

REPORT

MUTHANNA PROVINCE OVERVIEW

Embassy of the Netherlands, Baghdad



GENERAL | 18 FEBRUARY 2013

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INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared in a response from a request from the Embassy of the Netherlands for a high level assessment and provincial update on al-Muthanna province, southern Iraq. The assessment is being provided ahead of a visit to the province, which will focus on redevelopment projects.

The assessment covers the following:

- Provincial economy overview
- Location of health services
- Overview of tribes and clans in the area
- Incidents in the last 12 months and an assessment of security
- High level political overview of the project

The report is intended as an overview and offers an assessment of security in the province to inform mission planning for the intended visit. Should more detail be required, Control Risks would be happy to develop a scope of work to meet these requirements.



PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

Muthanna province is the second largest in Iraq and is located on Iraq's southern border with Saudi Arabia. It is mostly desert with the only natural water source being the river Euphrates (although there are reported to be extensive underground reservoirs) and is the second least populated province after Anbar. Samawah, the capital city, is situated close the ancient city of Uruk, built in 400 BC and the other major conurbations are al Rumaythah and al Khidir.

PROVINCIAL ECONOMY - OVERVIEW

Unemployment in the governorate is high at 25%, rising to 28% in rural areas, while female labour force participation is very low at 10%.

The underdevelopment of the governorate's economy may be contributing to the large proportion of the population (49%) living below the national poverty line, the highest in Iraq.

Major Industries

Agriculture

Muthanna is a large producer of dates. Agriculture in the province includes: wheat, barley, rice, citrus fruits, and tomatoes, dairy and poultry farming, animal feed production and fishing. In addition, Samawah is home to the small and rare trade in wild truffles which grow in the desert regions of Muthanna province. Forty five per cent of the population of Muthanna work in agriculture.

Brick making

Muthanna has a thriving industry in traditional sun-baked brick manufacture existing on the outskirts of Samawah and using primarily female labourers for forming and drying bricks. Large temporary kilns with chimney stacks as high as 30 m (98 ft.) are constructed by villagers in the surrounding region to make baked bricks with the same methods used during the Sumerian and Akkadian periods.

Cement production

Muthanna is a large producer of various types of salt, which can be utilized to produce cement.

Samawah had the largest cement factories in the Middle East during the 1970s with a total production capacity of 2.85 million tonnes a year.

There are reported to be two cement factories operating in Muthanna province. Samawah Cement Plant produces its sulphate resistant cement. It has a capacity of one million tons per year. Al-Muthanna Cement Plant lies to the south-west of the province and produces two million tons of cement per annum.

Media

Muthanna TV broadcasting company operates from Samawah. It focuses primarily on local and International news and issues.

Oil production and refining

There is reported to be a small oil refinery in Samawah with an estimated capability of 30,000 bbl/d (4,800 m³/d). The facility is linked by pipeline to the Kifl oil field in Samawah province and is designed for processing heavy crude oil, allowing the light crude to be exported.

Salt

The Bahr al Milh, or Salt Sea, is located 70 km southwest of Samawah and is the main source of industrial salts in Iraq. Salt mining and processing facilities are located in the region to exploit this resource which is used in many food, pharmaceutical, chemical and soap industries.

Textiles

There is a small carpet making industry in Samawah, primarily employing women. Cheap raw materials in the form of wool, is obtained from the desert Bedu who use Samawah as their main trading post.

Future potential

The governorate has potential for economic growth in tourism, agriculture and the manufacturing and processing of salt, cement, bricks and textiles.

The Provincial Government aims to develop these sectors further and take advantage of the border with Saudi Arabia to make the governorate a major thoroughfare for trade and pilgrims.

HEALTH SERVICES

The following health centres have been identified in Muthanna province. The grid references for these locations are also provided. Site visits have not been conducted. Therefore Control Risks cannot offer an assessment of the suitability of these health centres for use of visitation by the Embassy.

