

BAGHDAD EMBASSY VB

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST TASTE OF TERROR FROM THE GROU



IN JANUARY 2005 THE AUSTRALIAN MISSION IN IRAQ WAS DERAILED BY A MASSIVE TERRORIST ATTACK BY AL QAIDA IN IRAQ - THE GROUP THAT EVOLVED INTO ISIS

THE Australian Defence Force is currently focused on the struggle against the nightmarish barbarism of al-Dawla al Islamiya fi Iraq wa al Sham (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or ISIS) which over ran Iraq's al Anbar, Nineveh, at Tammim, Salaheddin, Kirkuk, Babel and Diyala Provinces in June and July last year.

With all the noise and horrific imagery emerging from the battlefield in northern and western Iraq it has been widely forgotten that the ADF has tangled with ISIS before.

During the early years of the Coalition occupation of Iraq, the ADF came under sustained attack from a little known group called Tanzlum Qaidat al Jihad Bilad al Rafidayn better known today as al-Qaida in Iraq.

Al Qaida in Iraq, led by the overweight but ferocious Abu Musab al Zarqawi, changed the nature of the Coalition occupation of the Levant from a low level insurgency with the Shiite militias of southern Iraq and remnant Baathists in western Iraq into a full blown bloodbath with Coalition forces caught between the savagery of sectarian civil war.

Zarqawi's fledgling al Qaida in Iraq would eventually evolve into Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and set the world on fire, but back in early 2005 AQI was just beginning to forge its reputation and was about to launch a major coordinated terror campaign to derail the January 30 2005 parliamentary elections and the Australians in Al Karada were going to be primary targets.

Australia, having withdrawn its operational contingents involved during the 2003 invasion, had set up shop at the old Australian 'Embassy' in an exposed site in the Al Karada District along the Tigris River outside the heavily defended Baghdad International (Green) Zone.

The Australian Representative Office (ARO) was one of the most vulnerable Coalition sites in Baghdad in late 2004/early 2005 and soon attracted the attention of Zarqawi's insurgency.

The entire Al Karada area became an insurgency target due to its wealth and non sectarian multi faith community. In May 2004 an enormous VBIED had detonated outside the

ED 2005

THAT BECAME ISIS



Above: All that remained of the VBIED prime mover which disintegrated in the detonation estimated at 227kg (500 pounds) of artillery shells.

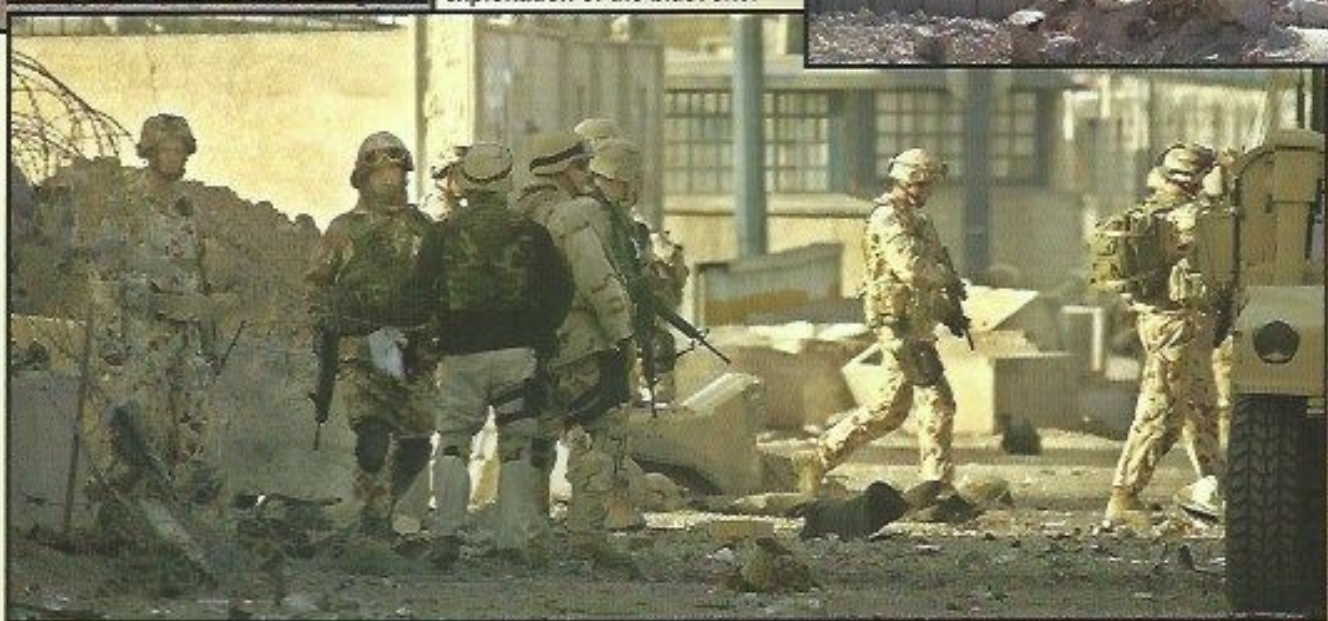
Left: Australian and US 1st Cavalry troops secure the area.

