

## **BAGHDAD HEADQUARTERS BOMBING**

On Tuesday, August 19, 2003, a massive and deadly bombing took place at the UN headquarters compound in Baghdad. The following quotes provide a chronology on that bombing and its continuing aftermath.

"Military weapons, including a ... 500-pound bomb, were used to blow up part of the UN compound here, the [US] FBI's special agent in Iraq said Wednesday. ...

[A truck, driven by a suicide bomber] had been driven up beside the wall. He said a similar vehicle was used in the attack on the Jordanian Embassy here 13 days ago that killed 17 people ...

Rescue workers were still digging through the rubble of the UN compound Wednesday in the belief that more bodies might be found.

The official toll stood at 20 dead, in addition to the bomber, three missing and more than 100 wounded ...

... there were signs that [Sérgio] de Vieira de Mello had been the target of the attack. The explosion happened just beneath his third-floor office.

If anarchy was the goal, it was anarchy that unfolded.

Screams and moans rose from the dozens of bloodied UN workers who lay across the courtyard, as American soldiers pulled the living from ruins. ...

... a UN spokeswoman said the bombing was the deadliest attack on the organization in its history."

Neil MacFarquhar and Dexter Filkins, "Military bombs used in attack against UN ", International Herald Tribune, **August 21, 2003**.

"As grief at the devastating destruction of the UN compound in Baghdad cascaded through the organization's headquarters [in New York], a few officials and diplomats began to raise troubling questions about the incident.

Was the United Nations trying to do too much with too little support -- and particularly too little security? And why has what one official called its 'moral shield' become so porous? Excluding peacekeepers, about 240 civilian UN workers have died in the line of duty since 1992 in places like Rwanda, East Timor, Somalia and Kosovo."

Felicity Barringer, "At the UN, a time for taking stock", International Herald Tribune, **August 21, 2003**.

"Grief among Western officials here was intense after the bombing Tuesday and unease widespread.

Many feel helpless. They are not sure who to blame -- pointing the finger alternately at Islamic militant groups and Iraq's own neighbors ...

After a bombing at the Jordanian embassy last week, senior U.S. officials warned that other soft targets might be next. But the United Nations deliberately avoided sealing itself off because it feared such barriers would send the wrong message to Iraqis seeking

help. ...

The United Nations has been targeted before. Three employees were killed over the past few months in shooting attacks. ..."

Neil MacFaquhar, "Western aides grieve and express concern", International Herald Tribune, **August 21, 2003**.

"American investigators looking into the deadly suicide bombing of the United Nations compound [in Baghdad] are focusing on the possibility that the attackers were assisted by Iraqi security guards who worked there ...

The American official ... said that all of the security guards [there] were agents of the Iraqi services, to whom they regularly reported on UN activities prior to the war. The UN continued to employ the security guards after the war was over ...

[He] said when investigators began questioning the guards, two of them said they were entitled to 'diplomatic immunity' and refused to cooperate. ...

'We believe the UN's security was seriously compromised', the official said.

... the American official said he was surprised that the UN had continued to employ the guards after Hussein's government was destroyed.

American officials said this week that UN administrators had turned down an American offer to provide greater security around the building.

The possibility that the Iraqi security guards cooperated in the attack has increased the suspicion that Sérgio de Vieira de Mello was a target of the attack. The truck pulled up just below de Mello's office while he was inside meeting with American officials."

Dexter Filkins, "Inside job suspected in Baghdad UN blast," International Herald Tribune, **August 22, 2003**.

"As the United Nations searched for ways to improve security after the bombing of its Baghdad headquarters, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that both the United States and the world body had made mistakes in Iraq and added pointedly that security was the responsibility of the occupying power.

Speaking Wednesday on his return to the United Nations ... Annan said he had been surprised by reports that the United Nations turned down an offer of security from U.S.-led coalition forces. ...