Samawah

Samawah Hospital. Grid reference: 38R NV 25977 65219

College of Medicine. Grid reference: 38R NV 27171 65014

al Khidir

al-Khidir General Hospital. Grid reference: 38R NV 50941 51580

al-Rumaythah

Al-Rumaythah General Hospital. Grid reference: 38R NV 18649 87196



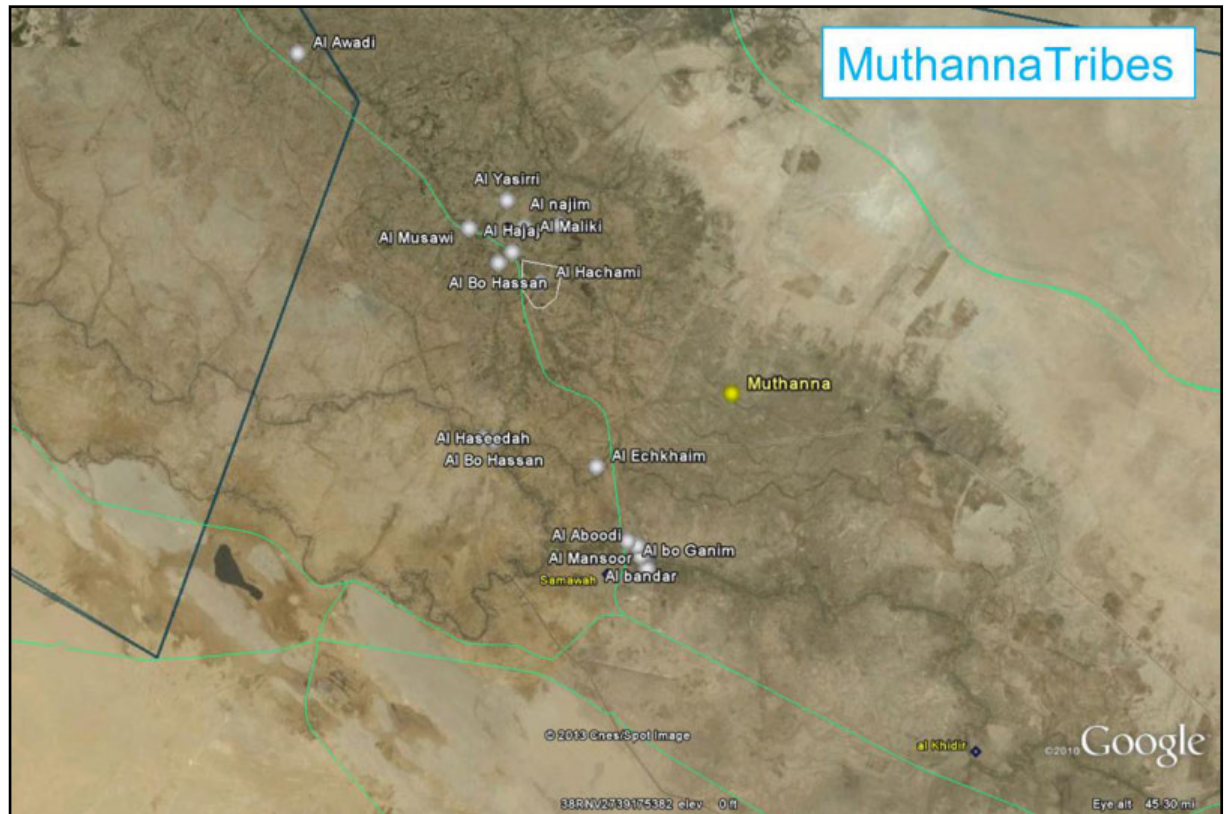
Tribes and clans

The following tribes and clans are present in Muthanna province. The general locations of these groups is depicted in the map below. The scope of this report does not cover a detailed breakdown of tribal affiliations. Control Risks would be happy to conduct further research should it be required.

1. Al Bandar - Samawah
2. Al Aboodi - Samawah
3. Al-Ajeb clan - Sheikh Karim al Mutalb.
4. Al Awadi
5. Alkhozaal clan - Sheik Hussein Shaalan.
6. Barakat clan - Sheikh Kamel Ashish.
7. Al Echkhaim
8. Al bo Ganim clan – Samawah - Sheikh Nuri Azarp.
9. Al Hachami
10. Hadjim clans: clan of the Bu Hassan – Rumaythah - Sheikh Ali Sultan Hachim.
11. Al Hajaj - Rumaythah
12. Al Haseedah
13. Al Bo Hassan
14. Al Humaidi - Samawah
15. Jabour tribe - Sheikh Ali Abdel.
16. Al Maliki – Rumayathah
17. Al Mansoor – Samawah