Right: TQJBR leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the attack on the Australian ARO.

Right: The two story building adjacent to The Flats was destroyed by the VBIED blast.

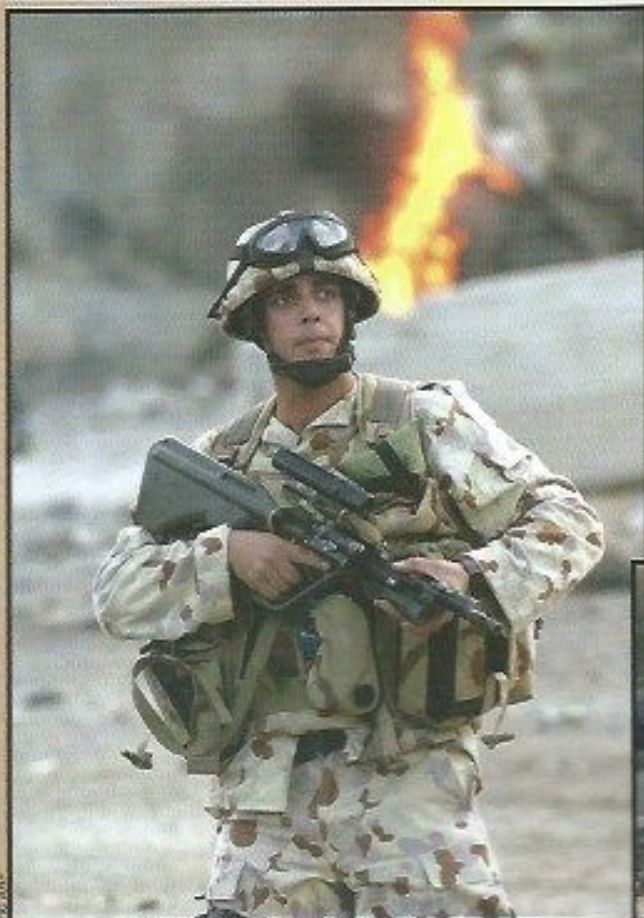
Left: A video frame taken seconds after the VBIED attack.

Below: Coalition Explosives Exploitation Cell begin the exploitation of the blast site.





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Karma Hotel, less than 100 meters from the Australian FOB at the Flats on Jadriyah Road.

Protecting the ARO was a rotating force of Australian Diggers deployed within the Security Detachment Iraq, or SECDET as it became known.

When SECDET Contingent VI (6) rotated in place with the 5/7RAR led SECDET V in early January 2005 it was prepared for trouble. SECDET V had suffered four soldiers seriously wounded and two ASLAVs destroyed in a VBIED suicide attack on October 26 near the gate to the International Zone and had been subjected to constant small arms and RPG attacks at its operating base at 'The Flats' opposite the ARO.

