

## JIC Assessment, 17 December 2003

### IRAQ SECURITY

*This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on Wednesday 17 December 2003.*

#### Key Judgements

- I. After a difficult November the number of attacks against Coalition Forces has fallen. Coalition operations will have had an impact in disrupting planning and attacks. Most attacks continue to take place in Baghdad and in the Sunni Arab areas to the north and west.
- II. The UK area of responsibility is calmer. Shia consent and accommodation with the Coalition Forces in the South remains solid for the moment.
- III. The arrest of Saddam Hussein will at least damage the morale of his supporters and offer encouragement to those many Iraqis who feared he could return. The impact on the level of violence is not yet clear. Former regime element groups have up until now been conducting sustained attacks with little apparent central direction. But there may be a more coherent former regime element network than we previously had thought. This suggests that the level of attacks will continue in the short term. Over time their determination and ability to attack the Coalition may wane.
- IV. Most attacks against the Coalition Forces have been conducted by former regime elements. Some co-ordination is taking place between former regime elements and Islamist extremists but there may be a lack of trust. The arrest of Saddam Hussein will have little immediate effect on the activities of Islamist extremists in Iraq.
- V. Mujahedin continue to travel to Iraq through Syria, Iran and Saudi (including probably a small number of UK residents). Although we continue to see reports of alleged AQ personnel operating in Iraq and support networks elsewhere, we have no evidence linking AQ to specific attacks.
- VI. [...] The Iranian regime does not want to be involved in the unrest in Iraq, and is trying to ensure that it is not accused of doing so.

## IRAQ SECURITY

*This paper is the fifth in a series of three-weekly assessments of the overall security situation in Iraq. The word was commissioned by OD Sec and builds on the weekly review co-ordinated by the Joint Terrorism and Analysis Centre (JTAC).*

### Overall security situation

1. November was a difficult month with 111 Coalition personnel killed – the highest number in a single month since the end of conventional operations. But since the end of Ramadan (the end of November) the **number of attacks against the Coalition Forces (CF) has fallen**. Having reached a peak of towards 50 attacks per day (11 November), the figure has now dipped to an average of 26 last week. The majority of attacks continue to take place in Baghdad and in the Sunni Arab areas to the north and west. It is too early to conclude that the recent reduction in attacks represents a downward trend – it could be a lull (there are indications that attacks are increasing again). The series of operations by mainly US forces (for example, Op IRON HAMMER) will have had an impact in disrupting anti-CF planning and attacks. But it is too early to assess the longer-term effect of these operations. Anti-CF extremists have previously responded strongly in the wake of US operations in the Sunni heart-lands.

### Recent serious incidents

2. The IED continues to be the most lethal means of attacking the CF. After a pause of a few weeks, suicide vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) have again been used against military and police targets. 42 Iraqis have been killed, a number of them policemen, in 3 VBIED attacks in the last 3 days. Police stations were the targets in 2 of the attacks. Attacks on Coalition aircraft and helicopters continue, with an OH 58 helicopter being forced down, and a C17 hit by a missile on 9 December. Man-portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) are readily available. Attacks on Coalition aircraft are a priority for anti-CF: further successful attacks are likely.

3. Attacks continue on non-military targets. Between 29–30 November a Colombian contractor was killed north of Baghdad and 2 Japanese diplomats and 2 South Korean contractors were killed in Tikrit. In a separate incident on 29 November, 7 Spanish [...] were killed in an ambush 18 miles south of Baghdad. Three of the attacks took place in the space of 8 hours and in a narrow geographical area, suggesting possible co-ordination. [...] former regime elements (FREs) were responsible for the attack on the Spanish. The **more vulnerable targets** - the police, government employees, economic infrastructure, schools - continue to be threatened and attacked. The Italian embassy was mortared on 26 November. [...] Many have reduced their staff as a result of security concerns. The threat to wider diplomatic interests probably reflects both the attraction of attacking easier targets, and a deliberate strategy to undermine

#### Significant Incidents:

29 Nov	Colombian, 2 Japanese; 7 Spanish killed.
30 Nov	2 South Koreans killed.
30 Nov	Ambush at Samarra.
8 Dec	VBIED attack at Tall Afar.
9 Dec	C17 hit by MANPADS at BIAP.
11 Dec	VBIED at Ar Ramadi.
14 Dec	VBIED at Khalidiya – 17 killed.
15 Dec	VBIED in Baghdad – 9 killed.
17 Dec	VBIED in Baghdad – 16 killed.

the Coalition's broader objectives.

4. There have been recent instances of significant sized forces attacking US convoys and positions, all in Sunni Arab areas north of Baghdad. On 30 November US forces came under sustained attack in Samarra, north of Baghdad. The details of the incident remain unclear (reports vary between 8 and 54 Iraqis killed). What is clear is that there had been a significant firefight against a determined and sizeable enemy force. No detectable communications were used before or during the attack. These determined attacks were probably conducted by FREs. A list of other significant incidents is in the box.

#### **The Situation in Multinational Division (South East) (MND(SE))**

5. **The UK area of responsibility is calmer.** The number of attacks accounts for under 5% of the total across the country, and represents the smallest number of incidents in any divisional area. CF proactive disruption operations against identified FRE groups continue. There was a well planned and coordinated series of hoax IED incidents at the end of November and these were followed up by a series of real IEDs, one of which exploded next to a passing CPA convoy in Basra causing minor injuries, but severely damaging an armoured vehicle. CPA vehicle security measures are being reviewed in the light of the recent increase in attacks on non-military Coalition targets.

#### **The Threat: FREs**

6. **Saddam Hussein was captured by CF near Tikrit on 13 December.** Whether Saddam had a role in co-ordinating and directing the violence of the FREs has not been clear. His arrest removes a figurehead, and will at least damage the morale of his supporters and offer encouragement to those many Iraqis who feared he could return. Coalition policies will need to take advantage of this opportunity. [...] We may also discover whether the extent of Saddam's control was greater than hitherto thought. The immediate impact on the level of violence is unclear. FRE groups have up until now been conducting sustained attacks with little apparent central direction. The motivation of many FREs may not be confined to support for Saddam or the former regime, suggesting that the level of attacks will continue in the short term. But, over time FRE determination and ability to attack the Coalition may wane. The arrest of Saddam Hussein will have little immediate effect on the activities of Islamist extremists in Iraq.

7. We judge that **most attacks against the Coalition are still carried out by FREs.** [...] But the picture is far from complete. [...]

#### **The Threat: Ansar al-Islam (AI), Al Qaida (AQ) and other Mujahedin**

8. The movement of extremists into Iraq continues. [...]

9. We do not know the how many volunteers are moving into Iraq, nor do we know whether the numbers are increasing or not. There is evidence **that some Islamist extremists are experiencing difficulties** in Iraq. [...]

10. [...] Although we continue to see reports of alleged AQ personnel operating in Iraq and support networks elsewhere, **we have no evidence linking AQ to specific attacks**. Usama bin Laden has repeatedly publicly given support to the jihad in Iraq [...] (We still do not know who was responsible for the An Nasiriyah bomb [...]; it could have been FREs, Islamist extremists, or a mixture of both. Contrary to press reporting, there is no evidence implicating AQ).

### **Shia Attitudes**

11. **Shia consent and accommodation with the CF in the South remains solid for the moment**. It will be necessary to ensure Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani does not undermine the CPA transitional political process in order to maintain stability in the south. The level of crime and continued fuel shortages remain concerns. The planned operation to arrest Muqtada al-Sadr has been cancelled.

[...]

12. [...]

13. [...]