

An analysis of international security issues compiled by security professionals for business leaders and those who advise them

Many Western companies are now seriously exploring how they can contribute to the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq's national infrastructure and the development of the Iraqi economy. As they consider the risks and rewards, security must be carefully managed. The immediate lawlessness will subside, but the underlying threat from Islamist terrorism is likely to have been exacerbated by the conflict, and will likely come into play in the medium term. This will have an impact upon security risk in Iraq and beyond.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Janusian has established a security management infrastructure for companies setting up operations in post-conflict Iraq. This includes assistance with threat assessment and planning, and well as physical protection and assistance on the ground. For further information please contact David Claridge on +44 (0) 20 7578 0009 or claridge@janusian.com.

As US troops were poised to enter Baghdad for the final push, the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak made the stark statement that US intervention in Iraq will produce "100 Osama bin Ladens". Mubarak, a steadfast ally of the US in the fight against terrorism, was expressing a widely held view that US unilateralism in its Middle East policy will contribute to an escalation of Islamist terrorism in the future. With his own hard-won experience in dealing with Islamism and terrorism the Egyptian leader is likely to have based his assessment on a number of observations:

- Islamic clerics in the Middle East and in the immediate neighbourhood of Iraq issued fatwas (Islamic decrees) declaring US and British forces as "invading crusaders".
- Islamic political parties and terrorist groups declared war against the "occupation forces" as a jihad urging Muslims around the world to travel to Iraq to fight them.
- Before US intervention, Al Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden issued an audio tape asking the Iraqi people to prepare for jihad against the "invader" and thereafter against the "occupiers".
- The statements by clerics, mosques, and other Islamic organizations repeatedly calling for martyrdom.
- A barrage of images of dead and wounded Iraqi civilians, and especially children, on Arab satellite television networks.
- Sustained and widespread anti-American and British demonstrations across the Muslim world.
- Observations of politicization and radicalization of moderate Muslims from progressive Islamic parties generating open and covert support for Islamism and Islamist parties and groups.

Unlike secular political groups, which tend to be informed by the immediacy of mortality, Islamist groups plan and prepare for the years ahead on a much longer temporal scale. As

they believe that God is guiding them, they are in no hurry to make quick wins. They regard losses as temporary and defeat as a test of their belief in God. If an operating environment does not suit them, they will wait until it does.

Through its website, alneda.com, Al Qaeda is advising the Iraqi people and the few hundred foreign Mujahidin regrouping inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries to be patient and to prepare slowly but cautiously for guerrilla warfare. In its initial reaction to the fall of Baghdad, Al Qaeda posted an article entitled "The Crusaders' War in Iraq" in which guerrilla warfare was suggested as "the Most Powerful Weapon Muslims Have, and It Is the Best Method to Continue the Conflict with the [superior force of a] Crusader Enemy." It went on:

First of all, what is happening today, Wednesday, in Baghdad - that is, Crusader forces entering the heart [of the capital] without fighting - surprised no one who examined the events according to military parameters, because the entrance into cities was anticipated, sooner or later, and the situation in the field did not allow steadfastness by the Iraqi defense [system as long as it functioned as a] regular [army]..Yes, we cannot deny that we were surprised at the ease of their entrance into Baghdad, and [also] that there was no resistance whatsoever by the city. So far we are incapable of understanding where the tens of thousands of regular troops disappeared to overnight...We expected that the method of defense of regular or semi-regular [forces] would collapse, and it would be impossible to withstand. From the beginning of this series of articles, we have focused on the modus operandi of guerilla warfare. This is the most powerful weapon Muslims have, and it is the best method to continue the conflict with the Crusader enemy who has stripped the nation of all the meanings of [military] might, and there is no chance that in the years to come we will be allowed to possess the elements of strength. Thus, the best method of struggle for the weak against the strong is guerrilla warfare.