'I don't know if the UN did turn down an offer for protection,' he said, 'but if it did, it was not correct and they should have not been allowed to turn it down. That kind of decision should not be left to the protected. It is those with responsibility for security and law and order, who have intelligence, which determines what action is taken.'"

"Annan calls security responsibility of the U.S.", International Herald Tribune, **August 22, 2003**.

" ... the UN's long-time headquarters at the Canal Hotel did its best to look like a neutral body in a country at peace. The barbed-wire and barricades that surround coalition facilities were eschewed, in favour of a plain concrete wall. And the UN refused all but token American military presence at the site.

Shots had previously been fired at a UN convoy in Mosul, and possibly at the Canal Hotel itself. Other organizations in Iraq have also been targeted, including the International Red Cross ... "

"The Iraqi bombs: Why the United Nations is vulnerable," The Economist, **August 23d, 2003**., pp. 29-30.

" ... the UN has evacuated nearly two-thirds of its 600 non-Iraqi staff [to Amman, Jordan]. Since the attack on August 19th on the UN headquarters in Baghdad, foreign aid workers of all descriptions have fled Iraq ...

The war-hardened International Committee of the Red Cross, known in the aid world as first in, last out, has cut its international staff by two-thirds, citing specific threats of attack. Oxfam, a British-based charity, has pulled its foreign staff out of Iraq, as has the Dutch arm of Médecins Sans Frontières and the Swedish Rescue Service Agency. Both Solidarité, a French NGO, and Mercy Corps, an American one, have come under attack. ...

The perception that foreigners, soldiers and civilians alike, are considered fair game by the anti-American resistance is taking its toll."

"Iraq and the United Nations", The Economist, **August 30th 2003**, pp. 29-30.

"[A] bomber detonated himself in a powerful blast that killed him and [a] police officer, in the parking lot of the UN compound, a month after another suicide bomber killed 23 people ...

... a spokeswoman said the agency would again review its operations in Iraq for the safety of its workers ...

... But she said the improved security measures since the first bombing -- rows of barbed wire and big barriers of dirt and concrete that have gone up ... appeared to be working.

'It's outrageous that an Iraqi policeman died and many others were injured,' she said. 'But it's true security has improved massively.'

In fact, ... it did not appear that the bomber got within 200 or 300 yards of the compound, a former hotel."

Ian Fisher, "Suicide bomb attack kills 2 in Baghdad: Second strike at the UN compound, International Herald Tribune, **September 23, 2003**.

"Saying that the United Nations had come to a fork in the road, Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued Tuesday that fundamental weakness in the architecture of the institution must be remedied for it to retain any effectiveness in combatting genocide, terrorism and nuclear proliferation. ...

He was stern and passionate Tuesday as he lectured the assembled delegates from 191 nations, saying that the institution and its more than 9,000 employees belong to them, and they must do a better job of protecting them.

'Excellencies, you are the United Nations,' he said.

'The staff who was killed and injured in the attack on our Baghdad headquarters were your staff. You had given them a mandate to assist the suffering Iraqi people, and to help Iraq recover their sovereignty.'

He added, 'We must take more effective measures to protect the security of our staff. I count on your full support -- legal, political, and financial.'

Felicity Barringer, "Annan puts urgency in his call for UN reform," International Herald Tribune, **September 24, 2003**.

"An independent panel [appointed by Mr. Annan and led by Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland] said today that the UN's security systems were 'dysfunctional' ...

Mr. Ahtisaari said, 'Everybody bears responsibility, the Member States, who are

asking the UN ... [to act] and of course the Secretary-General himself -- the buck stops always with the Secretary-General.'

[The report said] ... UN management and staff [failure] to comply with standard security regulations and directives left the UN open and vulnerable ...

... [and] failed adequately to analyze and utilize [threat] information ... [performance was] sloppy and non-compliance with security rules commonplace.'

'The main conclusion ... is that the current security management system is dysfunctional. It provides little guarantee of security to UN staff in Iraq or other high-risk environments and needs to be reformed,' the panel said.

