

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 9, 2012 2:24 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Violent incident at Ashraf

From: Fried, Daniel
Sent: Monday, April 09, 2012 1:35 PM
To: Burns, William J; Mills, Cheryl D; Macmanus, Joseph E (S)
Subject: Violent incident at Ashraf

Loading of cargo for Convoy IV was suspended Sunday, April 8 after a violent incident between Ashraf residents and the Iraqi police SWAT team. There were a number of injuries, most of which appear minor, but no deaths.

According to our best information, the immediate trigger was an argument over Iraqi inspection of a large container with medical supplies. The Iraqis suspected that the container had a secret compartment and wanted a second inspection. The residents refused and sought to load the container via crane onto a flatbed truck (the Iraqis claim the residents were taking the container back inside Ashraf; the residents claim it was approved by Iraqi authorities for the convoy and were loading it on the truck to add to the approved cargo queue). At this point, an Iraqi SWAT team arrived and forcibly stopped the loading, puncturing the truck's tires, breaking through its windows, and seizing the resident driver (since released). Ashraf residents reacted by confronting a line of Iraqi Army officers surrounding the truck, and Iraqi SWAT team members fought those residents with metal batons and tasers. This scene was videotaped by Ashraf residents and has been disseminated. A small number of Iraqi security personnel were also hurt, though none seriously. UN monitors arrived immediately after the episode, having been delayed by weather.

The MEK reaction has been uncharacteristically mild. They have expressed concern but maintained that they want to continue transfer from Ashraf to Liberty. MEK messages to UN head in Iraq Kobler and me since the incident have focused as much on property disposition as on the confrontation. Loading of cargo for Convoy IV has been suspended for April 9, but is scheduled to resume on April 10.

Both the UN and Ambassador Jeffrey have raised concerns about this incident with the GOI (Amb. Jeffrey met with Iraqi NSA Fayyad on April 9). Jim Jeffrey also asked Fayyad to show enough flexibility on property disposition and Camp Liberty/Hurriya infrastructure to conclude the draft agreement now under negotiation between the MEK and GOI through UN mediation.

This incident is the worst since the current relocation plan was launched, and comes on the anniversary of the April 8, 2011 Iraqi incursion into Ashraf and associated fatalities (the UN and Embassy Baghdad had cautioned the GOI to avoid activity that day). The GOI maintains that it was merely seeking to restore order after Ashraf residents refused to allow the inspection of the container in question. However, the Iraqi government may have sought to demonstrate its power as the relocation from Ashraf to Liberty continues. If true, it is an ill-timed message: Kobler is scheduled to report on Camp Ashraf to the UNSC this week. From New York, Kobler will come to Washington for meetings at State on Thursday.