



**WFP IRAQ
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200117**

Country:	Iraq
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Iraq
Total cost (US\$):	11,524,872
Duration:	15.12.10-14.12.11

Executive Summary

In the coming year, the United Nations (UN) humanitarian agencies plan to open additional operational hubs in Iraq and increase their international presence in those hubs and in Baghdad. On 14 November 2010, the Deputy Special Representative for the Secretary General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq officially requested WFP to start preparations to resume United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) for flights into and within Iraq. Such flights had ceased in December 2003.

This special operation is proposed for the provision of a safe, reliable and cost-effective air transport service to the United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organisation (NGO) and donor community operating in Iraq.

The WFP/UNHAS operation will be integrated with the United Nations assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) operations, applying the same security coverage and procedures as UNAMI's as enforced by United Nations Department of Security and Safety(UNDSS) via specific Security Risk Assessments (SRAs).

Through this project, UNHAS, managed by WFP, will operate one Embraer 135 aircraft, or similar, equipped with a self protection system and based initially in Amman (Jordan) and/or Erbil (Iraq). The aircraft will primarily operate flights within Iraq, using the Baghdad military side of the airport, which is more secure than the civilian side of the airport. Flights will be provided to various locations in Iraq, including Erbil, Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Tallil and Sulaymani, and, if required, Kuwait. Until such time as UN staff are cleared to fly commercial airlines into and out of Baghdad, flights will also be offered to Marka Airport in Amman, Jordan.

The project funding is expected to be raised mainly through donor contributions, complemented by a partial cost recovery from the users of the service (estimated at 13% of the project funding requirement). The project is prepared for 12 months, from 15 December 2010 to 14 December 2011 at a total budgeted cost of US\$ 11,524,872 with a possibility of extension if the need for the service remains.

Project Background

1. At the beginning of 2010, the situation in Iraq could be described as being in transition from crisis to recovery. Decreasing levels of violence, improved government capacity and limited new displacements contributed to a gradual stabilisation of the humanitarian situation. It was also recognised that these improvements could unravel should the security or political situation in the country deteriorate, or in the event of a disease outbreak or a natural disaster. As of November 2010, the political situation continues to be uncertain following the parliamentary elections in March 2010. Political stalemate remains with no real progress on the formation of the next government. The political impasse has had an impact on the security situation with political assassinations of senior government officials including members of the security services. While the numbers of incidents are generally lower than that of the period 2006 – 2008, the lack of progress on the political front has had an impact on the general security situation with the local government infrastructure coming under increased pressure to deliver basic services to the community. Therefore, the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors need to sustain their response capacity to both man-made and natural disasters.
2. Within this framework, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2014 is a joint humanitarian and development strategy for the UN in Iraq. Five UNDAF priorities have been identified, providing the scope and strategic direction of the UN system's support to Iraq in the next four years, namely:
 - Improved governance, including the protection of human rights.
 - Inclusive, more equitable and sustainable economic growth.
 - Environmental management and compliance with ratified international environmental treaties and obligations.
 - Increased access to quality essential services.
 - Investment in human capital and empowerment of women, youth and children.
3. Following the tragic bombing of the former United Nations Headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, which saw 22 UN staff lose their lives and over 100 injured, the United Nations was forced to reassess its staff security policy and reduce its physical presence in Iraq. However, the United Nations continued providing assistance and support to the Iraqi people, mainly through its Iraqi staff. In May 2004 the UN re-established its international staff presence in Baghdad and, since then, has been logistically supported in a working arrangement with the US government. This support included air transportation, medical evacuation, mission support and security. Since 2007, the United Nations has progressively increased its presence in Iraq and plans to continue expanding physical presence throughout the country as security permits and in line with available funding. In accordance with the UN initiative to increase its presence within Iraq, two WFP international staff were assigned into Iraq in mid 2008. At the beginning of 2009, plans for a US military drawdown was announced, and subsequently, it was implied that it would also affect the support rendered to the UN. Though the security

