

SAFETY AND SECURITY REPORT FROM IRAQ

21 July 2003

GENERAL

Last week showed more frequent open attacks on coalition forces. Towards the end of the week attacks intensified with reports of up to 36 incidents including attacks on patrols, on foot as well as vehicle convoys. The pattern of these incidents all point towards a trend of continuing attacks on the forces and Westerners in and around Baghdad and mainly around the airport. As reported worldwide and reiterated by our advisors, the situation in Iraq is heading towards a guerrilla-type war, especially in the Sunni triangle of Baghdad, Fallujah and Ramadi.

There are large groups operating especially in north Baghdad who are specifically targeting the forces and Westerners filming and working in that area. Coalition forces have increased the numbers of soldiers patrolling on the ground to try to eliminate these attacks.

Attacks on coalition forces and Westerners have included weapons such as various small arms, mortars, RPGs and mines.

It was a tense time as the anniversary of Saddam Hussein's rise to power came about and Ba'ath Party personnel need little encouragement to attack the US/Western personnel.

In the south of the country there has been an increase in criminal and paramilitary attacks against the UN agencies especially with a rumour emanating from the mosques that the UN food agency is a Zionist organisation trying to undermine the Shia people. The UN, after five RPG attacks has now pulled out from Mosul.

Individuals stepping out of the crowd and shooting one or two rounds at Westerners/coalition forces and then disappearing seems to be the growing trend. Threats are made daily by a variety of organisations all trying to diminish the coalition efforts.

IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)

There are increasing reports and incidents concerning the use of IEDs. This includes devices hidden alongside the roads in amongst rubble and suicide car bombs. Warnings have been issued to all coalition forces and Westerners that the main threat is to the security forces patrolling the areas but targets also include government buildings, key bridges, hotels, etc. Being attached to the military does have its bonuses, especially regarding added security. However, the use of IEDs will be an ongoing danger to any journalist embedded or going on patrol with coalition forces. All crews operating in country should be aware that being alongside the forces could increase the danger to themselves as these attacks will increase.

The bomb threat that was issued last week to hotels has increased the alertness of all individuals and appropriate measures have been taken and put in place where applicable by our advisors. These measures hopefully will deter the attackers and make them look for an easier target. Vigilance is still the key element and working together to watch each other's backs is extremely important. Report anything suspicious to the coalition forces or to the advisors and they will pass the information on to the people who need to know. If you think you are being targeted, change your routine, timings, and vehicles if possible, but make people aware of your concern.

Due to the increase in use of IEDs, it has been strongly recommended that no vehicle should drive over any item such as cardboard boxes, plastic bags, small obstacles, tin cans, etc, as they can all include and hide IEDs.

Over the last few days an IED exploded at a bank, injuring one soldier, causing serious lacerations. Reports said that the IED was planted in the ground.

A passenger from a nearby taxi threw an IED at a civilian vehicle which then exploded.

A suspicious object believed to be an IED was found on the road to the airport.

We have included a separate paragraph on IEDs in this update which may assist personnel.

VEHICLE CHECKS

Due to the use of Improvised Vehicle Explosive Devices (IVEDs), it is strongly recommended that all vehicles be checked prior to use for anything suspicious, especially if the vehicle has been left for a period of time and out of a secure area.

BAGHDAD AIRPORT

Surface to air missiles (SAMs) were again used against US military aircraft coming in to land at Baghdad airport. Due to early warning and evasive procedures by the crews the incident passed without damage or injury to the aircraft and crews.

The roads around the airport are still under threat by armed groups and vehicles are being stopped at gunpoint.

Most attacks are happening around the outskirts of Baghdad. These include RPGs. Mortar attacks were reported on the coalition forces to the north of the airport.

CONVOYS

Coalition vehicles are still being targeted especially in convoy formation. An incident happened when a vehicle was hit by an IED which immediately caught fire. The driver was struck and killed by the trailing vehicle as he exited the wreckage.

Another coalition patrol vehicle drove over a mine and two soldiers were injured. One lost both legs at the shins and the other suffered a broken leg. It has basically been 'open season' on attacks on 4x4 vehicles as the bandits think they belong to the Army/UN.