In his recent public statements Bin Laden has made at least two calls for "martyrdom operations" in Iraq, ensuring that suicide terrorism remains a threat. Others have echoed his call: for instance, the Friday sermon delivered on March 28, 2003, by Sheik Abd Al-Ghafour Al-Qaysi at Abd Al-Qadr Al-Gaylani Mosque in Baghdad was aired on Al-Arabia TV in Dubai in collaboration with Al-Haram Mosque in Mecca. During the sermon the preacher hoisted a gun, whilst speaking the words:

Oh Mujahidin-believers! We have sworn Jihad before Muhammad... We are the army of Allah. We who are fighting against those who are fighting us. Oh Mujahidin -believers everywhere... The evil has arrived. The Satan and his army. The Mujahidin have declared Jihad for the sake of Allah to bring down the banners of the infidels and those full of hatred.. The war has started and evil is spouted from the mouths of those who have lied and continue to lie, those who said that Baghdad will be occupied within hours. And, as you can see, Baghdad is standing firm and everyone in it is carrying arms. Every child in it is carrying arms, and even the women are carrying arms. They will not defile the soil of Baghdad and they will not desecrate any inch of our believing Iraq. Disappointment and defeat will be their fate. Therefore, this war demands patience. Be patient, Allah loves patient people and supports their patience. He has promised them heaven and He will usher them into heaven without any other consideration. For what purpose are you fighting, Oh evil men? We are fighting the Jihad for the sake of Allah. We are fighting to [reach] heaven... They have been hired by the enemy and were doomed in this world and doomed in the world to come. Their dead are in hell because they have attacked a peaceful and believing country, but blessings to anyone amongst us who died a death of a holy man because he earns strength in this world and heaven in the world to come.

As a result of this rhetoric the coalition forces anticipated numerous suicide attacks by Iraqi zealots and foreign Mujahidin in the event resistance was weak and there were only five suicide attacks:

- When US Special Forces attacked the Ansar al-Islam complex in Northern Iraq on March 21, an Ansar member wearing a suicide bodysuit exploded. The bomber failed to kill or injure US troops on that day.
- The following day a Saudi member of Ansar Al Islam exploded a taxi laden with explosives at a checkpoint at a junction near Halabja. The attack killed an Australian

cameraman, two Kurds, and injured ten others. One week before the suicide attack, Mullah Krekar, the leader of Ansar al-Islam, which is an associate group of Al Qaeda opposed both to Saddam and to the US, publicly warned the US against an invasion and explicitly said that they would use suicide attacks.

- On March 29, an explosives-laden vehicle driven by an Iraqi military officer exploded at a US military checkpoint in Najaf, central Iraq killing four US military personnel. The father of many children and a non commissioned officer Ali Jaffar Al Nomani was posthumously promoted to colonel, decorated with two medals, and the family given 100 million dinars (USD 34,000). Some reports suggested that this was not, in fact a suicide attack, but was a proxy bomb that was remotely detonated without Nomani's knowledge. He may have believed he was delivering the taxi to a location where it would be detonated after he had walked away.
- On April 4, an explosives-laden vehicle exploded at a Special Forces operations checkpoint in western Iraq killing three coalition soldiers, a pregnant woman and the taxi driver. This may also have been a proxy bomb.
- On April 10, a suicide bomber attacked a checkpoint on the east bank of the Tigris River about a mile from the Palestine Hotel severely injured four US marines.

Although secular the Saddam regime has provided tangible support to Islamic suicide operations. It encouraged the use of suicide tactics in Israel by offering financial support to the families of martyrs, to the tune of an estimated \$10 million over the course of the Al-Aqsa intifada. In spite of UN sanctions, Rafidain Bank of Iraq moved funds worldwide including to the Palestinian territories through the network of its branches in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, UAE and Yemen. Funds destined for injured Palestinians and to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers were transferred through its offices in Jordan to the Palestinian territories. The Israeli military seized bank statements, cancelled cheques, and documents, all referring to the Rafidain Bank, at the Ramallah office of the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), the Iraqi supported anti-Israeli Palestinian group. The Israeli has alleged that the ALF works closely with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to disseminate funds.

With the exception of the Palestinian causes, Saddam refrained from directly supporting Islamist movements. Prior to the US invasion last month the Iraqi president was hated by most Islamists, including Al Qaeda but during the course of the war he gradually became a symbol of resistance against a mutual enemy. Like Osama bin Laden- who was a effectively non-entity until 70 American cruise missiles targeted his camps in Afghanistan immediately after the US Embassy bombings in East Africa in August 1998- in some quarters Saddam is rapidly becoming a hero.

