



IFJ Safety Advisory Mosul Iraq

Introduction: Due to the current high risk situation journalists are experiencing operating in Mosul, Iraq the IFJ has produced this safety advisory, which describes best practices and procedures that should be considered whilst newsgathering in and around Mosul to mitigate and avoid dangerous situations.

This Safety advisory has been constructed on the latest available risk and threat analysis and can be utilized by all sectors of Iraqi media covering the current combat operations. The instructional material is based on events and incidents that have happened during the recent combat operations although new threats can develop as the conflict evolves. Two Iraqi journalists have already lost their lives from small arms (Sniper fire) in the line of duty covering this volatile high-risk environment.

After 10 days of combat operations the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces are now getting closer and meeting fanatical Asymmetric tactics and resistance on the periphery of Mosul. The resistance forces are using guerilla tactics and are avoiding full frontal contact with the conventional forces operating on the ground. They are also using diversionary tactics and sleeper cells to draw combat troops off the frontline such as it has happened in Kirkuk this week. This will not be the last of these attacks so diligence needs to be a priority on all surrounding towns and cities and road routes leading to Mosul. This type of tactic is common when asymmetric forces are retreating or defending a location from a large conventional force.

Asymmetric Tactics being used By ISIS in Mosul

- Small arms attacks
- Ambush tactics including frontline fighters wearing suicide vests
- Heavy weapons attacks
- Fleets of car and truck suicide bombers
- Discriminate assassination of innocent civilians
- Suicide vest Bombers
- Sleeper cell attacks
- Active shooter incidents
- Landmine and IED Road side attacks
- Drone attacks (Dropping improvised devises from civilian UAVs onto advancing troops and static locations)
- Burning facilities to release poisonous chemicals
- Potential chemical warfare attacks (Chlorine and Mustard Gas)

- Attacks from tunneled positions using small arms ambush tactics. All tunnels are bobby trapped incase they have to escape when advancing military forces breach the tunnel system. Make sure they are cleared before you enter.
- Individual and group Kidnappings
- Slowing down advancing troop movement using (Explosive devices, booby Traps and lighting oil fires)
- Use of Human shields
- Diversionary attacks

Conventional Military Combat Actions

- Small arms fire
- Heavy weapon fire (Mortar and Artillery)
- Tanks and armored vehicles
- Wire guided missile
- Multi launch rocket system
- Airstrike attack
- Frontline combat infantry and supporting arms operational tactics

Operational media task planning when covering frontline combat operations

- Planning is the most important part of newsgathering in regions of conflict.
- Before any deployment can commence, detailed prior planning must take place to ensure the success of the assignment, reduce the risk and retain control.
- Planning allows you to anticipate events and create a threat and risk analysis with countermeasures.
- It reduces reaction time and enables you to start immediate implementation of your proactive plans.
- Know the tactics that are being used by both sides.
- Know where to get medical treatment if injured (Local hospitals and military aid stations)
- Make sure you have a communication plan with your HQ let them know your location and current situation
- Have a plan for relocation of newsgathering
- If embedded with conventional forces ask about actions on incident (Attack) and what are the drills especially when travelling in military transport
- Always wear your protective equipment and helmet when travelling in vehicles when near frontline operations
- Know your safe havens and escape routes
- Do not use large cameras or tripods on frontline coverage they are cumbersome if you have to move quickly or have to crawl and from distance can be mistaken for weapon systems, stick to small cameras and monopods
- Under no circumstances pick up any weapons you will lose your neutrality as a journalist and be treated as a combatant
- The best policy when covering combat operation is always be **proactive** not **reactive**

Conflict analysis

What are its consequences for newsgathering in this environment?