Convoys are still being conducted on both routes, Amman to Baghdad and Kuwait to Baghdad. Numerous incidents have occurred - the usual armed robberies, etc. A grey/blue vehicle fired small arms rounds at a three-vehicle US convoy. The assailants were wounded in the fire-fight that followed.

FILMING/REPORTING

Some advisors have had to advise crews to leave the area where they have been filming as crowds had gathered and were becoming angry. Basically the locals take any opportunity to vent their feelings once they see a camera. This obviously makes it difficult for the crews to do their job because they are then restricted in their movement due to the numbers of locals involved. This is not just in Baghdad but also in the outlying towns and villages. The main threat to media crews seems to be when travelling with the coalition forces.

OTHER REPORTED INCIDENTS

- A coalition patrol was ambushed on the outskirts of the city by armed personnel using AK47s and RPGs.
- A suspicious object was spotted near the airport, described as sandbags with wires coming out of it.
- An RPG rocket was fired at a military vehicle, missed and landed in the river.

- Two RPG rockets were fired at a military armoured vehicle. Both went high and missed.
- A coalition convoy was attacked with a remote IED which was placed under a road drain.
- In Tikrit AK47s and RPGs were fired at a coalition convoy.
- A raid by coalition forces uncovered 200 artillery warheads and 100 mortar bombs.
- Two RPGs were fired at a security force position and failed to explode.
- Mortars were fired at a coalition base camp.
- An attack on the UN was reported as three individuals fired rounds from a distance of 250 metres against the police officers on duty at the UN house.
- A coalition-mounted patrol was ambushed by armed personnel using multiple RPGs. Ten soldiers were injured and one killed.
- A drastic increase in the number of rapes has been reported in the city.
- Drive-by shootings continue on a daily basis and pose major problems for the coalition forces.
- A medevac aircraft reported being fired upon by rounds heavier than AK47 rounds.

Message from the Mujahadeen of Iraq

There is a message being handed around Iraqis calling for all to rise up and attack coalition forces, Westerners, etc. The locals have been advised to stay away from coalition forces as there will be increasing attacks against them and the attackers do not want the locals to be hurt. The message mentions that the Mujahadeen will notify the locals of specific days to strike at the coalition forces.

TEMPERATURE

Many individuals have been suffering from dehydration. The heat is increasing and so is the dehydration problem. Drink plenty of water, seek advice from our advisors if necessary regarding dehydration and other heat-related illnesses and injuries.

A separate paragraph below provides additional information on this subject:

DEHYDRATION

Becomes increasingly noticeable, as more body fluid is lost. Water makes up 70% of the body weight - about 42 litres for the average person. Sweat will evaporate quickly. Hot humid conditions are the most likely to produce heat problems.

Signs and Symptoms

- Rising body temperature
- Declining sweat rate
- Excessive thirst
- Dry skin which folds on pinching
- Dark urine
- Infrequency of passing urine

- Mental confusion
- Irrational behaviour
- Extreme fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea/vomiting
- Progressive weakness
- Eventual heatstroke

Everyone must be aware that the onset of dehydration can occur quickly and with little warning. Do not depend on thirst alone to key into your body's need for fluid: make yourself drink.

HEAT ILLNESS

Heat illness occurs not only in hot climates but also in temperate climates when strenuous work or exercise is being done in warm weather. There are two main types: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

HEAT CRAMPS

Cramping of the muscle due to water/sodium imbalance.

Signs and symptoms:

- Muscle cramps in legs, sometimes in abdomen
- Profuse sweating may have occurred

Treatment:

- Primary assessment
- Apply gentle pressure to the affected muscles
- Gentle stretching may also be helpful
- Have the patient drink water or half-diluted electrolyte solution to help balance sodium
- Have the patient rest
- Seek medical advice
- Do not give salt

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Shock-like symptoms caused by overwork in a hot environment. Circulatory system is unable to meet the demand to cool the body and provide oxygen and nutrition to muscles and organs. May lead to heat stroke.

