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SUBJECT: UNAMI Baghdad Weekly Sitrep 16 - 22 January 2007

1. General.

The week under review was marked by major IED attacks at the beginning and the end of the week in Baghdad. The attacks, at Mustanseriya University and a predominantly Shiite area in central Baghdad, resulted in over 145 killed and 270 injured and raised the possibility of a series of retaliatory attacks as preparations for the new Baghdad Security Plan continue. On the political front, the Sadrist political bloc ended its boycott of the Maliki's Government, enabling the Council of Representatives (CoR) to achieve a quorum for the first time in over a month.

2. Activities of the SRSG.

Following his return to the mission area, SRSG Qazi met with Prime Minister Al-Maliki to discuss the current situation and the government's strategy. He also met Vice-Presidents, Adel Abdul Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashemi, to discuss reactions to the Baghdad Security Plan, the status of key legislative items and progress towards national reconciliation. He discussed the future of the International Compact for Iraq with Deputy Prime-Minister Barham Saleh and World Bank officials. He attended the Prime Minister's briefing for the Diplomatic Corps and hosted a working luncheon for the Government Spokesman, Dr. Ali al-Dabbagh, and the Minister of Human Rights, Ms. Wijdan Mikhael, at which the Government responded to the recent UNAMI Bi-Monthly Human Rights report.

Accompanying USG/DSS, Sir David Veness, SRSG Qazi met the Minister of Defence, senior Interior Ministry officials, and MNF-I Commander General Casey. He met with US Ambassador Khalilzad to discuss the new US strategy towards Iraq. The visiting Director of the UK Foreign Office Iraq Unit, Simon McDonald, along with UK Ambassador Asquith, called on the SRSG to discuss some issues including Baghdad security, Basra and Kirkuk. He participated by videoconference in the first meeting of the Secretary-General's Iraq Policy Committee.

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3. Security.

Overall, the country saw an increase in incidents reported to 1541 from last week's 1445, while the number of Iraqi civilians killed increased sharply from 250 to 385 and the number of civilians wounded increased from 570 to 771. Two mass casualty attacks in Baghdad were the primary drivers of this increase. The number of unidentified bodies found remained relatively constant at 307 (as compared to 303).

In the Northern region, there was slight increase in activity with combined incidents for the north up to 387 from the previous period's 371. This week a VCIED attack on an MNF-I patrol raises particular cause for concern. Although the explosion missed the patrol, the device comprised 1500lbs of home made explosives. We have previously noted that AOG operating in the north have changed the composition and deployment of IEDs. This attack demonstrates the ability to produce a large scale device, most likely to be deployed against MNF-I, as well as possibly civilians. The north continues to see increased IDF on government facilities and residential areas, which had been less frequent in the area. This week, the north central region witnessed a coordinated and sustained attack on an Iraqi Army facility near Baqubah by more than 50 AOG. This attack further demonstrates AOG ability to launch complex attacks despite major ISF/MNF-I operations in the area. Similarly, a complex attack involving a VCIED and SAF occurred near the main entrance into Balad Air base against MNF-I. In Kirkuk, attacks this week were focused on civilians, as an AOG campaign of intimidation and extortion skyrocketed.

There have also been several coordinated attacks in the Western region, particularly in Ramadi and Fallujah, resulting in reported incidents for the region increasing to 252 from 170. In particular, an attack against an Iraqi Police Station in Fallujah showed a degree of sophistication not before seen in the west. Insurgents managed to occupy the facility, and then planted explosive devices in and around the compound. This event is significant because it impacts community confidence in the lead up to the proposed handover from MNF-I to Iraqi Police in towns west of Ramadi. Responsibility is due to transfer to police units consisting of local tribesmen, who have little, if any, police training or experience. The lack of response by the Iraqi Police in this Fallujah attack, raises uncertainty as to whether Iraqi Police will be able to cope with the security situation, let alone with the expected influx of insurgents from Baghdad as the new security plan gets underway.

Reported incidents in Baghdad were lower than the previous week, down to 594 from 773, although this was still one of the most lethal weeks in over a year. To the west of the city, MNF-I / ISF operations resulted in hundreds of AOG members detained and close to a hundred reported killed. Targeted raids occurring in preparation for the new Baghdad Security Plan, included arrests in Sadr City, have led to increased attacks against the MNF-I. This week, IED related incidents claimed the lives of over 100 people, with a further 200 injured on 16 January alone. On this date, following an IED next to the Sunni Gailani mosque, retaliatory IEDs detonated in and around Sadr City, including two placed at Mustanseriyah University that killed over 60 and injured over 100. On the same day, gunmen targeting civilians in the al-Banook market west of Sadr City killed 12 and injured 30. In the most spectacular attack, on 22 January, a double VBIED attack in a predominately Shiite neighborhood killed over 85 and injured 170. It is assessed that retaliatory attacks will occur around the capital in the coming days.

