations, i.e. one IED will explode followed by another larger explosion when people think it is safe. IEDs are being used in rural and urban locations. IEDs are being planted by people who know exactly what they are doing, lending more evidence to external assistance being used to train the locals in 'guerrilla' tactics.

To spot a well camouflaged IED is practically impossible, but there are lessons to assist you.

## **REPORTED INCIDENTS**

Soldiers were targeted by grenade attacks dropped from elevated positions. Two soldiers were wounded at Baghdad University when a grenade was dropped from a window above their location, injuring both. Three soldiers were killed and four wounded in a similar attack the day before. Soldiers were killed in another grenade attack at a children's hospital.

There is an increase of local drivers and their vehicles refusing to stop at traffic control points.

Various patrols came under attack over the last day as enemy and criminal activity continued through their area of operations.

Looters still remain an ongoing problem in some areas, mostly happening after nightfall.

Coalition forces have raided several locations resulting in ammo/weapon finds as well as numerous arrests.

US forces observed Iraqis placing a tripwire attached to a grenade across the road. US forces opened fire killing one as the others scattered.

Some 200 US uniforms have gone missing in the Baghdad area, increasing the possible infiltration on locals into the media and military safe areas.

An interpreter's media ID card was stolen.

US forces were fired upon while guarding the Baqubah General house by a number of Iraqis firing RPGs. Two US personnel were injured.

Forces providing security for an EOD team were fired upon from Iraqis on a motorbike. US forces returned fire and killed the attackers.

A hand grenade was thrown at the Al Kut police station injuring one US MP.  
US forces engaged between 15-20 Iraqis who were stealing artillery rounds.  
A US vehicle was involved in an accident when it was overtaking an Iraqi-driven tanker truck. As the vehicle was passing, the truck increased its speed resulting in a head-on collision between a civilian vehicle and the US vehicle. The tanker carried on driving at high speed.

Two Iraqis were shot as US forces spotted them carrying AK47s. (This incident may be a warning for all personnel using/employing/carrying armed personnel.)

A maroon BMW carrying four Iraqis attacked a US patrol near a gas station. The patrol returned fire killing three of the attackers.

A US patrol was attacked by six Iraqis in what was believed to be a well-coordinated attack. The ambush was initiated by heavy machine gun and followed up by RPGs. Both sides suffered casualties.

It has been reported that a US soldier struck the face of a Japanese correspondent in the last couple of days, thus resulting in tension and anger between the media and US forces.

Since the deaths of Saddam Hussein's sons there has been mixed reaction on the streets in Baghdad. Some locals are talking to the media and US forces while others, mostly Ba'ath party members, are angry towards all Westerners.

## **SAFE LOCATIONS**

There are still threats reported about an attack on the hotels housing media and Westerners.

For organisations using 'safe houses' (residences totally for their staff), be aware of the security implications. Most roofs will be exposed so if using the roof for 'live' feeds, etc be aware that snipers will make the most of an easy target especially if reporting at night using floodlights which will fully illuminate those doing pieces to camera. This would make an easy target for any budding sniper. Some roofs do not even have walls so anyone can put rounds onto the roof from 200-300 metres away depending on the type of weapon that could be used.

It is always worth consulting your safety advisor to ensure these threats can be minimised.

Ensure all safe houses/bureaus are adequately equipped with essential fire-fighting and first aid equipment.

Ensure there is an emergency plan that can be put in operation in the event of local attacks (seek the advisor's advice on this issue).

## **VEHICLES**

If using vehicles that are similar to the military, especially the colour, this may be the time to do something about it, even if it means repainting them a different colour. US military vehicles are being targeted every day throughout Iraq. Don't let yours become a target.

Ideally anyone travelling to and from Amman or Kuwait from Baghdad should be in an armoured vehicle, though we appreciate this is not always possible.

Parking and security of your vehicles should also be considered especially if the streets surrounding your building offer little or no security observation. Vehicles that are not under security observation can be easily tampered with and IEDs easily placed. If your vehicles are not under a strict watchful eye, it is recommended that all vehicles be searched for any IEDs prior to anyone driving them. If possible move all vehicles to an area so they can all be watched continuously.

## **ROUTINES**

With the heightened threat on Westerners it is advisable to change your routines. If the threat moves to a higher level of hostage-taking, abduction and assassination, then anyone setting a routine pattern, whilst in Baghdad especially, may make themselves a vulnerable and easy catch. Vary your eating times, don't travel the same routes day in, day out, change timings of departure and arrival, etc. Change the venue where you eat. This threat may well intensify as the current guerrilla campaign develops.

Seek out our advisors for more information on this subject.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Increase in personal awareness. Extra vigilance required by all.
- Plan and practice safety drills (seek advisor to assist).
- Ensure information passed from locals is genuine; check detail out prior to commitment.
- Be aware of potential ambush/attack 'set up' as there have been several related incidents of continuing similarities between departing a location and being the victim in an attack. Numerous occasions have involved locals possibly phoning ahead to warn attackers of a trip and what is being carried.
- Communications – use radios or sat phones where possible between all vehicles travelling in convoy.
- Ensure good liaison with coalition forces. Work with them, not against them. Be aware of increased attacks if embedded with coalition forces.
- Report any incidents to the military or advisors if you are suspicious of anything including possible IEDs.
- Ensure someone knows your route (inform someone you trust). Ask your advisor about the 'route card' routine.
- Do not travel unnecessarily to the Sunni Triangle region. There are too many reported incidents against Westerners.
- Listen to the advice from the advisors. Due to the increase in threats and attacks the advisors' role with the media is of greater importance especially as media personnel are not only under risk from the locals but also in some cases from the military. Some of the military are laid back while others are very nervous, especially in the Baghdad area, which is quite understandable after the latest trend of attacks on them.
- With the increase of incidents and threats continuing and sometimes concentrated in certain

areas, it may be wise to evaluate and re-assess the role of your organisation deployed in Iraq.

- Due to the increase in lawlessness and attacks it may also be worth thinking about increasing the number of advisors on site especially if a lot of staff are deployed.

Thanks again to all Centurion advisors in Iraq for their invaluable information.