The panel labelled as a major deficiency a 'lack of accountability for the decisions and positions taken by UN managers with regard to the security of UN staff.'

'The United Nations', it said, 'needs a new culture of accountability in security management.' ...

In his briefing, Mr. Ahtisaari said ... "We need a much more professional approach, a professional staff ..."

"Iraqi bombing panel finds UN security systems dysfunctional, in need of reform," UN News Service, **22 October 2003**.

[Note: it is important to recognize that Mr. Ahtisaari is a former UN Under-Secretary-General for management and served the UN in the field as well.]

"The security of the staff has been the constant concern of the Secretary-General and the Organization. There have been many previous evaluations of the United Nations Security Coordination System but following the attacks on UN staff on 19 August, the Secretary-General decided that there should be an independent investigation and asked Mr. Marti Ahtisaari to head it. The reports of three earlier investigations were made available to his team.

Mr. Ahtisaari's report, while focusing on the attack of 19 August and security conditions in Iraq, has concluded with Findings and Recommendations regarding security in the wider UN system. The report will be closely studied and steps take to ensure early implementation of its main Recommendations.

The Secretary-General is very grateful to Mr. Ahtisaari for having accepted this assignment despite other demands on his time."

"Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq," New York, **22 October 2003**.

"The United Nations failed to respond to security threats before the August bombing of its Baghdad headquarters and rejected protection by U.S.-led coalition forces, a U.N.-appointed panel said. ...

The U.N. staff union called the report a 'damning indictment' of the organization's attitude toward the security of its employees.

'While it points to gross negligence and massive shortcomings ... it fails to hold anyone accountable,' the union said in a statement. 'The real problem lies in the failures of management to adhere even to the existing security system.'

[A truck had exploded,] killing 22 people ... and injuring more than 150 others.

The report said U.N. senior management in Baghdad asked coalition forces -- the only credible security force in the country -- on several occasions to remove military positions and equipment from the vicinity of the hotel, apparently because they wanted to distance the United Nations from the occupying force.

... Antisaari ... said the United Nations must address the issue of accountability."

Barbara Borst, "Panel: U.N. missed security threat", AP, **October 23, 2004**.

"Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Friday the United Nations 'will have to change our way of doing business' after a highly critical report blamed 'dysfunctional' security for unnecessary casualties in the August bombing ...

But Annan -- speaking to reporters after returning from a Madrid, Spain, donors conference for Iraq -- sidestepped a question on whether he deserved or accepted blame for the security failures cited by the U.N.-appointed panel, saying he needed more time to study the report.

'Obviously, that is one issue -- of accountability, what happened, who did what or did not do what,' he said. ...

Annan said the United Nations' security system worked well for the past 50 years.

'But the world has changed, and we will have to change ...to protect our staff around the world,' he said. ...

The secretary-general is scheduled to discuss security issues at a meeting next week with senior U.N. executives."

Edith M. Lederer, "Annan will act on U.N. security criticism", Associated Press, **October 24, 2003**.

"Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the withdrawal of international UN staff was almost finished ...

Annan ordered the pullout last week ...

He said that ... UN officials were reviewing the [Ahtisaari] report, which said 'sloppy and dysfunctional' security may have contributed to the casualty toll of the August attack.' ...

'We are going through the details ... and we are going to be making some changes', he said.

In an open letter to UN staff last week, Annan vowed to 'review the responsibilities of key individuals,' after the release of the report, which found that security procedures were routinely ignored.

It also found confusion and mismanagement, particularly over an offer of free blastproofing for the UN's windows which was turned down because a bidding process to buy the window material had already begun.

Shards from the truck bombing are believed to have contributed to the casualty toll. ... more than 150 people were injured, many of them seriously.

Annan has also ordered security management to be reorganized by his deputy, Louise Frechette, who was among the UN officials blamed in the report for the systematic failures in the security chain of command."