situation in Iraq remains volatile, the number of security incidents has decreased compared to the situation in 2007. This has allowed United Nations agencies and NGOs to be able to assess humanitarian needs in many outlying and hard-to-reach areas. At the beginning of 2010, humanitarian actors were able to access all districts of Iraq, although many areas could only be reached by missions led by Iraqi national staff or supported by US Forces Iraq (USF-I). Despite these visible improvements, humanitarian access is logistically becoming a challenge with the diminishing support from USF-I. Iraq is still a country affected by significant levels of violence, with a considerable impact on civilian lives, governance, economy and humanitarian operations.

4. The security situation amidst the continuing drawdown of USF-I is expected to impinge on the humanitarian community's movements within the country and access to operations in the field. The United Nations programme imperatives for 2011 and beyond, as outlined in the UNDAF 2011-14, require extensive staff travel to and within Iraq. The current air services providers for international and domestic flights, cleared for use by United Nations staff and selected other members of the international community, are USF-I and the UNAMI. The main limitation for the use of cleared commercial airlines is their use of the commercial terminals as these are – with the exception of Erbil – not authorized for UN Staff due to security concerns and internal UN security limitations. The continued US troop drawdown over the coming months will lead to a corresponding reduction in the availability of air support which is expected to further affect United Nations mobility, thereby impacting programme delivery.
5. In line with these limitations, on 14 November 2010, the Deputy Special Representative for the Secretary General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq officially renewed her request to WFP to start preparations to launch an UNHAS operation to address the air transport gap. The proposed operation will complement the existing UNAMI air service through boosting the air services between Baghdad and the main destinations within Iraq, as well as between Amman and Baghdad.

Project Justification

6. Humanitarian agencies continue to be present in Iraq to respond to the needs of the Iraqi people who have suffered from years of sanctions, conflicts and wars and lack of access to essential services.
7. Currently, UNAMI is the only air service provider available in the country that is cleared for use by the United Nations staff, and operates a 30-seater Embraer-120 aircraft, providing flights between Kuwait, Baghdad and Amman four times a week, with weekly flights to Erbil and twice-monthly flights to Basra. There is a requirement for additional internal flights in Iraq, which has not been addressed yet.
8. There are a number of limitations with the existing air service arrangements, which include the following components:

- The currently available aircraft capacity does not respond to the increased transport needs and geographical coverage of the humanitarian community;
 - UNAMI prioritises travel of their own staff over staff from other agencies;
 - The aircraft schedules are mainly adapted to UNAMI's requirements and do not regularly cover all areas that the humanitarian community needs to access;
9. The following are the main reasons for the proposed resumption of WFP/UNHAS services:
- In spite of funding shortfalls, as the security situation inside Iraq improves, the humanitarian community are moving staff out-posted to Jordan and surrounding countries into Iraq and the need for domestic travel is increasing while USF-I capacity to transport staff is decreasing. The 2009 UNHAS assessment identified a monthly UN passenger requirement of 365 excluding WFP. In addition there are the NGO requirements;
 - There is an increasing requirement for flights to other airports usually driven by humanitarian imperatives in the surrounding provinces. According to the 2009 assessment, the humanitarian community now needs services to 10 cities within Iraq, seven of which are not served regularly by UNAMI or USF-I;
 - UNHAS, being a common service, addresses the needs of all humanitarian community equally;
 - UNHAS identifies the travel needs of the humanitarian community through a User Group Committee (UGC) and adapts schedules to the requirements;
 - UNHAS will be able to address the air transport gap by integrating into humanitarian flight operations with UNAMI in order to fully meet the requirement for humanitarian flights;

Project Objective(s)

10. The objective of this Special Operation is to provide a safe, efficient and cost-effective air transport service for all United Nations Agencies, NGOs, diplomatic missions and other humanitarian and development actors, contributing to development and reconstruction activities in Iraq.
11. In addition to regular passenger transport services, UNHAS will provide medical and security evacuations and transport high-value cargo, such as medical supplies and information and communication (ICT) equipment.