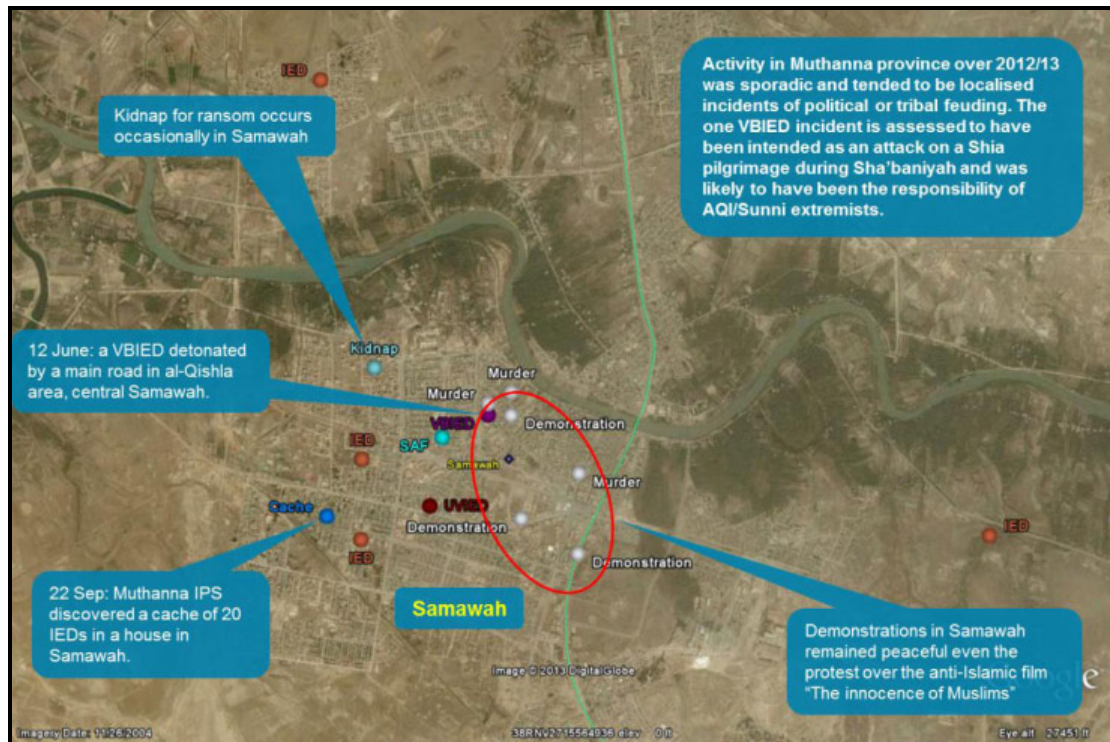
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18. Al Najim - Rumaythah
19. Al Musawi – Rumaythah
20. Al Yasirri - Rumayathah
21. Zawalm tribe - Sheikh Al Shaalan.
22. Ziad clan - Sheikh Muhammad Kazem.



INCIDENTS

Activity in Muthanna province over 2012/13 was sporadic and the vast majority of incidents were assessed as localised political or tribal feuding. Activity was centred on Samawah, the capital, with incidents in the other parts of the province being mainly security operations and cache finds. Incident levels are expected to remain low although there may be instances of political violence in the run up to the regional elections on 20 April 2013.