"Annan vows changes as UN moves ahead with Iraq pullout", AFP, **November 3, 2003**.

"The U.N. security coordinator and acting head of the U.N. mission in Iraq are stepping down while independent experts assess responsibility for lapses in the bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad ...

On Tuesday, Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a team of four experts to determine accountability at all managerial levels at headquarters and in the field' for the security failures which led to so many casualties ...

Tun Myat of Myanmar, ... [the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of UN] security since July 2002, and Ramiro Lopes da Silva of Portugal, the acting head of the U.N. mission who was responsible for security at the time of the bombing 'have asked to be relieved of their present responsibilities while the team conducts its work', said a [UN

spokesman.] ...

In a letter to more than 25,000 UN staffers worldwide ..., Annan promised to take immediate action to implement recommendations of the ... [highly critical Ahtisaari report.]

Annan told the staff he was 'gravely concerned' at the findings of the Ahtisaari panel and was reviewing 'the serious weaknesses' in the management of the UN security system. ..."

Edith M. Lederer, "U.N. security chief asked to step aside", Associated Press, **November 4, 2003**.

"The UN put two of its senior officials on special leave on Tuesday following a scathing report on safety precautions before the deadly August bombing of U.N. offices in Baghdad. ...

Annan also ordered a 'strategic reorganization' of security management to be led by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette, herself faulted in the Ahtisaari report for heading a group that blurred the chain of command on security.

[A spokesman] said Annan had 'full confidence' in Frechette, a Canadian."

Evelyn Leopold, "Two top officials put on leave over Iraq safety", Reuters, **November 4, 2003**.

"... Later this week Secretary-General Kofi Annan is expected to appoint a team of experts to assess who was to blame for the lapses [in Baghdad security] ... In the meantime, Tun Myat, a lawyer from Myanmar, is to go on leave until the probe is completed ...

Myat, 61, joined the United Nations in 1979 and was the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Iraq before being [put] in charge of global security in July 2002.

"UN security chief put on leave over Iraq", Reuters, add, **November 4, 2003**.

"Acting on a damning report of UN security failures in the bombing of its Baghdad headquarters last August, Secretary-General Kofi Annan fired his chief of global security, demoted a second senior official, penalized three staff members and received -- but did not accept -- the resignation of his own deputy, according to his spokesman.

The deputy secretary general, Louise Frechette of Canada, offered her resignation in response to a letter to her from Annan expressing disappointment over the security lapses, the spokesman, Fred Eckhard, said Monday. But Annan declined it, deeming the failures 'collective and not the responsibility of any one individual.' ...

The report, from an outside panel commissioned by Annan, said UN officials had been 'blinded by the conviction that UN personnel and installations would not become a target of attack, despite the clear warnings to the contrary.'"

Warren Hoge, "UN security chief fired over Iraq bombing", International Herald Tribune, **March 31, 2004**. [emphasis added]

[Note: the UN document acknowledging the long list of security mistakes and shortcomings in Iraq, and the actually very modest sanctions then enacted, is presented in "Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Report of the Security in Iraq Accountability Panel", 29 March 2004, New York.]

IO Watch believes that the above extremely awkward and terribly unsatisfying -- at least to some people -- story of UN

leaders' attempts to sanction themselves is a classic example of the UN barons' fundamental inability to enforce accountability. This case involved not just gross mismanagement (as with the case of the UN Top corruption fighter corrupted (and his successor?) as discussed in that subsection above, but also the deaths of 22 UN staff, including an outstanding and courageous fellow senior official, and injuries to more than 150 others.

IO Watch wishes to note just a few more important aspects of this weak, but at least on-the-public-record, attempt at enforcing accountability of UN senior managers:

-- A decade ago Childers and Urquhart highlighted the need for the UN to not be "blinded by convictions" and instead to recognize that its humanitarian and emergency field staff were targets, as cited by the UN humanitarian assistance coordinator in 1993:

"Additional measures for respect of humanitarian aid and for protection of relief personnel are now necessary. The blue ensign of the United Nations and the symbols of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, and of other relief agencies, no longer provide sufficient protection."