On March 28, at anti-US demonstration in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 50,000 people marched holding placards of Saddam and burning effigies of Bush. In Sanaa, Yemen, tens of thousands took to the streets; in Khartoum it was 30,000; in Jakarta over 250,000. Across the Muslim world sentiment turned from anti-war and anti-US, to pro-Saddam. In order to appeal to politicised and radicalised Muslims worldwide, Saddam made use of the Islamist card and any other means to stay in power. In context, Sheikh Al-Qaysi at the Mosque in Baghdad said on March 28, 2003: "Allah guard Iraq... Allah guard the Mujahidin... Allah sow fear in the hearts of our enemies... Allah send [against] them soldiers they cannot see... Allah bring victory to Islam and the Muslims... Allah guard our army, our youth, and our women from the evil of these villains... Allah guard the believing leader of Iraq, the symbol of belief and Jihad, the leader Saddam Hussein."

In the event, Saddam failed adequately to defend himself with religious rhetoric and entreaties for suicide operations. A number of Syrian and other non-Iraqi fanatics committed themselves to suicide operations against coalition forces in Iraq, but the Iraqi people did not.

But a future path may have been set, in which Islamist groups take the long view, seeking to undermine the military presence with terrorism.

The Future

Although the governments in the region opposed Saddam, US intervention has brought Iran, Syria and Lebanon together. According to the US intelligence community, Iran and Syria had begun to support Iraq by sending in supplies. In addition, several Islamist parties, groups and other bodies from Egypt to Indonesia have called for a "jihad" against US forces. The most sustained call has been by Al Qaeda. With daily postings alneda.com has been persistently urging Muslims around the world to travel to Iraq for the purpose of fighting the "invading crusaders." In response, a few hundred Arab Mujahidin entered Iraq through Iran and Syria for the purpose of assisting their Iraqi brethren.

The most powerful terrorist group in the world, the Iranian supported Lebanese Hezbollah, has been carefully monitoring the developments in the region. In addition, Hezbollah has monitored reconnaissance and surveillance on several US and Israeli targets worldwide. Although there is no immediate indication that Hezbollah is intending to strike US or Israeli targets, the signs are that Hezbollah is slowly and steadily building its strength. Should the US turn its attentions to Iran next Hezbollah will respond. The Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah recently said that Americans "will not be met in this region with roses, flowers and perfumes. They will be met with arms, martyrdom and rifles." A long-term US presence will engender resentment and terrorism.

Ansar al-Islam, relocated on the Iran-Iraq border, is likely to present a long-term threat to the US presence in Iraq and beyond. Ansar is a Kurdish Islamist group evolved from the Islamic Party of Kurdistan, with 600-700 members. Recent US Special Forces operations against the group killed only an estimated 50 Ansar fighters. A well-armed, trained and directed group, Ansar works closely with Al Qaeda including in the development of poisonous gases.

The most dangerous trend is the politicisation and radicalisation of the progressive Muslim parties and Muslim moderates. The unilateral action by the US in intervening in Iraq has prompted even those who opposed Osama bin Laden after 9-11 such as Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, the grand sheik of Al Azhar University to issue a religious decree emphasising the duty of Muslims worldwide to wage jihad against "invading" forces. Much work the US did immediately after 9-11 to build a widespread anti-terrorist consensus has been negated by the war.

Images of jubilant Iraqis celebrating their newfound freedom do little to deflect the seething anger across the Muslim world at US Middle East policy. With its failure to address the most pressing issue for most Muslims (Israel-Palestine) and its determination to drive through a war in Iraq whatever the consequences, the Bush administration will need to develop a deftness of touch in dealing with the region that has been lacking until now. There are positive signs: Shia fatwas calling for followers to accommodate the coalition troops, and the failure of Al Qaeda to deliver upon its promise to carry out a spectacular attack in the event of a war. But the honeymoon period in Iraq will end, and the patient waiting game played by the Islamists will allow them to strike once more. American and British troops, perhaps the UN, and later Western businesses will present an opportunity for those determined to drive "the Crusaders" back.

Further information: Janusian Security Risk Management is the specialist political risk and security subsidiary of The Risk Advisory Group Ltd. For further information please visit www.janusian.com.