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The lower south saw a significant increase in incidents reported up to 308 from 131, largely driven by increasingly intense and accurate IDF focused on MNF-I facilities in and around Basra. It is believed that a number of these IDF attacks, as well as an IED attack against an MNF-I patrol, are a response to MNF-I operations targeting JAM elements east of the city. Recent weeks have also seen more frequent and accurate sniper attacks against MNF-I and PSCs, around the Basra Children's Hospital. A well executed complex attack against the Provincial Joint Coordination Centre in Najaf left five US soldiers and an undetermined number of ISF members dead. This attack is notable for its sophistication, involving vehicles disguised as a coalition convoy, and coordination. The group responsible likely included members with military or police training, who probably had access to information about the facility prior to the attack.

4. Political Affairs.

Iraq President Jalal Talabani returned to Baghdad after an official visit to Syria from 14 to 20 January. The joint communiqué issued underlined brotherly relations of two countries and called for greater political coordination, economic cooperation and water resources management. It also indicated that security related issues were discussed and agreed to continue this dialogue. The Syrian President welcomed the Iraqi Army rebuilding process "in preparation of a timetable of the MNF-I withdrawal in accordance with UNSCR 1546 and the end of foreign military presence in the country". Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the UIA leader, whom Jalal Talabani met in Baghdad upon returning from Damascus, characterised the President's visit as "historical".

On 18 January the Iraq Vice President, Tareq al-Hashemi, met King of Jordanian Abdullah II in Amman. The monarch reiterated Jordan's support for the national reconciliation in Iraq "provided that it fulfils the aspirations of all Iraqi groups".

On 21 January the Sadrist political bloc ended its boycott of the Council of Representatives and Maliki's government and stated that this was done after an agreement had been reached on accepting their demand of setting a timetable for training and handover of security file to Iraqi forces, establishing parliamentary committees on the MNF-I withdrawal timetable, non-extension of the withdrawal timetable without parliamentary approval, and measures to strengthen Iraq's sovereignty. With the return of the Sadrist MPs, the CoR managed to achieve a quorum and passed a number of acts, including extension of the current caretaker status of the IECI Board of Commissioners for four months or until the permanent IHEC law is enacted. Mahmoud Othman, the Kurdish bloc spokesman at the Parliament, criticized Maliki's government for "failing to fulfill its duties" and suggested that formation of a national salvation government might be a better option. This idea was supported by Adnan Pachachi, the former interim Speaker of the Council of Representatives.

Saddam Hussein's co-defendants: Barzan Ibrahim and Awad Hamed al-Bandar were executed on 15 January 2007. The fact that Ibrahim was decapitated during the hanging led to protests among the Sunni community and international condemnation of "mishandling" of the execution.

5. Office of Constitutional Support.

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During the period under review OCS finalized preparations and opened its Multiparty Dialogue on Iraq's Judicial Architecture. The conference is being held in Cairo and will run from 20 to 24 January and conference participants included OCS staff, international experts and Iraqi academics, judges, and members of the Constitutional Review Committee. In Baghdad, OCS staff continued to conduct outreach to Baghdad's diplomatic missions concerning UNAMI's plans for the constitutional review. Monitoring on the Hydrocarbon Law and its constitutional implications continued, with OCS providing analysis on the latest draft.

6. Electoral.

On January 21, the CoR voted to extend the current caretaker status of the IECI Board of Commissioners for four months or until the permanent IHEC law is enacted. The CoR also indicated the IHEC law would be passed in the coming weeks before the recess begins. UNAMI is preparing advisory guidance for the CoR for the selection of new Commissioners upon the enactment of the IHEC. UNAMI's election team completed a draft work plan for 2007 and consultations with the IECI Commissioners, IFES and the donor community are now underway. In addition, UNAMI/UNEAD are finalizing and planning for the implementation of the capacity building assessment of the IECI which was initiated in December. Plans are also being drawn up to consult with the Iraqi political parties to determine their electoral planning for 2007.

7. Public Information Office (PIO).

PIO continued to provide synopsis of developments in Iraq during the reporting period. On 16 January, PIO organized the launch of the 9th UNAMI Bimonthly HRO Report with a media encounter at the International Convention Center. The PIO Chief also coordinated with the HRO Chief on a subsequent media interview. PIO monitored and maintained data pertaining to the coverage of the Report (available for review). On 18 January, PIO issued a press statement by the SRSG condemning the bombing near Al-Mustanseriya University and on 22 January PIO received and distributed the hard copy of the Arabic version of UNAMI Focus.