- Are conventional or asymmetric tactics being used in your area of newsgathering?
- Analysis of actors involved
- What are their capacities and capabilities?
- What factors contribute to prolonging the conflict?
- What factors may impact on your personal safety?
- Embedded with Military Forces and risks associated

Essential Personal Equipment

- Clothing: Wear appropriate clothing for the environment
- Footwear: Pair of well-broken in, comfortable, water-resistant boots, which give good ankle support and are flexible with good tread, is essential in all environments.
- Personal protective equipment
- Navigational Equipment.
- Personal First Aid kit.
- Communications Equipment.
- Camera and Recording Equipment (Think smart with choice of photographic equipment)
- Food and Drink.
- Sleeping equipment
- Press Identification.
- Authorization to report and take photographs and video

“Military Equipment: Do not dress in military clothing or carry military equipment like bags otherwise individuals may be mistaken for military combatants”

Ballistic Protection

- Body Armor: level **four** protection ballistic plates are needed
- Ballistic Helmet
- Ballistic Glasses

Chemical Protective equipment

- Gas mask
- Chemical protective suits
- Chemical Poisoning get industrial protective masks

Small arms Attack: Familiarize yourself with weapons being used and their capabilities

Types of Static cover

- Sand banks
- Earth Banks
- Rocky Areas
- Shell scrapes and trenches
- Large concrete constructions

“Do not use single thickness structures as protective cover. High velocity bullets will go straight through”

Vehicle protective cover

- Only use the engine block as protective cover on soft skin vehicles!
- Armored vehicles

Small arms and heavy weapons safety distances

- Pistols: **50** meter safety distance
- Rifles: **300** meter more than two people firing at you **600** meters
- Sniper rifle: **800 – 2000** Meter
- Light machine Gun: **600 - 800** meter
- Heavy machine gun: **800 – 1000** meter
- RPG: **100** Meters and **360** degrees of weapon
- Mortar: **300 – 800** meter
- Artillery: up to **16** km

Reaction to small arms fire

“Always be vigilant when moving on foot or as part of an embedded military foot patrol and always check where you are stepping and scan the ground ahead, laterally and to the rear of yourself if you are advancing towards any combat actions”

- React immediately to incoming fire. Get down and crawl into protective cover.
- If you are moving on foot move in short bursts in a zig zag movement especially over long distances or open ground and keep your spacing do not bunch together
- Never take or break cover as a group. You present yourself as a bigger target
- Avoid taking cover where a person is, or has recently been, firing
- Never film directly behind a firer. Always in cover and from an angle
- Remember Outgoing fire attracts incoming fire
- Never look over the top of cover to observe. Get low and look around the cover.
- If taking cover never get up from the same position you went down. Crawl back then get up at a different angle. A gunman may be watching you position.
- Avoid crossing large spaces in urban and rural environments

Sniper Awareness

Possible sniper positions

- Any elevated position
- Rooftops
- Kill holes (Loop holes in walls and concrete structure)
- Deep in windows
- Sand dunes
- Sewers
- Derelict buildings
- Deep vegetation
- Tunnel locations
- Large transmitter or electrical masts

Sniper Countermeasures

- Alert yourself to the presence of snipers. eg hearing single shot engagements from over 300 meters
- Make sure where there is risk of snipers you always wear your protective equipment it can save your life. Snipers favored tactic is to aim at central body mass which your body armour protects.
- When moving in open ground keep moving
- Keep exposure down to a minimum
- Do not skyline yourself
- Always be looking for protective cover when moving
- Do not silhouette yourself on high ground
- Long range shooting requires the shooter to be able to judge the wind. Avoid areas with flags, ribbons or plastic bags which could aid a shooter to judge wind
- When moving in urban environments avoid possible kill zones. Long clear views unobstructed streets where snipers can easily shoot static or moving targets. Identify where snipers have already carried out distance measurements like isolated vehicles and prominent buildings. They use these to test and record distances to get accurate shots on target

Heavy weapons

Mortar Attack

- If mortars are incoming immediately do to ground lying flat on your stomach. Do NOT kneel. Cover your head with your hands and stay where you are until mortar attack has stopped.
- Never run about when there is a mortar attack. You will get hit.

Artillery attack

- As per mortar attack.
- Try to seek protective overhead hardcover if possible.

Airstrike awareness

- Always be observing for potential airstrikes.
- Observe for jet engine smoke in the air and aircraft sound.
- Check weather reports, as aircraft may not fly in low cloud or inclement weather.
- Do not expose yourself in open areas.
- Do not silhouette yourself on high ground.
- Try not to locate yourself near strategic targets (Military or Opposition forces)
- Be aware. Long-term use of your communication equipment can be used to locate you by triangulation and your position compromised. Smart phones, satellite equipment and transmitters are especially vulnerable.

