

CPA (SOUTH) NEWS UPDATE No.12

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Background

Following the attack on British members of the Coalition Forces in Basra on Saturday, 23 August, additional security precautions are now in place. These aim to protect members of the public, staff working for Iraqi and non-Iraqi companies and agencies, and non-Iraqi military and civilian staff in the city of Basra.

The security precautions restrict the movement of non-Iraqi staff, especially those working for CPA (South), for the United Nations and non-governmental organisations in Basra. As a result, the work of CPA (South) staff is being affected. Some programmes of work with Basra regional ministries and other organisations are being delayed.

Refugees delayed in Iran

The return of around 100 refugees from Iran has been delayed owing to the security situation.

The refugees come from Basra province. They were scheduled to return to Basra this week. It is now expected they will not return to Basra for at least two weeks. When they return, the refugees will travel by road convoy and be received at the old Basra airport for processing.

Altogether, up to 400,000 Iraqi refugees are currently waiting to return.

New generators at Shaiba Refinery

At the Shaiba Oil Refinery, A 20MW generator is now providing full power to the refinery. Twenty 1-MW generators have been delivered as back-up; eighteen have been installed, and fourteen are operational. The concrete bases for two 12.9MW Siemens generators are being laid. The target date for completion is 30th September.

This work will enable the refinery to produce significant volumes of benzene, diesel and, by October, LPG for Iraqi markets.

Blood bank plan for Basra

CPA (South) health staff have now completed a survey of the Basra blood bank, located next to the Children's and Maternity Hospital. Until now, people in Basra who have needed blood for surgery, have had to ask friends and family to provide it.

The survey found that Basra blood bank has a very knowledgeable and dedicated staff, working with limited resources. Basra province currently needs around 250 pints of blood every day for use in surgery and for accident victims. The current capacity is 100 pints per day.

CPA (South) staff have been in contact with the director of the Kuwait blood bank, and both he and his health minister have been supportive and helpful. Now, CPA (South) is looking for support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to increase the capacity of Basra's blood bank. In the past, some NGOs have provided positive help, while others have promised assistance. If funding is found, this task could be completed by the end of September.

Health centre for Marsh Arabs

CPA (South) health staff are in the final stages of completing a proposal to create a health centre for Marsh Arabs, to be located near Basra International Airport.

The health centre, a semi-permanent structure with accommodation, will provide primary health care for 10,000 people in that locality, also for passing caravans. Until now, Marsh Arabs have had virtually no healthcare: many suffer from malnutrition and a lack of sustainable work. Childhood mortality among Marsh Arabs is higher than among the Basra population as a whole, because there are no local facilities and it is difficult to travel into Basra in times of emergency.

The project is being developed and supported by the US Civil/Military Interface Centre (CIMIC) team, based in Basra.

\$25,000 to meet short-term oxygen needs

The sum of \$25,000 has been agreed to buy oxygen to meet the short-term needs of hospitals in Basra city. 1,000 bottles of oxygen are needed each week across the four provinces, and although local production capacity can meet the need, the cost of oxygen has risen from \$1 to \$6 a bottle, which is extremely expensive.

In addition, most of the oxygen produced is industrial grade-oxygen. Although this type is used safely in hospitals, it is better for patients to have medical-quality oxygen available.

The oxygen will be purchased from commercial sources.

In the longer term, a proposal to buy a commercial medical-grade oxygen production plant has been made, and a decision is expected in the near future. This plant would be specially constructed, would be self-contained, including generators for electricity, and would supply all the medical needs of the South. It will cost around \$300,000 to purchase and take 6-9 months to install.

Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the Kuwaiti Star of Hope charity, have already supplied oxygen and oxygen bottles to meet the needs of Iraq's hospitals.

Boreholes tested to check salt levels in water

Boreholes across the Basra governorate are being tested to measure how much the salinity of the water has increased.

Increased salinity in the water is believed to be the result of the draining of marshland under the previous regime, the creation of micro-climates because of the drainage programme, and the effects of dam projects in Turkey and Syria on water in the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Sampling will continue until October 2003. The samples will be analysed in collaboration with the Ministry of Irrigation, and the results of the analysis will be known by the end of the year.

Emergency housing for 4,000

Plans for emergency housing in the four provinces of the South, Al Basrah, Al Muthanna, Dhi Qar and Maysan, have been released. The aim of the programme, a Governing Council initiative announced by the Governor, Judge Wael Abdulattif earlier this month, is to create 4,000 homes – 1,000 in each province - within six months to meet housing needs of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

In Basra, the Emergency Housing Committee, representing local councils and the Housing and Reconstruction Ministry in Basra governorate, met on Monday, 25th August to discuss sites for new housing. Meetings in other provinces are likely to take place during September.

Work will be carried out by local contractors, chosen by Committees in each province. The estimated value of the entire project is \$27,500,000. It will create around 20,000 jobs across the province.

Each home will consist of single-storey housing, suitable for up to five people, each with a kitchen, bathroom, toilet and small garden space. A plan of the proposed housing is attached.

'Schools in a Box'

A plan to distribute UNICEF 'Schools in a Box' education kits to schools in the southern provinces has been finalised. Discussions are now taking place on the process and timescale for distribution.

UNICEF 'Schools in a Box' kits contain materials for teachers and up to 40 pupils, including exercise books, individual slates and chalk, and posters.

For more details about UNICEF 'Schools in a Box', see the attached information sheet from UNICEF (text in English only).

Further Information

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