

UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission



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SRSR Activities

During the last week of Ramadan the SRSR met with Sheikh Kheir Allah al-Basri, a prominent UIA member, to discuss current political issues in Iraq. He also met with the Dean of Al-Mustansiriya university, Baghdad about the impact of the current situation on its students and their work of the university. On 16 October the SRSR hosted two correspondents from major foreign news media outlets. The following day he hosted an Iftar Dinner for President Jalal Talabani and a group of 35 Iraqi leaders from across the political spectrum

The SRSR chaired a dedicated management meeting on preparatory work needed for UNAMI re-occupation of the Basra Palace Island subject to prevailing security conditions on 17 Oct. He also hosted a farewell dinner for the Fijian PSD Team, prior to their partial rotation out of the Mission area.

The SRSR and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh co-chaired a meeting of the International Compact for Iraq (ICI) Preparatory Group at UNAMI Offices in Baghdad on 19 October. The event included video links with the Kuwait Fund, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the EU Presidency. As part of pre-work for the final Compact Preparatory Group meeting in Kuwait scheduled for 31 October, the SRSR met with Ambassador Daniel Speckhard, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission concerning the security situation in Basrah and its impact on reconstruction initiatives and the work of the US Consulate, and spoke via telephone with His Highness Sheikh Mohammad al-Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait.

On the last week of October 2006, SRSR Qazi met with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders in advance of the Preparatory Group Meeting of the International Compact with Iraq, (held in Kuwait on 31 October 2006). He also met with US Ambassador Khalilzad to discuss the situation in Iraq.



High-Level preparatory meeting on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) – Kuwait, 31 Oct 2006

DSRSR Schulenburg met with the Vice President Adel Abdel Mahdi to discuss issues relating to the Constitutional Review Process. He also met with Dr. Hussein Hindawi, the chair of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), to discuss the law for establishing the IHECI as well as means of maintaining the neutrality and impartiality of the IECI Board of Commissioners.

Political Update

Despite a number of efforts made by the Government of Iraq along the security, diplomatic and political tracks during the review period, insurgent and militia activities remain uncontrolled in large areas of Baghdad and other parts of the country. The proliferation of reconciliation and security initiatives has, without tangible progress in the situation on the ground, provoked skepticism among the Iraqi public.

As part of a plan endorsed by the National Political Security Council to purge the Interior Ministry of officers associated with militia elements, three commanders of special police forces were reassigned to administrative posts on 17 October. In a further attempt to rein in militias, Interior Minister Bolani met Muqtada al-Sadr in Najaf on 20 October, two days after clashes in Amara between Sadr's Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization.

Dozens of armed men demonstrated in Ramadi on 18 October in support of an Islamic state announced earlier by the Mujahedeen Shura Council. The demonstrations were televised by Iraqi Media coverage. The Islamic State of Iraq claims a presence in the governorates of Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Ninawa, and parts of Babel and Wasit. On 21 October, tribal leaders representing the "Salvation Council" in Anbar downplayed the demonstration stating that the supporters of the Shura Council represent only a small portion of the people in the province .

Prime Minister Al-Maliki met with Grand Ayathollah Ali Al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr on 18 October in an effort to stabilize the security and political situations. On the same day, the Cabinet announced that the national reconciliation conference, which was postponed indefinitely on 21 October, would be scheduled for 4 November (it has yet to be held)

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Iraqi Shiite and Sunni religious leaders in a meeting sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) issued an eight-article declaration on 20 October in Mecca, calling for the end of sectarian bloodshed in Iraq. The OIC initiative was supported but not attended by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The Mecca Declaration condemns kidnappings and incitement of Iraqis, attacks on mosques and shrines and attempts to clear neighbourhoods of members of other sects. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani welcomed the agreement and praised the OIC and Saudi Arabia for their role in advancement towards reconciliation. The agreement was also supported by Syria, Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

To date various reconciliations initiatives that have been announced, both inside and outside Iraq, have had not had a sizeable impact on the scale and nature of the violence in the country. In most cases they have involved statements of principle and intent, as well as lists of desired measures, with little indication of how they will be implemented. The ultimate impact of the Mecca Declaration will therefore likely depend upon the tangible follow-up measures that are taken. UNAMI has announced its readiness to assist with the implementation of the Mecca Declaration in whatever manner that the parties see fit.