UN Under-Secretary Jan Eliasson, in an address at the Carter Center, On 17 February, 1993, as quoted in

Erskine Childers, with Brian Urquhart, "Renewing the United Nations System", Development Dialogue, 1994:1, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, 1994, p. 118.

-- The Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator was created in 1998, but was only "strengthened" to become a grand new UN-style bureaucracy led by a full-time Assistant Secretary-General [Mr. Tun Myat] in August 2002, just in time to head toward its Baghdad disaster. It has an annual budget of some \$40 million, with about 40 administrative staff and 300 field staff for its worldwide operations.

"Jointly financed administrative activities", in "Proposed programme budget for 2004-2005, UN document A/58/6 of **25 March 2003**, Part X, Section 31, pp. 18-32.

-- The General Assembly has long been concerned about protecting UN staff in the field, and the Secretariat prepared a very impressive report on UN security and protection measures in August 2002, followed by a specific report on progress in implementing a "framework for accountability" for the UN field security management system in July 2003, most all of which was swept away only one month later by the Baghdad bombing and the urgent call by the Ahtisaari report two months after that for "a much more professional approach, a professional staff ... .

"Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/57/300 of **15**

**August 2002, and**

"Inter-organizational security measures: framework for accountability for the United Nations field security management system: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/58/188 of **23 July 2003**.

-- UN staff have been dying in field operations for years, in (to name only some of the worst incidents): 11 in Cambodia in 1993; 25 Pakistani soldiers in Somalia in 1993; more than 60 UN staff, most of them local, in Rwanda in 1994; 4 members of an observer mission in Tajikistan in an ambush in 1998; and 7 Kenyan peacekeepers in Sierra Leone in May 2000.

"The UN: Always facing danger", *New York Times*, International Herald Tribune, **August 21, 2003**.

[Annexes I and II to the Secretariat 2002 report cited above showed 10 civilian staff who had lost their lives to gunshot wounds or helicopter accidents during the preceding year, and another 39 UN system staff under arrest or detention or missing as of mid-2002.]

-- Perhaps as bad or in some ways even worse than the Baghdad tragedy was that of a small, isolated group aware of their impending deaths: three UN staff members (from Puerto Rico, Ethiopia, and Croatia) who were attacked and killed by a mob of militiamen at a UN refugee office in West Timor in September 2002, during the week of the grand UN Millennial Assembly celebration in New York in September 2002. As one of them e-mailed out shortly before the attack:

"You should see this office. Plywood on the windows, staff peering out through openings in the curtains hastily installed a few minutes ago. We are waiting for this enemy. We sit here like bait, unarmed, waiting for [the] wave to hit. ... I just hope I will be able to leave tomorrow."

Christopher S. Wren, "3 U.N. aid workers killed in attack in West Timor", New York Times, **September 7, 2000**.

-- And finally, the actions that Mr. Annan took after the Baghdad disaster were very mild: the "show" of Ms. Frechette's resignation offered and refused, with Mr. Annan only "disappointed" in her, and citing the old mantra that argues that collective guilt means that no individual can be held responsible, plus the "firing" of Mr. Tun Myat (a UN staff member for 24 years and already past retirement age [61]), and minor penalties for others. This punishment pattern copies the discriminatory traditions found in many national armies, whereby a soldier who commits offense "X" gets a year of "hard time" in the stockade (prison) while an officer committing the same offense gets a letter of reprimand in his file (in a gentleman's world, the letter itself is considered a blow of bitter shame.)

