General Highlights:

- WHO conducted different visits to many sites which included Environmental Health Department in Bab –Al Zubair, the Central Blood Bank, Al Razi Center (which serve as temporary public health lab), and Basra Educational Hospital all in Basrah City. The summary reports of these visits are in annexes 1 and 2.

- UNHCR in a letter said WHO donation of 6 New Emergency Health Kits to the refugees' population through UNHCR has enabled both Ahwazi refugees from Iran and the nearby Iraqi community of Al Gharbi, El Kumait and Dujala districts to have an improved access to health care.

- The first case of Cholera Ogawa was confirmed by serological testing, in Basrah. All other cases so far are from the Cholera Inaba type.

Personnel: NSTR

Medical Supplies and Equipments:

- Two hospitals (Teaching and Basra General) were visited today in Basra district for monitoring and evaluation of the received medicines and medical supplies. Analysis of the items received revealed that most the essential and specialized drugs are available in sufficient quantities that will last for over a month period. However, a few anticancer drugs such as Tamoxifen Tab, Chlorambucil and Hydroxyurea with some injectable antibiotics such as ampiclox inj, ciprofloxacin among others are in shortage. Other shortages included Syringes and Needles, calcium lactate and narcotic analgesics

- Lists of these shortages and other urgently needed items are being prepared to be sent to WHO Baghdad to facilitate the supply of these items from Kimadia.

Communicable Diseases:

See annex 2 for details.

Meetings: NSTR
WHO Mission to Environmental Health Department in Bab – Al Zubair, And Central Blood Bank in Basrah on 6 July 2003

Khalid Shibib, Shah.W. Siddiqi, Reda Atta and Samsun Samuel

A. Environmental Health Department-Basra,

WHO was invited by Dr Hassan Abdul Hussein - the manager of the department to inform on several environmental conditions that possibly affect the health situation in Basra. In the centre, the mission was briefed by Mr. Khajak Vruer Vatan, the physicist in charge of the radiation protection unit, as follows:

1. Since 1991, the area of Basra Governorate is full of remnants of destroyed tanks and military equipment which are all around the area. The department has been measuring the radioactivity both in the battle fields and in Basra city. It was noticed that the radioactivity in the directly affected vehicles and objects were around 7 milli-rad/hour, while in Basra city, it was recorded 0.008. It has been noticed that over the years, the radioactivity in the city is on the increase because the dust is being carried by winds and storms from the battle fields to Basra city. In 2002, this radioactivity was as high as 0.014 mR/hour. However, vegetables and other food items are not polluted if they are properly washed.

2. The department has been responsible for raising public awareness of various radiation issues and labelling dangerous sites. This work has stopped since the beginning of the recent crisis.

3. During the chaos following the war, several institutes which used radioactive materials were looted. The institutes are as follows:
   a) The Fertilizers industry: where Caesium 137 was stolen
   b) Iridium 129 and Caesium (Cs) 137 and Neutron Source were stolen from the Petrochemical factory and the Southern Petrol Company
   c) Caesium (Cs,) Thorium and Beryllium were stolen from the Oil Logging company
   d) The Neutron source was stolen from Basra University (Faculty of Science). This had been re-bought by the expert for 50 cents from the vegetable market in Basra

4. One of the functions of the department is to examine imported food items, also for radioactive pollution. This function stopped after the war.

5. The Department needs to assess the new situation and re-establish surveillance for radioactive objects

The Needs of the Department are:
Security, permission to examine new battle sites, equipments and protective clothing. A request to this effect is in preparation

B. Central Public health Laboratory

The Central Public health Laboratory and the Department of Preventive Medicine and PHC were fully destroyed and vandalized.

C. Blood Bank

The Blood Bank in Basra is not looted. It is functioning with full capacity performing the following: blood separation, blood testing for hepatitis B and C, and HIV. It also provides 15 hospitals in Basra and surroundings with blood (2500 pint /month). Elisa kits provided by the CPHL (before the crisis) were destroyed. Most of the equipment are donated by the Austro-Arab Association.

Problems and Needs:

- There is need for some physical rehabilitation
- Some equipment such as blood bag shaker and balance, sealer, new blood donation chairs and new refrigerators are urgently needed.
Annex 2

Communicable Disease Site Visits Report (Sunday, July 06, 2003):

Visiting team: Dr. Mohsin, Dr. Hammam and Dr. Momtaz

A. Al Razi PHC laboratory:

Al Razi Center which scheduled to function as a temporary Central Reference Microbiology Laboratory was visited. One of the two laboratory rooms was being set up for use in managing vaccination programs, CDD (Control of Diarrheal Disease), ARI (Acute Respiratory Infections), and non-communicable diseases. Some new furniture had already been received and installed.

The other laboratory room had a new air conditioner and a new refrigerator with a top freezer cabinet. Some of the laboratory equipments were old and had just been recovered from the looters through mosque announcements. These equipments were quoted as functioning and consisted of:
- 2 incubators (medium size)
- 2 hot air ovens
- 1 centrifuge

There were no microscope, autoclave, balance, pH meter, media and reagents. The doctor in charge was not available. On enquiring from the Kimadia Central Warehouse in Basra, there are some these items that can be supplied from their stocks. A meeting with the lab staff will be arranged soon to initiate the work.

The Primary health Clinic in Al Razi and its laboratory are functioning. However, the temporary PHL is still not functioning

B. Basra Educational Hospital:

The hospital keeps a stock of V. cholera isolates that were recovered from TCBS (Citrate Bile Salts sucrose Agar) presumably by reactivity in KIA (Kigler Iron Agar) or TSI (Triple Sugar Iron Agar). The laboratory director - Dr. Riad and one of his technicians were met and specific antisera for Cholera was handed over to them.

Only 3 stock cultures were tested by slide agglutination and two of them were positive with the poly antiserum. **While one isolate reacted with Inaba antiserum, the other was not, suggesting Ogawa serotype. This is the first time since the beginning of the outbreak to have a confirmed case of Cholera Ogawa.** The lab technician promised to test the remaining stock isolates (20-30 suspected) and will inform WHO within 24-48 hours.