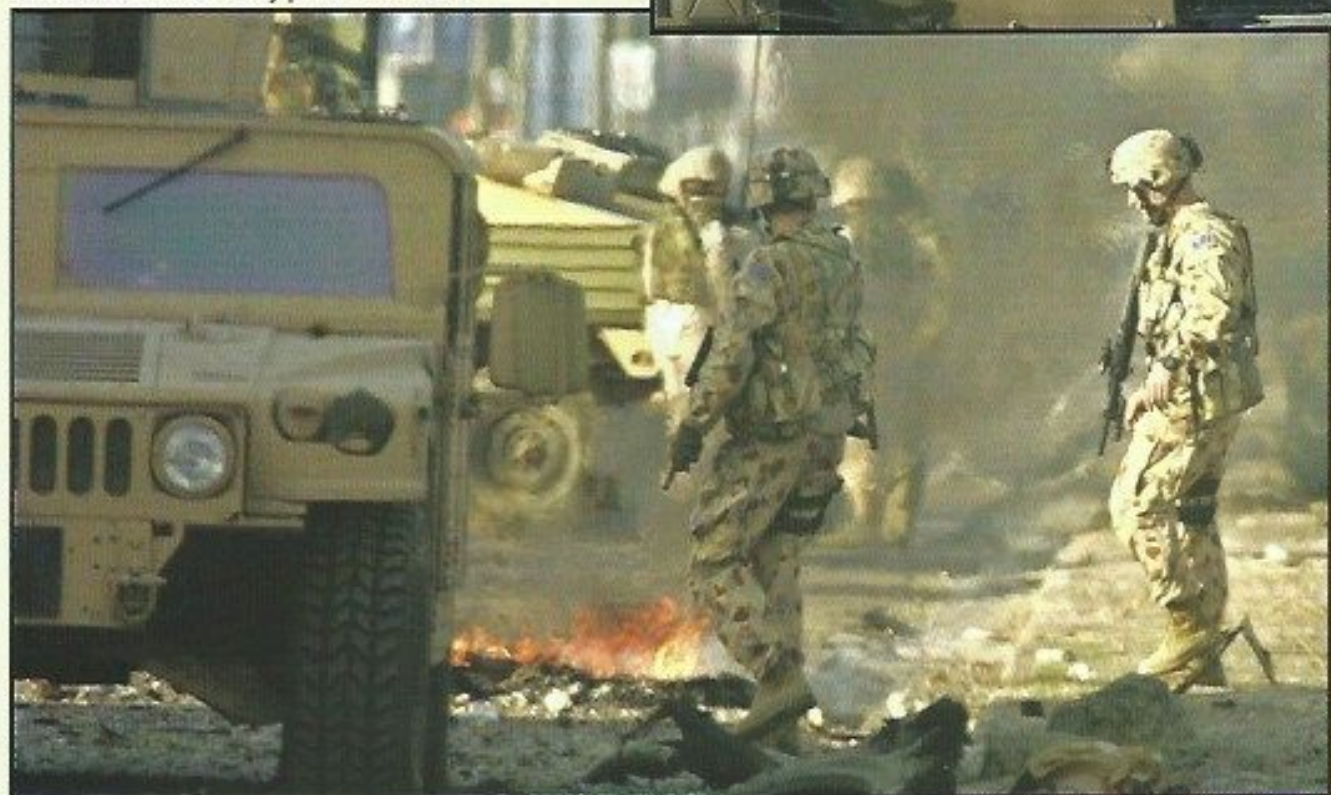
SECDET VI(A) was composed of a reinforced infantry platoon from Alpha Coy 6RAR supported by a troop of ASLAV crews from 2nd Cavalry Regiment and Military Police from 1 MP Battalion. The Detachment was tasked with somehow keeping the Australians diplomats safe



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These pages: Wary Australian SECDet VI Diggers move out to secure the approaches to The Flats in the aftermath of the attack on January 19 2005. The concrete security barriers and The Flats' solid construction deflected much of the blast, but two SECDet Diggers received fragmentation wounds. Two Iraqi civilians were killed in the attack with up to ten wounded. The VBIED explosive package was made up of multiple artillery projectiles (probably 130mm) with an estimated 227kg (500 pounds) of explosive. Some witnesses claimed that it was a suicide attack but a civilian guard employed at the ARO said he saw the driver leave the truck and escape in a civilian car. No suicide bomber body parts were found.





Above: US Army 1st Cavalry Division troopers inspect the damage from the prime mover VBIED after deploying in strength to cordon off and secure the bomb site area.

Below: The crater left by the VBIED was two metres deep and eight metres across. The placement of concrete barriers and the integral strength of The Flats protected SECDET VI Diggers from the full force of the huge bomb.



Below: SECDET VI Diggers react to the VBIED blast from their elevated Observation Post in The Flats' upper floors.



from the full blown madness of 2005 Baghdad.

ATTACK TIME LINE

Wednesday January 19 2005 07:07 hrs: An untrailer prime mover truck speeds down Jadriyah Road towards the Australian Embassy Security Detachment position at The Flats in Baghdad. The speeding truck forces a bus off the road before heading straight for the obstacles and blast barriers in front of The Flats.

SECDET VI's security team detects the threatening truck but does not engage due to the strict Rules of Engagement in place at the Australian Representative Office at the time. By the time the truck became a legitimate target under the ROEs it was too late to respond.

07:10 hrs: The truck detonates in the driveway of The Flats. Witnesses claim that the truck exploded on contact with the concrete barriers blocking the entrance. An Iraqi civilian guard working at the Australian Ambassador's residence who witnessed the attack claimed that the driver left the truck and escaped in a car before the vehicle exploded. No trace of a suicide bomber was found.

The huge explosion damages the exterior of the Australian position and two SECDET VI soldiers receive fragmentation wounds. An Iraqi truck driver and a homeless man are killed and eight civilians are wounded including a ten year old boy.

The blast effect and shrapnel produced by the artillery shells used in the charge destroys a two story building next to The Flats and breaks windows for three blocks. The VBIED leaves a two metre deep by eight metre wide crater.