Project Implementation

12. UNHAS will be managing its operations from Baghdad, Iraq, to maintain close coordination with the user agencies which operate within the country.
13. The aircraft will be equipped with counter measures (civilian certified anti missile system). The initial aircraft operating base will be in Amman, Jordan

and/or Erbil, Iraq as the most logistically convenient and secure locations, with the base moving full-time to Erbil – or even Baghdad – if security allows. The aircraft main bases will be changed as per the client agencies' requirements and the guidance of the UN security and the UNHAS User Group pending funding availability.

14. The aircraft will provide flights from Baghdad (military side of the airport) to all major centres in Iraq, including Erbil, Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Tallil and Sulaymani and to Amman, Jordan (Marka airport) and, if required, to Kuwait. From the start, the aircraft will regularly remain overnight in Erbil, Iraq to enable it to reply to client transport requests. The aircraft will be available to perform medical and security evacuations.
15. Seven international staff – inclusive of one Private Security Detail (PSD) staff – will manage the entire air operation supported by eight national staff. Five out of the seven international staff will be based in Iraq. This is a high number of international staff as it is extremely difficult to get the required security clearances for Iraq national staff to work on Baghdad military airport. Aircraft ground handling contracts for operations out of Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Tallil, Sulaymani, Amman and Kuwait will be drafted and signed.
16. A UNHAS User Group committee (UGC) will be created. It will be composed of the representatives United Nations agencies, NGOs, diplomatic missions and donor organizations, with the Chair selected by the committee. The UGC will follow the standard WFP/UNHAS terms of reference (ToRs) as following:
 - Establishing administrative policies and issuing administrative directives detailing eligibility and priority of passenger and cargo on UNHAS aircraft, and ensuring compliance with WFP management and operational policies and procedures;
 - Deciding on the destinations to be served;
 - Ensuring compliance with established procedures for the safe and efficient handling of passengers and cargo;
 - Ensuring timely settlement of dues to WFP and matters relating to the quality of service; and
 - Ensuring continuous reassessment of the air transport needs
17. The project will function using the WFP management structures and support systems:
 - Passenger and cargo bookings will be made through UNHAS Flight Management Application with data and voice connectivity to relay flight manifests and schedules to all flown-to locations.
 - The UNHAS User Group will meet at least on a two-monthly basis to review the adequacy and quality of the common service.
 - A dedicated communication system will allow WFP Aviation monitoring of the location and flight progress of the WFP/UNHAS operated aircraft through flight tracking systems.
 - Monthly flight schedules will be maintained with flexibility to take appropriate action and adjust to requests for chartered flights.

- UNHAS will ensure the monitoring of the safety level of the operation in line with the United Nations Aviation Standards.
 - The Aviation Service (ODLA), based in Rome, will be responsible for the contracting and provision of aircraft and crew for the operation.
 - The Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO) based in Iraq, will manage the operation. The Air Transport Officers (ATOs) will be assigned in Amman, Baghdad and Erbil to monitor the operations at each location. They will report to the CATO.
 - The UNHAS main booking offices will be located in Baghdad and in Amman.
 - The WFP Iraq Country Director will act as the Fund Manager for the SO and the WFP Iraq Finance Officer will be the Allotment Administrator. ODLA will provide operational and administrative support and will be responsible for the oversight of the operational activities in Iraq and in Jordan.
18. WFP/UNHAS will secure all the necessary arrangements with the local Civil Aviation Authorities (CAA) in Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait for landing, take-off, parking and over-flight. When contacted, the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), various Iraq Airport Directors, Jordanian CAA and Amman Marka Airport Directors welcomed a possible UNHAS air operation. UNHAS will be operating in UN hub locations in Iraq, all of which have been cleared for use by the Security Management Team (SMT), and already have UN staff. There are additional security provisions which have also been cleared by the SMT for those locations that do not have a permanent UN presence.
19. The WFP/UNHAS operation will be integrated with UNAMI air operations, applying the same security and safety coverage and procedures as UNAMI's. Current airport destinations within Iraq have been cleared by a Security Risk Assessment (SRA) process endorsed by the Security Management Team (SMT) and approved by UNDSS HQ. This includes Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, and Tallil. There are caveats on the use of these airports and it includes internal UN security arrangements coordinated with the existing Iraqi security support at the airports. Another Security Risk Assessment (SRA) will be conducted on the hubs and presented to the SMT for approval before UNHAS flights are launched in Iraq.
20. The following elements will be coordinated between UNHAS and UNAMI to ensure effectiveness of the service and to avoid overlapping of tasks between the two agencies:
- Preparation of flight schedules;
 - Preparation of UNHAS Standard Administrative and Operating Procedure (SAOP);
 - Preparation of UNHAS Emergency Response Plan;
 - Preparation of UNHAS check-in and boarding security and Safety procedures;
 - Passenger booking process will be, if not common, than at least, coordinated;
 - Aircraft daily aircraft tasking;
 - Medical and security evacuations.