Signs and symptoms:

- Pale skin colour
- Moist, clammy skin
- Profuse sweating
- Cramps
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Patient might become confused and eventually unconscious

Treatment:

- Have patient lie down in a cool, shady place
- Elevate feet 8-12 inches
- Lower body temperature by fanning or sponging the whole body
- Give patient water or half-diluted electrolyte solution
- If patient does not respond to rest, seek medical help

HEAT STROKE

The casualty will have many of the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion, but the condition will be much more dramatic.

The patient will reach a dangerously high temperature due to the body's inability to cool itself. This is a life-threatening emergency.

Signs and symptoms:

- Tissue colour is red
- Skin is very hot and unusually dry
- Temperature 105°F and rising
- He or she will have stopped sweating, although the skin may be covered in sweat droplets and the clothing is soaked. Under these circumstances the skin circulation shuts down and the patient's skin may feel quite cool. Inside the body temperature might be 104°F and rising
- The patient maybe disorientated

- Confusion
- Irritability
- Loss of co-ordination
- Seizures
- Nausea
- Loss of consciousness

Treatment:

- Primary assessment
- Lay patient down in coolest place available
- Remove clothing
- Cool patient as quickly as possible by sponging with cool water and blowing cold air on the patient – ice packs to the groin and flanks
- Obtain medical assistance as fast as possible
- Continue to cool patient but do not chill
- Evacuate as soon as possible

If not treated the casualty will lose consciousness, lapse into a coma and die.

BOMB THREATS - COURSES OF ACTION

No bomb threat should ever be ignored. All bomb threats should be reported to the police or local security forces immediately. Follow their instructions.

The first consideration with any bomb threat is obviously the safety of people in the area. Although many bomb threats turn out to be hoaxes you cannot take that chance. There is no real way to know initially whether the bomb threat is real or not, so therefore evacuate all personnel in the area, i.e. in and around the building, as swiftly and calmly as you can.

Most media organisations now have their own action plans in force as directed by advisors should they receive a bomb threat. Part of that may be to search the building first, and if a suspected package/device is found then evacuate the building. Most do this to avoid cost and disruption should the bomb threat turns out to be a hoax.

If evacuating a building or office, inevitably there may be a degree of panic. Remember that panic can cause injury or damage to people, property or equipment.

There is an action plan for a bomb threat procedures originally developed by the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom and which has subsequently been adopted by the FBI. This is:

T Target assessment: accurate information on site and occupants i.e. controversial, political prominent, etc.

H How to search; coordinate a systematic search.

R Remote command centre established at a safe perimeter.

E Evacuate if necessary.

A Awareness of other targets; beware of secondary targets.

T Tape and man appropriate cordons; keep people out at all costs.

BOMB SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Whenever possible bomb searches should be conducted by trained, explosive search teams for reasons of safety and thoroughness. The mission of bomb search personnel is only to search for and report suspicious objects. If you need to search then use the following as a guideline:

- Outside areas should generally be searched first, followed by inside public access areas. Outside and inside areas can be searched simultaneously, only if sufficient resources are available.
- Common sense and logic should always be employed during the searching.
- Rely on systematic, thorough searching techniques. Everywhere an explosive or incendiary device may be concealed must be checked.
- If using mobile phones or two-way radios between search parties then it is imperative to understand and explain to all that explosive devices can be triggered by using this equipment.
- If a device is found, under no circumstances should it be touched, as they can also be booby-trapped.

ROOM SEARCH TECHNIQUES

- A minimum of two people should search a room or specific area.
- Prior to searching the room or specific area the pair should move to opposite ends of the room and stand quietly with their eyes shut listening for any sounds that may give away the possible clue that there is a device in the immediate vicinity. Clockwork devices can sometimes be detected by using this method thus reducing the time it takes to search.
- There are several primary types of room searching techniques with minor variations. The preferred method is to divide the room in half, a two-person team starts back to back, working around the walls and then proceeding towards the centre of the room.
- The room is searched bottom to top and three or four sweeps are made.
- First sweep searches objects in the room up to approximately waist height (the average height of furniture and objects in the room that are resting on the floor). This is normally the most time consuming.
- Second sweep searches from waist to head height.
- Third sweep searches from the top of the head to the ceiling.
- Fourth sweep is made if there is an acoustic or false ceiling to be searched.
- Each sweep covers all items within the searching height range.
- After any room or area has been searched and cleared, a sign of some sort should be placed on the door informing other people that the area has been done.