8. Humanitarian Reconstruction and Development (HRD).

On 18 January, DSRSG Fakhouri provided a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Iraq to the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs meeting in New York via videolink, during which numerous agency HQs supported the need for increased action and advocacy to address Iraq's mounting humanitarian crisis. A follow-up meeting in Geneva has been proposed for later this month to better quantify unmet needs and to determine the best course of action for an interagency response. On 17 January, a letter was sent to Resident Coordinators in the region requesting their support for a common approach to address the situation in Iraq, which is taking on an increasing regional dimension. In the meantime, DSRSG Fakhouri accompanied USG Veness to Erbil on 21 January, where meetings were held with senior KRG officials to discuss the operational constraints and opportunities of working in Northern Iraq.

With respect to the International Compact with Iraq, the Government of Iraq has held a number of internal meetings to discuss the Compact's Joint Monitoring Matrix. The first of these meetings was attended by the World Bank and UNAMI in an observer capacity, while the

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remainder have been closed meetings. The meetings have aimed to prioritise actions requiring immediate attention, in particular disbursing standing funds from the 2006 budget and projections for the 2007 fiscal year. The outcomes of these meetings are expected to be discussed in a Technical Committee or Baghdad Coordination Group meeting. Finally, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's meeting with US President George W. Bush on 17 January, may result in a revival of the Compact preparatory process from its hiatus over Eid and the Saudi Government's decision to not to host the final ICI conference. The location and timing of the final meeting remains under closed discussion within the Government.

9. Human Rights Office (HRO).

Large scale acts of violence and intimidation targeting civilian population continued throughout the past week. A large number of targeted killing were reported, continuing the trend of intimidation, displacement based on sectarianism and religious extremism which dramatically affects medical, health and other services in the country. Among the extra-judicial assassinations is the killing of Professor Majid Naser Hussein of Baghdad University by gunmen in Al-Amiriya on 17 January; the killing of one and wounding of another policeman in Amara on 15 January, killing of two policemen and injuring 39 others in the 17 January attack on KDP office in Kirkuk, and several additional targeted assassination incidents reported in Ninevah. Reports from Mosul during the past week include the killing by militants of a member of the Al Shabak community, the director of the al Ebbaa Research Center, a dentist, Iraqi army officers, an employee of the Iraqi Commission for Public Integrity, and numerous others. On 15 January, 34 people were killed and injured in an attack against the KDP office in Mosul.

According to media reports, on 16 January, 30 unidentified bodies were found in different parts of Baghdad. HRO also recorded two new kidnapping cases, noting that this is likely only a fraction of the kidnappings taking place daily in Iraq. On 15 January, a 10-passenger bus was hijacked near Al-Khalis in Baghdad. On 16 January, the director of Al Mansour Municipality was kidnapped by gunmen and his whereabouts are unknown. The fate of the kidnapped 7 Sunni ICRC members is unknown.

HRO continues gathering information on gender based violations and reactions by local officials. Three separate incidents were reported in Kirkuk, involving the sexual abuse of two under-age sisters, a case of female self-immolation and the killing of a mother and a new-born baby.

HRO held several meetings in Amman, Erbil and Baghdad, including with the Speaker of the CoR, the Government Spokesperson and the Minister of Human Rights regarding the national human rights commission legislation and the latest Bimonthly Report, as well as with several leaders of Iraqi NGOs on the issues of human rights violations. On 15 and 16 January, in cooperation with the KRG Ministry of Human Rights, HRO organized a transitional justice seminar entitled "Transforming Past Conflicts - Achieving Resolution for Human Rights Violations in Iraq" in Erbil. Approximately 135 participants attended the seminar, including the KRG Ministers of Human Rights, Justice, Extra-Regions, Labour and Social Affairs and KRG Ministries of Anfal and Martyrs Affairs, Interior and Religious Affairs representatives.

10. Administration.

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The Mission continues to progress development of facilities in Erbil and Baghdad. In Erbil the construction of a new dining facility is 60% complete and a detailed statement of work is being prepared for development of facilities at the proposed new headquarters in Baghdad. In Basra a plan has been prepared for recovery of assets and equipment from the area office in the event that relocation orders are issued. The Danish Airforce C130 arrived in theatre and is currently being prepared for flight operations which are expected to commence in the coming days.

Best regards.

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