IO Watch wonders what more decisive moment there could have

been for Mr. Annan to show that, in this terrible tragedy, he would finally and firmly sanction a senior manager by accepting (at the very least) Ms. Frechette's resignation, and giving Mr. Tun Myat and his immediate associates summary dismissal. Mr. Annan's statement that the UN "must change our way of doing business" in the aftermath of the Baghdad bombing and the Ahtisaari report does not seem to have extended to enforcing UN management accountability for what happened.

One further reflection, made on the first anniversary of the Baghdad bombing tragedy, is also important in the UN management context:

"[Sergio Vieira de Mello's death a year ago in Baghdad] ... along with 22 of his colleagues ... stunned the United Nations and its staff ...

Why is the United Nations short on competent personnel to lead complex peacekeeping and political missions? ...

The answer is that there is a human resources crisis in the United Nations. An entrenched bureaucracy, fueled by counterproductive quotas, nepotism and outlandishly generous tenure policies, impedes the rise of talent and excellence through the ranks. ...

... This is why Annan was repeatedly compelled to rely on de Mello ... to undertake the three most delicate UN missions in recent times, sending him to Kosovo, East Timor and Iraq, all in a period of less than four years.

[The UN needs outstanding staff] .. with the requisite experience, competence, stature and charisma to manage the UN's presence in situations where thousands if not millions of lives and livelihoods are at stake.

With the support of the Security Council, Annan must thoroughly reshape his work force to improve its caliber and reward talent. Only then could he be sure of a reliable pool of crisis managers ..."

Ludovic Hood, "Remembering de Mello: The UN must let talent rise", International Herald Tribune, **August 13, 2004**.

[Note: Mr. Hood served with the UNDP in East Timor from 2001-2004, and his article was a personal comment.]

Meanwhile, the wounds of the Baghdad tragedy continue on within the UN, as shown by the following "old boy" accusations and a very measured and reasonable staff response.

"A dangerous outgrowth of the ... [UN headquarters bombing in Baghdad in 2003] has been an orgy of outrage and self-pity that has increasingly paralyzed the UN's capacity to respond meaningfully to needs in Iraq ...

Grief and rage among the staff ran deep, and I share their mourning ...

At first, the response seemed normal, but ... internal criticism of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his senior staff for allowing a UN deployment to Baghdad grew ...

Staff members seemed to want the world to feel sorry for them, the survivors, and to punish Annan for seeking to forge a bridge in support of Iraqi needs ...

Is the UN leadership now running scared of staff attitudes that have become dysfunctional? ...

Annan was initially lionized by his secretariat colleagues. He was one of them ... But after excessive adulation has come irrational rejection ...

If Annan's margin for diplomatic and operational maneuver is to be constrained

by staff challenges to his judgment, the UN will be significantly weakened....

While the UN needs to adopt better security precautions, its staffers are wrong to display unwonted self-regard and to invite pity for their plight. The UN needs to move on."

David Malone, "UN anger over Iraq: Nobody said it would be safe", International Herald Tribune, **October 1, 2004**.

[Note: Mr. Malone is a former Canadian ambassador to the UN, and head of the International Peace Academy in New York, which works closely with the UN.]

"The United Nations Staff Union [wishes to respond to Mr. Malone's article] ...

Malone correctly points out that staff have become outraged. [They] are increasing[ly] becoming targets and are incensed over the lack of accountability of senior officials, the failure of the organization to adhere to minimum operational standards in many field offices and the lack of progress to address the serious flaws in our security management system.

The staff union has always recognized that UN missions carry inherent risks ... But at the same time the union demands that staff be protected from undue risks.

We do not want the world to feel sorry for us, but we do ask that our leaders ... fulfill their obligations and commitments to provide the necessary resources and environment to do our jobs. Many UN staff work in dangerous and hostile environments and are right to demand that last year's errors are corrected and that tangible measures are taken to improve security.

Malone is right to say that the United Nations must move on -- but in what direction? If we do not learn from our past mistakes, the tragedy that happened last year in Baghdad will certainly be repeated."