07:15 hrs: Iraqi Police (IqP) reacting to the VBIED attack arrive and take up position in front of The Flats. The wounded ten year old was taken to a civilian hospital in an IqP vehicle and his fate remains unknown.

07:30 hrs: Iraqi Army soldiers in trucks, deploy along Jadriyah Rd and attempt to cordon off the bomb site. Crowds of onlookers gathered and were eventually cleared from the direct area.



Above: 6RAR Diggers inspect a damaged garbage truck outside The Flats. The young driver of the truck was killed by the VBIED.

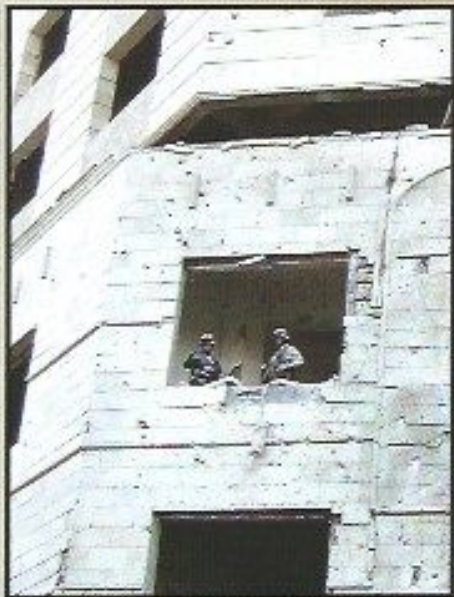
Top right: US 1st Cavalry Div HMMWVs arrive at the blast zone to cordon off the area about 30 minutes after the attack.

Above right: The VBIED threw lethal fragmentation and sent a shockwave that smashed windows for three blocks.

Right: Australian SECDet VI Diggers secure the site of the VBIED in the direct aftermath of the terrorist attack. The Flats were right on a public street and vulnerable.

Bottom right: 6RAR Diggers look down from The Flats at the destruction below. The Flats survived the blast with only superficial damage to its exterior.

Below: A SECDet VI Digger attends to a wounded Iraqi civilian who was hit by secondary fragmentation.





Above: 6RAR Digs secure the approaches to The Flats while Coalition Explosives Exploitation Cell investigators examine the debris for evidence and intelligence data.

Top right: A Blackwater sniper team flies over in an MD500. **Above right:** US Army M1A1 and an M2A1 Bradley IFV cordon off Jadriyah Rd during the post blast investigation.



Above: Two US Army AH-64D Apache helos provide top cover for reaction forces in the aftermath of the VBIED blast.

Below: SECDet VI Diggers and an Iraqi security guard share the joy of surviving the al Qa'ida Iraq VBIED attack.



07:40 hrs: A second VBIED explodes outside an IqP Headquarters and the Al Alahi Hospital in Alwiyah in eastern Baghdad killing six IqP Officers and thirteen civilians.

07:45 hrs: A US Army reaction force of ten HMMWVs, an M-2 Bradley IMV and an M1A1 MBT from the 1st Cavalry Division arrive and block off the area. SECDet VI personnel join US and Iraqi Security Forces to secure the area.

08:25 hrs: A third VBIED explodes at an Iraqi Security Forces Vehicle Check Point south-west of Baghdad International Airport. Two Iraqi soldiers are killed.

08:40 hrs: A fourth VBIED explodes at the main gate of the IqA Barracks at the unused Al Muthanna airport complex. Two Iraqi Army and two Iraqi civilian security guards are killed in the attack.

11:00 hrs: (approx) A fifth VBIED explodes outside a Baghdad bank in the Etifyah area where IqP officers are lined up to collect their pay. Five IqP officers and thirteen civilians are killed and a mosque is destroyed.

21:00 hrs: Abu Musab Zarqawi led terrorist group Tazim Qa'adat al-Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn (TQJBR) now known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria claims responsibility for all five attacks.

THE AFTERMATH

The January 19 VBIED attack proved beyond a doubt that the al Karada ARO site was too vulnerable to maintain.

By January 30 the Australian Ambassador and staff had relocated to temporary offices at Presidential Palace North in Camp Victory and eventually relocated to the British Embassy in the Green Zone.

On January 24, five days after the VBIED, SECDet VI shot dead an Iraqi man after he stopped his truck outside The Flats. The driver was shot after he refused to obey directions from SECDet Diggers. The truck was filled with petrol cans but had no explosives.

SECDet personnel also eventually redeployed from The Flats to Coalition Operating Base Union.

Abu Musab al Zarqawi was killed by USAF F-16s near Baqubah on June 6, 2006. His organisation survived his death and evolved into Islamic State.