21. The implementation of the project could be hampered by factors such as severe weather conditions, the security situation, political instability and / or shortage of funds. UNHAS shall therefore continue to adjust the fleet and network to meet the demands and resources in such a rapidly evolving situation.

Exit Strategy

22. This project will be continuously monitored and the implementation plan revised as the situation evolves, according to the needs of the humanitarian community. The requirements will be discussed regularly during the User Group Committee meetings.
23. UNHAS Iraq will be reoriented as the security situation permits. Deployment will mainly be restricted to internal flights once the use of international commercial flights and airport services are permitted. Similarly the operation will be phased out once the security situation authorizes the use of commercial airports and commercial airlines to provide adequate internal air services between the main Iraqi towns for the humanitarian community.

Project Cost and Benefits

24. Operating costs are detailed in the budget attached. These costs amount to US\$7,455,980 and cater for the chartering of the aircraft, aviation fees, airport charges as well as the costs for fuel, handling and office support. Direct Support Costs covering WFP staff and related entitlements are estimated at US\$3,314,929.
25. The envisaged benefits of re-introducing an UNHAS operation in Iraq are as follows:
- enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and security in the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian operations as staff can reach their projects around the country;
 - a common service provided to the humanitarian community which is consistent with the call by the Secretary-General “for greater unity of purpose and coherence at country level and that each United Nations entity should benefit from another’s presence through establishing corresponding consultative and collaborative arrangements”; and,
 - enhanced air safety through a standardized, single contracting and safety surveillance system.
26. The funding for this Special Operation will be provided through donor contributions supplemented by a system of a partial cost recovery. A one-way ticket cost would be aligned to the cost charged by UNAMI at approximately US\$300 for international flights and US\$100 for internal Iraq flights. Flight costing will be reviewed on a regular basis in coordination with UNAMI. Those proposed charges will be discussed with the UNHAS User Group during its first meeting. It is estimated that the cost recovery will generate US\$1.5 million during the project life (one year).

27. The levying of flight charges will enable UNHAS to illustrate cost awareness to donors and will encourage agencies to ensure more cost efficient usage of the aircraft through better planning of personnel movements and reduce the number of “no-shows” to flights. WFP staff travel cost contributions will be charged to their specific project budgets.

Monitoring & Evaluation

28. Key performance indicators will be reported at the end of the project and will include the following:
- o Average number of hours flown per month (target: full utilization of contracted hours);
 - o Average number of passengers transported per month (target: 800 passengers);
 - o Number of agencies and organizations using the air service (target: 16 agencies);
 - o Number of flights conducted for medical and security evacuations (target: 100% of requests responded to at UN hubs that have international staff presence);
 - o Aircraft occupancy rate (target 60%);
 - o Frequency of and attendance at the User Group meetings;
 - o Number of locations served (target is still to be confirmed)
 - o Number of days the aircraft is unserviceable (target is not to exceed 5 per month)
29. The Chief Air Transport Officer will provide regular operational reports to ODLA and the Funds Manager as well as the User Group as required.