Rosemarie Waters, president, UN Staff Union, "Letters: UN staff in Iraq", International Herald Tribune, **October 7, 2004**.

IO Watch believes that the above exchange reflects very legitimate UN staff concerns about the stumbling but protected "old boy network" of UN senior officials, as expressed in the worldwide UN Integrity Survey in 2004, as well as by the half-century history of an autocratic and unaccountable UN leadership, which is discussed in detail under the Where is the Rule of Law? section of this archive. The excellent Ahtisaari report of October 2003 cited very serious UN mismanagement, but once again efforts to actually hold the senior UN officials who were responsible "accountable" for their actions or inactions were very feeble.

Further recent articles indicate that the UN Secretariat is "reforming" security work yet again after its ineffective efforts of 2002 and 2003 cited above, this time seeking greatly expanded funding to cope with security issues for UN staff worldwide as the threats and risks of field work multiply as well.

"The United Nations is appealing for almost \$100 million ... to overhaul its outdated security system, amid growing warnings that its current arrangements are grossly inadequate to cope with the rise in direct threats against UN staff.

... the UN faces unprecedented new threats as it is asked to staff increasing numbers of humanitarian and peacekeeping missions in countries still at war, or subject to persistent insecurity.

The UN has been in particular crisis since ...[the 2003 Baghdad bombing, followed by] a damning report by Martti Ahtisaari, [who] found the UN's security system to be dysfunctional, and subject to widespread mismanagement. ...

*[The UN seeks] ... to protect its staff ... but without undermining its avowed impartiality ... [with a system] that would cut it off from the people it is meant to help.*

Mr. Ahtisaari warned 'the UN could in theory be the target of attacks anywhere at any time, from Baghdad to Kabul, Nairobi, Jakarta, Geneva or New York.' ...

[Mr. Annan's report] is calling for a new UN Directorate of Security, with 'significant new capabilities in the areas of security threat and risk assessment', and many more dedicated centrally-funded UN security personnel in the field."

Mark Turner, "UN appeals for \$100 million to fund overhaul of global security", Financial Times, **October 13, 2004**. [emphasis added]

"[Secretary-General] Kofi Annan ... has launched an all-out campaign to rebuild the UN's dysfunctional security system, prompting a debate that could determine the organisation's capacity to operate in dangerous countries for years to come.

Over the coming days, UN budget experts will discuss a \$97 million ... appeal for a fundamental [security] overhaul ... to be paid from the UN's core budget.

'The United Nations today faces a security environment of unprecedented risk', Mr. Annan told the budget committee ...

... Political questions could prove [very] important. ...

Developed countries are seeking new ways to deal with [threats of terrorism] ... and some are pushing for the right of preemptive action as well as 'humanitarian intervention' in countries that do not protect their civilians.

... Developing countries are demanding a renewed focus on poverty. Many analysts think any reform will entail a 'grand bargain' between 'northern' security concerns and 'southern' financial worries.

... According to one official, the simple fact was that the UN could no longer fulfil its mandate in development without security. This, said the official, led to a simple decision: 'They've got to make up their minds whether they want to send us there or not.'"

Mark Turner, "Annan launches drive to boost UN security", Financial Times (UK), **November 4, 2004**.

[Note: Will another UN political 'grand bargain' mean severe delays in improving security while haggling goes on, followed by more half-hearted security for UN field operations and reduced funding for poverty reduction?]

"The apparent murder in Iraq of Margaret Hassan, head of CARE International in Baghdad ... underlines the fact that aid work is one of the most dangerous professions in the world. ...

In the past decade, more than 200 of the United Nations' civilian staff have been killed by 'malicious acts' in 45 countries ... [and] hundreds of other unarmed aid workers have been killed, maimed, abducted and assaulted as they have tried to help people in some of the world's most benighted places.

Humanitarian outfits have long been used to being caught in the crossfire. What is new is the deliberate way they are now being targeted, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan. ...

