



Prepared by the Security & Hazardous Materials Safety Organization (ASH)

Iraq: Attacks on U.S. Interests in Iraq

On 06 June 2021, two separate attacks targeted U.S. interests in Iraq. There have been no claims of responsibility for either attack, as of the time of this report.

The first attack consisted of a rocket attack targeting the U.S. Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BDSC), collocated with Baghdad International Airport (ICAO: ORBI), according to Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) public statements and international press reports. Press reporting specifically noted two rockets impacted within the airport perimeter, targeting the areas of the airport housing U.S. forces. There were no reported injuries or damage resulting from the rocket attack. The Iraqi military subsequently found a rocket launcher equipped with a timer in a rural area of western Baghdad.

The second attack involved two weaponized unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) attempting an attack on Al Asad Air Base (ICAO: ORAA), west of Baghdad, according to press reporting. Both UAS were intercepted by fielded defensive capabilities at Al Asad. According to the Iraqi Security Media Cell, at approximately 0030 hours local time (2230 UTC), counter rocket, artillery, and mortar (C-RAM) systems at Al Asad tracked and shot down two weaponized UAS. Weaponized UAS attacks have targeted U.S. forces at Al Asad previously; the last reported weaponized UAS attack against Al Asad occurred on 08 May 2021 and damaged an aircraft hangar.

Iranian-aligned militia groups (IAMGs) repeatedly targeted U.S. interests, particularly at Baghdad International Airport, throughout 2020. These attacks have continued through the first half of this year, likely in an attempt to influence a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. On 28 May, Iraqi security forces found and dismantled a rocket launch platform emplaced to attack U.S. interests located at ORBI. On 02 May, two rockets were fired at ORBI, with no damage or casualties. On 22 April, at least three rockets impacted within the ORBI perimeter; one rocket landed within the Iraqi forces' residential area and wounded an Iraqi soldier. After the 22 April attack, Iraqi security forces found an unspecified quantity of unfired rockets at a launch site atop an empty house near the airport.

Outlook:

IAMGs in Iraq have increased attacks against U.S. interests using indirect fire weapons, such as rockets, and, more recently, have incorporated weaponized UAS into their attack campaign. The 06 June attacks mirror previously observed IAMG tactics used in other attacks on U.S. interests. IAMGs have repeatedly called for a complete withdrawal of U.S. and other coalition forces from Iraq. IAMGs will likely increase the frequency and complexity of attacks in an effort to influence a U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq.

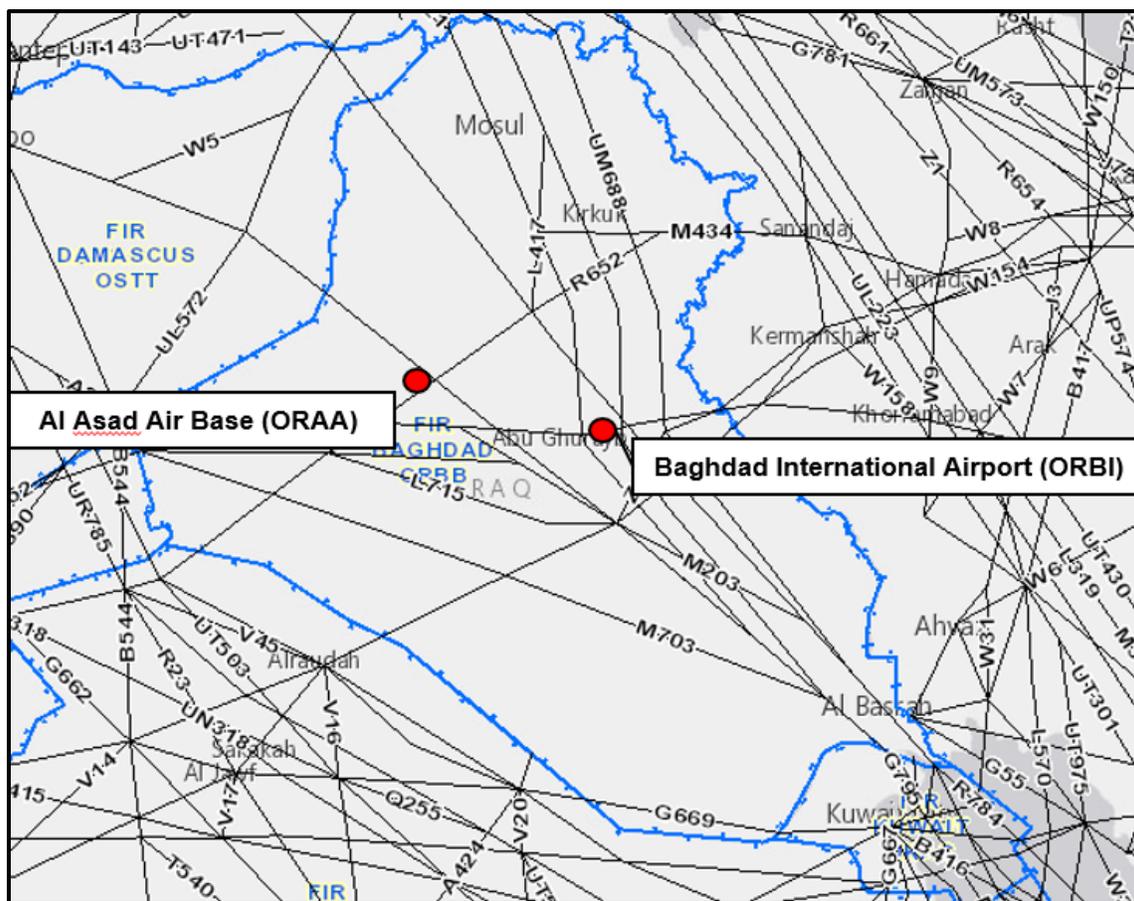
Indirect fire and weaponized UAS attacks against U.S. and coalition military sites collocated with civil airports represent a safety-of-flight hazard to civil aircraft during low altitude phases of flight, including approach and departure, and pose a risk to civil aircraft while on the ground at targeted airports. Such attacks could occur with little or no warning. While indirect fire and weaponized UAS attacks are typically altitude-limited, they could escalate tensions in the region, increasing the inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Baghdad (ORBB) Flight Information Region (FIR) at higher altitudes as well. For example, IAMGs may activate anti-aircraft weapons after attacks in anticipation of counterstrikes.

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IAMG use of anti-aircraft weapons systems would pose an inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation due to the increased potential for miscalculation and/or misidentification resulting from inadequate training and not having a complete airspace picture.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) maintains an all-altitude flight prohibition Notice to Airmen (NOTAM), KICZ A0036/20, for the entire Baghdad FIR (ORBB). This NOTAM is in addition to Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 77, which prohibits U.S. civil aviation operations at altitudes below flight level (FL) 320 in the entire Baghdad FIR (ORBB). Copies of all FAA-issued flight prohibition SFARs, flight prohibition NOTAMs, and advisory NOTAMs are available on FAA's Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Notices website at: http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/us_restrictions/.

If there are any questions, please contact the FAA Threat Analysis Division (AXE-200) at 202-267-3203 or FAA-Watch@faa.gov.



Iraq's Baghdad FIR (ORBB) with high-level air routes.

This graphic is for situational awareness only and is not to be used for navigational purposes.

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