WHAT TO DO IF A SUSPECTED DEVICE IS LOCATED

Under no circumstances should anyone move or touch the suspected device. Inform the local police or security forces/bomb squad immediately.

BOOBY TRAPS

Definition of a booby trap is 'an explosive or non-explosive device or other material, deliberately placed to cause casualties when an apparently harmless object is disturbed or a normally safe act is performed.'

Booby traps may be improvised, which is easier with electrical devices, or may be constructed using factory-made military mechanisms.

Like anti-personnel mines, booby traps often cause horrific but not lethal injuries. The effect can be to lower morale and take more members of a group out of action to evacuate the casualty. The pace of operations slows down as the group looks for trip wires, obstacles and possible locations for booby traps. Sometimes delay can be imposed by simply marking safe areas as being booby-trapped.

Explosive Charge

The explosive charge is normally between .25 kg and .5 kg of plastic explosives (PE) for human targets, and larger for vehicles, although sometimes far greater amounts have been used. The charge may rely on blast alone for its effect, or may be surrounded by improvised shrapnel or incendiary material. When the detonator is connected to the charge and the safety pin removed, the booby trap is armed.

IEDs

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are often made from easily available substances such as ammonium nitrate mixed with diesel fuel or sugar. Incendiary bombs can also be used. They contain a delay mechanism and fuel (such as lighter fuel ampoules). These devices are not usually intended to injure or kill, but to cause damage to property.

IEDs can be made out of virtually any material that can cause harm to an individual, vehicle or group, depending on the size of the explosive being used and how it is packed, and what the explosive is wrapped in (e.g. nails/bolts/metal fragments/barbed wire, etc), will depend on the size of the explosion and area of devastation.

In some countries booby traps are produced from the unexploded bombs and shells which have landed, or from ordnance taken from the opposing forces. Grenades, mines, shells and mortar bombs can be set up as booby traps with a small amount of plastic explosive pushed into the fuse well and linked to a detonating cord, detonator and mechanism.

Grenades can be made into tripwire-operated devices by attaching the wire to the pin. Sometimes the grenade is placed inside an empty tin, with the pin removed but the handle held in place by the sides of the tin. The wire is attached to the grenade and when tripped pulls the grenade from the tin. The handle flies off, releasing the spring-loaded striker, and the grenade explodes.

Methods of Initiation

Booby traps are normally triggered by one of four methods: delay, pressure, pull or release. Alternatively, a combination may be used.

Delay

Usually operated by a mechanical device such as an adapted watch, or by an electronic timer.

It may work over a period of seconds, minutes, days, or even weeks.

Pressure

Pressure mechanisms operate under the direct pressure of a vehicle or person.

Pull

A tripwire may be positioned across a path or fixed to an object.

Release

Operated when an object is picked up - often something attractive or unusual.

Principles of Setting or Locating Booby Traps

When people want to set up an IED to cause injury, damage and fatalities there are usually several principles that are normally followed. These are:

Concealment

Devices will be hidden and the surrounding area disturbed as little as possible.

Constricted localities

Places such as doorways, alleys, bridges and tracks will channel people or vehicles towards a trap.

Concentration of traps

Traps will be positioned close together, as this increases the chance of one or more being sprung.

Double bluff

An obvious trap may sometimes disguise a well-concealed one. An inconvenience such as the clearing of road blocks, or obstacles, may trigger traps.

Attraction

Desirable items like radios, cameras, food or weapons may be left around and can be booby-trapped.

Everyday operations

For example: opening and closing doors or windows, switching on lights, using telephones, etc.

Delayed action

People can often use two delayed action traps: the first is to kill or wound, the second is to target the military and emergency organisations which come to the site.

Alternative methods of firing

A trap may have a delay mechanism and an anti-handling device, designed specifically to attack Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) experts. For example a device may have an obviously visible timer, but behind the explosive may be an alternative mechanism.

Variety

Different types of devices are possible and can be used in one locality, they can be disguised

virtually as anything.

Again, it is with thanks to Centurion advisors for providing the information from Iraq.