Improvised explosive device (IED) and small arms fire (SAF) attack

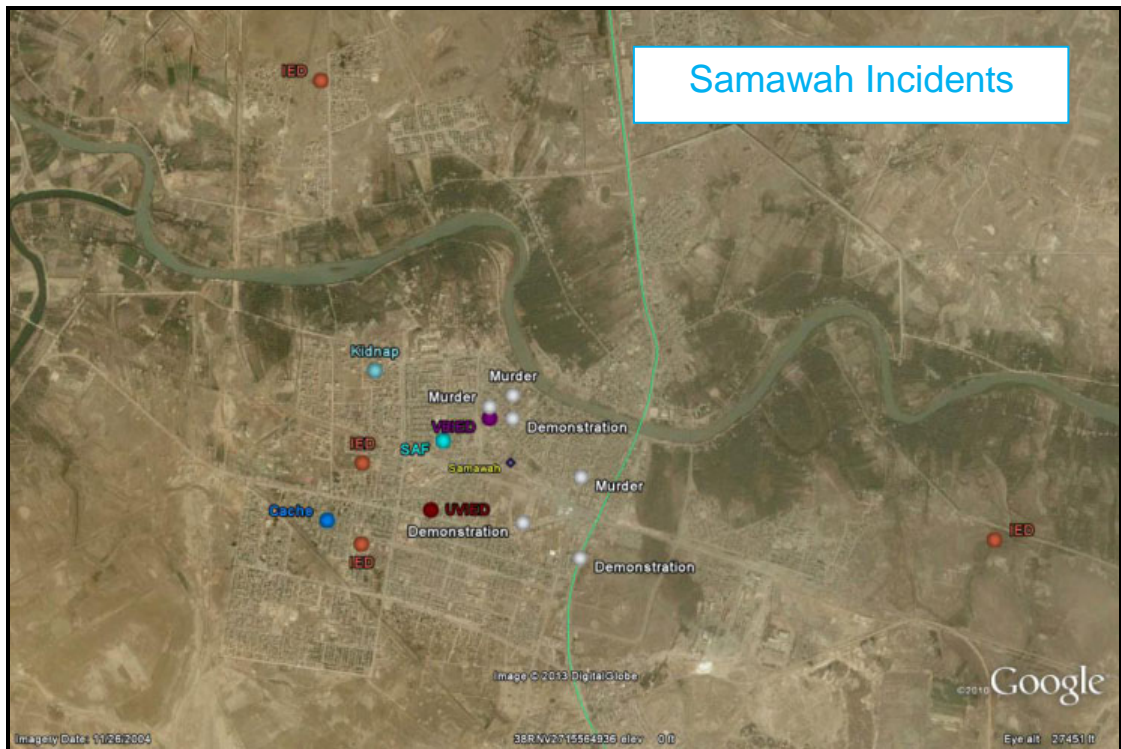
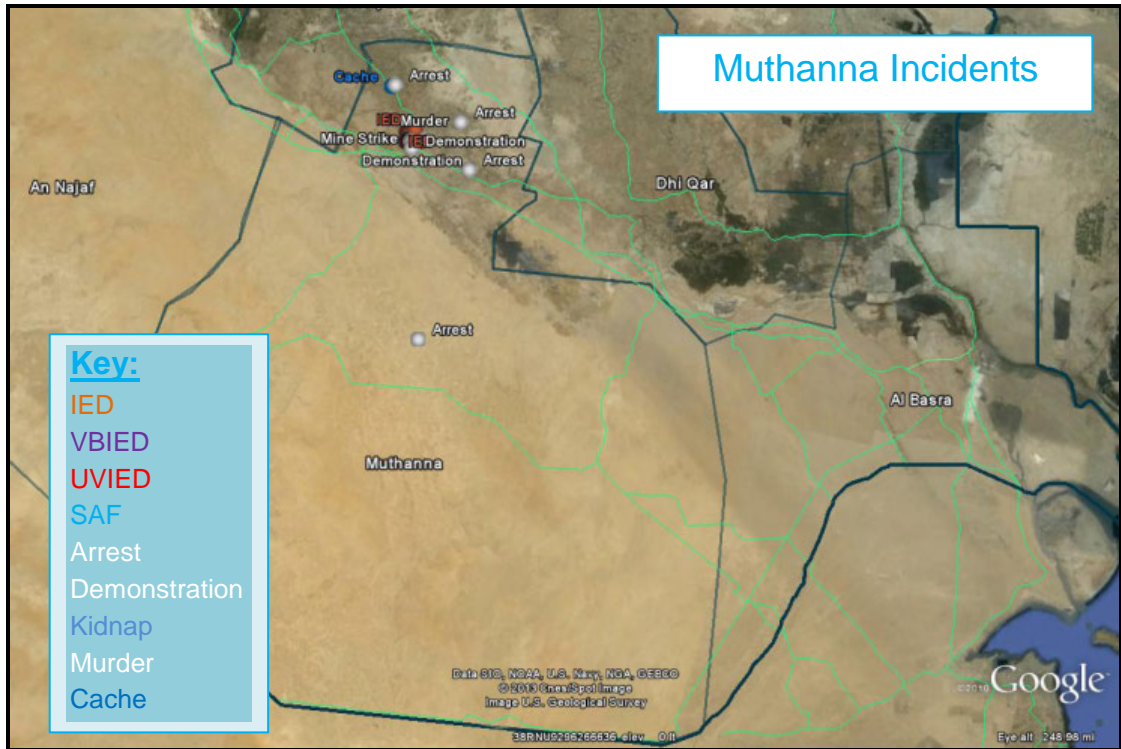
IEDs and SAF attack occur on a sporadic basis and the vast majority of incidents were assessed as localised political or tribal feuding. The one VBIED incident is assessed to have been intended as an attack on a Shia pilgrimage during Sha'baniyah and was likely to have been the responsibility of AQI/Sunni extremists.