If you are caught in the open during an air attack

- Never run about. You will be subject to more risk from airstrike
- Drop to the floor cover your head with your hands. Open your mouth and do not hold your breath as your eardrums could be damaged.
- Try to crawl into overhead protective cover.
- Do not move until you are confident the airstrike has finished.

If you are caught in a building during an airstrike

- If you are in a building, drop to the ground and move away from windows immediately.
- Seek immediate cover under a staircase or supportive corners of room. Be aware of falling structures and roofs.

If under attack whilst driving

- If driving, decide whether to accelerate out of the bombing zone, or abandon the vehicle and seek immediate cover.
- If the attack is on your current route seek alternative route.
- If your vehicle is directly attacked or you are stuck in a convoy you should get out and seek cover away from the vehicle.
- Keep observing the skies when driving for signs of aircraft.
- Do not travel in convoy in high-risk areas & always assume that your vehicle will be targeted.

Checkpoint Awareness

- Always be vigilant to potential IED or car bomb attacks if you are situated near a military checkpoint
- At the checkpoint look for earth or sand protective makeshift barriers this indicates the military are maybe expecting car or suicide attacks.

Improvised Explosive devises

Types of IED

- Blast
- Fragmentation

- Directional (Explosively formed projectile)
- Timed

General Mitigation measures

- Keep vigilant at all times even when tired. There will be lots more road side attacks especially on the main roads and supply routes leading in and out of the city of Mosul
- Awareness of IED devices being used
- Possible placement points of IEDs
- Awareness of alignment markers (Telegraph poles, electrical wires on the side of the road and placement of rock piles on the side of the road)
- Never use your mobile phones when in close proximity to possible devices as some IEDs are initiated by GSM signal
- IEDs have been concealed in dead animals and Humans
- If driving be cautious where a vehicle slows down on bends or turns in the road or where there are obstacles in the road to slow down traffic like speed humps
- Be aware when crossing bridges or there are pipes/drains on the side of the road. These are very common placement points for IEDs
- Look for wires on the road whilst driving. Command wires are sometimes visible especially in desert locations.
- Try to use central lane driving position and accelerate when you anticipate possible placement areas
- If driving your own civilian vehicles keep away from military vehicles and especially convoys as they are potential targets

Car and truck bomb attack

Car and trucks bomb suicide attacks have been used extensively during the defense of Mosul where fleet and single vehicle attacks have occurred. This technique is used to slow down troop movements so any attacking force or static military location is a potential target for this type of attack.

- If you see a vehicle that is approaching a checkpoint at speed immediately take evasive action.
- You immediately drop to the ground and try and get into some type of protective cover to protect you from the blast and over pressure of the explosion or try to distance yourself as far as you can from the attack whilst moving or crawling in some kind of protective cover.

Safety distances

- Any static device minimum **300** meter
- Small Vehicle **380** meter
- Passenger van **600** meter
- Large truck **1200** meter

Kidnap Awareness

Risk reduction

- Reduce your exposure in high risk areas
- Stick to the plan
- Correct risk analysis
- Make sure any sources you meet are in a controlled environment

Surviving a kidnap situation

- If taken you will probably be used as a human shield
- You will be subjected to enhanced interrogation techniques
- Do not talk about politics or religion.
- Maintain dignity and respect at all times.
- Manage your time and personal health.
- Do not try to identify your captors. They could kill you for this
- Even in a large group you are still a target

Escape

- The percentage of people that do escape is very low so weigh up the consequences of escape.
- You must know where you are geographically.
- Be fit enough to escape
- Hide by day and only move by night is sometimes a better option

Surviving a hostage rescue

- The termination of any kidnapping incident is very dangerous
- Remain calm and hit the floor. Keep away from doors and windows as the assault team might use them for explosive entry.
- Make no sudden moves and wait to be identified.
- Follow all instructions you are given.
- You may experience rough treatment. Be prepared.