Until the early 1990s, the UN's blue flag and the ICRC's red cross almost guaranteed protection against attack. No longer. ...

As a result, say the aid people, the neutral 'humanitarian space' in which they

seek to operate has drastically shrunk. They are now regarded as semi-official distributors of western government relief [aid] ...

The United Nations 'cannot succumb to a bunker mentality' says Kofi Annan ...

Brave words. But will they prove any more effective against targeted attacks than the blue flag?"

"Aid agencies: More dangerous work than ever", The Economist, **November 20th, 2004**, pp. 42-43.

"Sir David Vennis ... is to become the head of security at the United Nations ... as part of a thorough overhaul of the organisation's outdated security system. ...

In the wake of the [deadly attack on the UN's Baghdad headquarters in August 2003 the Ahtisaari report found] ... the UN's security system to be dysfunctional and subject to widespread mismanagement.

The appointment of Sir David is also happening within the broader context of personnel reforms within the UN as it reels from scandals in Iraq and Congo ...

Sir David ... [has] spent the last 10 years as commander of the most important specialist squads at Scotland Yard with responsibility for diplomatic and royal protection, security, and counter terrorism.

His operational experience and organizational skills have earned him respect around the world. ...

His appointment marks the first time the UN has had a counter-terrorist professional in charge of its security ...

After the inquiry into the Baghdad bombing, the then UN security chief Tun Myat was forced to resign."

Jimmy Burns and Mark Turner, "UN raids Scotland Yard for new security chief", Financial Times (UK), **January 7, 2005**. [emphasis added]

[Note: The appointment of a top expert is needed in many areas of UN management instead of an "old boy", so this step is of extra significance and hopefully will be repeated again and again.]

Despite these efforts, however, the UN determination to continue to be "open" in its future operations in severe crisis zones and the aggressive "old boy" criticisms of staff attitudes raised by Mr. Malone highlight a fundamental responsibility for UN senior officials sending UN staff "in harms way." The situation is eloquently outlined by not only by the above November 20th 2004 quote, but also by a long-time veteran of dangerous field situations:

"In the last few years, expatriate and local staff working for ... [the UN and NGOs] have been murdered in ... failed or failing states, [which] are the most dangerous places on earth. Donors [such as the EU, UN agencies, and others] ... have a moral obligation to ensure that humanitarian work is not being done at the expense of innocent lives. The people who run aid agencies should not allow their idealism or need for visibility and funds to compromise the safety of their staff.

[A code of conduct for humanitarian aid], states that 'when we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.'

That was then, this is now, when the lines of humanitarian and military action are blurred. ...

The code of conduct needs to be radically overhauled with the involvement of governments ...to speak to the obligations of warring parties to respect humanitarian workers, and it must obligate aid agencies to exercise due diligence in the deployment of

qualified staff in conflict areas, and to desist from doing so if they cannot ensure their safety."

Denis McClean, "Hostages in Iraq: Aid agencies shouldn't take unnecessary risks", International Herald Tribune, **September 14, 2004**. [emphasis added]  
[Note: Mr. McClean is a journalist for the Irish Times who worked for 14 years with the International Federation of the Red Cross in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.]

In the opinion of IO Watch, the UN leadership must be held fully accountable for its future field staffing and security management decisions in crisis zones, in accord with the sad historical adage that "Wars are made by old men for young men (and now women) to die in." Or, as an excellent portrayal of such experience, first published in 1930 but reissued in 2004, states it, "Generals die in bed".

[Generals die in bed, by Charles Yale Harrison, Annick, Toronto, **2004**.]

IO Watch also believes that the Baghdad headquarters bombing marks a pivotal point in UN field operations, and underscores many central, urgent, and long-term ramifications for UN management accountability and staffing. This topic will be pursued here and also elsewhere in this archive, particularly under the archive subsection on Mobility , and in the subsections on peacekeeping, humanitarian and nation-building under UN Performance Problems .