Kidnap

Kidnap for ransom, although rare, does occur in Muthanna. The main target is Iraqi civilians although foreign stakeholders would also be likely to be viewed as an attractive target for abduction. The use of an armed protection team would mitigate the threat of abduction due to teams being trained and equipped to counter any kidnap attempt.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations in Muthanna generally occur in Samawah, the capital, and tend to focus on industrial disputes and local issues. They have all remained peaceful during 2012/13, even the protest over the anti-Islamic film "The innocence of Muslims". There are not assessed to be any direct threat to foreign interests although any large gathering should be avoided as a matter of course.



Political overview

Possible political violence in Muthanna

Muthanna is considered to be the most benign of the southern Iraqi provinces although even here there may be outbreaks of violence. These are not expected to be as deadly as those in Maysan or even Basra provinces but the province could still witness demonstrations and incidents of murder and intimidation particularly in Samawah

- The regional elections in Maysan, Dhi Qar, Muthanna and Basra provinces are slated for 20 April 2013. The previous regional elections were held in 2009 and were won exclusively by Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition (Dawa Party). Prime Minister Maliki is still generally seen as the front runner for these elections with the only province where the State of Law Coalition is likely to see a possible rival is Maysan.
- Political tensions are expected to rise in the run up to the elections and there may be an increase in instances of murder and intimidation in all four provinces. These incidents are likely to consist of small mainly intimidatory IED attacks on vehicles and private residences with more destructive attacks on political offices involving IEDs, hand grenades (HG) and arson attacks. In extreme cases there may be instances of close quarter assassination using suppressed weapons particularly hand guns. There may also be an increase in politically motivated demonstrations across the whole region which could turn violent in extreme cases.
- It is expected that the State of Law party will remain the dominant party in southern Iraq after the regional elections in April 2013 and that there will be little change to the overall political landscape.

2009 regional election results

Party	Total votes	Percentage	Seats	Party Leader
State of Law Coalition	22,627	10.9%	5	Nouri al-Maliki
al-Mehraab Martyr List (ISCI)	19,448	9.3%	5	Abdul Aziz al-Hakim
Al-Jumhoor List	14,520	7.1%	3	
National Reform Trend	12,878	6.3%	3	Ibrahim al-Jaafari
Independent Free Movement	11,436	-	2	Muqtada al-Sadr
Gathering for Muthanna	10,867	5.0%	2	
Independent National List	9,854	4.9%	2	
Independent Iraqi Skills Gathering	8,941	4.4%	2	
Middle Euphrates Gathering	8,322	3.9%	2	
Other parties		42.7%	0	
Total	207,752	100%	26	

In Muthanna province, where the State of Law party and Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) al-Mehraab list each won 5 seats, both parties created their own alliance forming blocs of 13 seats.

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The State of Law formed a Coalition with the National Reform Trend (3 seats), Sadrists (2 seats) and the Middle Euphrates Gathering (2 seats) while ISCI created an alliance with the al-Jumhur List (3 seats), the Gathering for Muthanna (2 seats), and the Independent National List (2 seats).

The Independent Iraqi Skills Gathering which had 2 seats was split between these two blocs.

However Ibrahim Salman al-Miyali, an independent who ran as part of the State of Law Coalition left and joined ISCI's block because Maliki did not nominate him for an important position. This gave the ISCI block a 14 seat majority and led to his election as governor with ISCI member Abd al-Latif Hassan al-Hassani being elected as chairman.

SUMMARY

The security situation in Muthanna province is relatively benign compared to most other provinces in Iraq and the threat of direct or indirect attack on diplomatic personnel is considered to be low. However, thorough journey management procedures and the Embassy's standard security precautions and protocols should be followed throughout this visit.

In the run-up to provincial elections in April 2013, the risk of politically motivated violence may increase. The form that it is likely to take is targeted intimidation attacks against local political personalities. Whilst this will not pose a direct threat to the Embassy's mission, it is an important dynamic to be aware of in the coming month. Political rallies and demonstrations by the local population over provision of basic services and employment may also increase. This is unlikely to have a direct impact on the Embassy's mission but may travel disrupt travel, especially in the provincial capital.