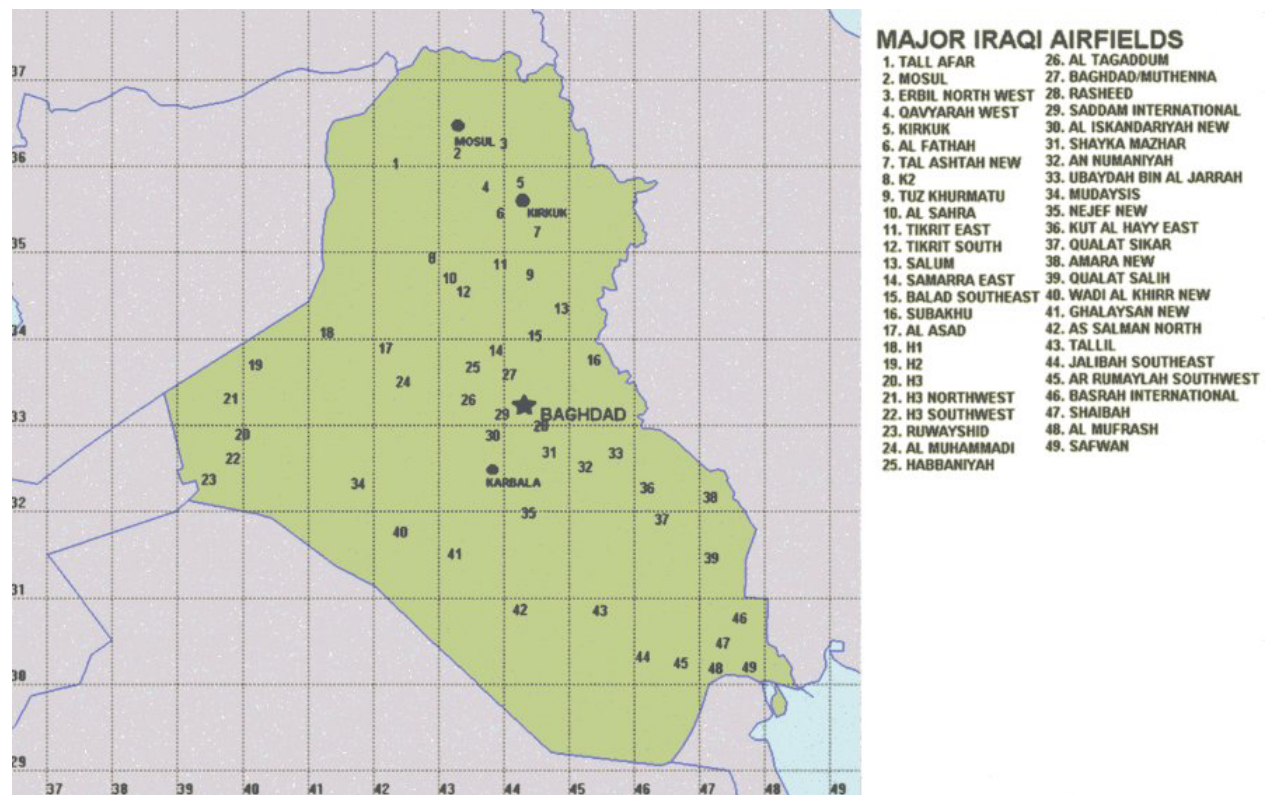
RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 15 December 2010 to 14 December 2011 at a total cost to WFP of US\$11,524,872 is recommended for approval by the Executive Director.

APPROVAL

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Josette Sheeran
Executive Director

Annex A – Map of Major Airfields in Iraq



Note – UNHAS will only operate to airfields that have received security clearance by UNDSS.