As result of differences over security operations in Sadr City, the Government of Iraq and the Multinational Force announced the formation of a joint coordination committee on 25 October 2006. The committee, which is composed of the Iraqi National Security Advisor, the Iraqi Ministers of Defence and Interior, the Multinational Force Commander and the US Ambassador to Iraq, was charged with accelerating the training of Iraqi Security Forces and the transfer of responsibility for security to the Government of Iraq, including assumption of command and control over Iraqi forces.

President Talabani told the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat on 29 October that US "contacts with Tehran and Damascus is the best [option] and it could be very useful". The following day Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari announced that the Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem would visit Iraq in November 2006 (the visit occurred on 19 November).

Amidst continued violence and poor service delivery of basic services in Baghdad and the rest of the country, on 12 November Prime Minister Al-Maliki announced his intent to reorganize his government. Reports suggest that these changes are likely to be more than a cabinet reshuffle and may include the realignment of political forces currently represented in the Council of Representatives (CoR). The announcement is perceived to be aimed at countering the widespread perceptions on the ineffectiveness of the five-month old government.

In Parliament, the law on the establishment of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) remains stalled due to unresolved issues related to the distribution powers between the IHEC and the regional electoral commissions foreseen in the draft law. As a consequence the date for Governorate elections has yet to be set. Despite this, there are indications that political actors are gearing up in anticipation of these elections occurring next year. For example, the National Trend, a new coalition of "secularist" forces consisting of parties affiliated to former Prime Minister Allawi's Iraqi National List and other political formations, announced its formation on 10 November in Basra. Reportedly, the formation of the coalition has been welcomed by Sheikh Yacoubi, the spiritual mentor of the Fadhila Party. Fadhila is currently part of the Shi'ite led UIA coalition at the national level and Mohammed al-Waeli, the current Governor of Basra, is a member of the Party. Along with the increased Mahdi Militia activities in Basra, this indicates that political forces may be attempting to position themselves to take advantage of public dissatisfaction with the Basra Provincial Council when local elections are held.

Constitutional Support Newsflash

On the 25th of September the Speaker of Council of Representatives (CoR) announced the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) and that it would conduct its work over the following one year period. Membership of the committee was later announced to be 29 CoR members, with a further two CoR members nominated to be observers. Representation from all key political blocs has been secured. The CoR went into recess straight after announcement of the CRC, without determining the issue of the chairperson. Negotiations on this matter took place during the 2 week CoR recess for Eid Al-Fitr and when the CoR resumed. On the 15th of November the CRC met for the first time in plenary. It announced that date as being the commencement of its work in proper and the date from which the one year time period of work would commence. It further determined that its own work programme to be confined to 6 months, effectively extending the Article 142 four-month deadline by making use of the 2-month CoR recess in January and February 2007. On the 15th the CRC also announced that management of the committee would occur through a 'Presidency Council, made up of Sheikh Hummam Hammoudi (UIA) as chairperson, and Fouad Masoum (Kurdish Alliance) and Iyad Sammarai (IIP) as deputy chairpeople. They agreed that decisions would be taken by consensus.

At time of writing (28 November) the CRC has met a handful of times at the plenary level since its initial meeting on 15 November. It announced the launch of a very modest public submission campaign to run for 1 month (20 November - 20 December), in which a minimal very advertising campaign has encouraged the public to submit its views on the constitution either in writing to the CoR or through email to a nominated address. The chairperson has indicated that once these public submissions have been analysed the Presidency Council will create CRC sub-committees to focus on the various issues brought to light through the public submission process.

UNAMI/OCS and UNOPS are providing technical assistance to the CRC. This assistance will focus on the provision of expert advice on substantive issue areas, as well as support to the CRC secretariat and may include modest outreach support.

Electoral Update

There has been little progress on the adoption of the IHEC law by the Council of Representatives since its second reading on 27th July 2006. The main point in dispute was the division of powers between regional and federal election bodies.

On 9 November, the CoR resumed deliberations on the IHEC. After a dispute between those supporting regional commissions with exclusive powers on all electoral affairs within the regions and those who favored a strong federal electoral commission, the Speaker's Council met in a closed door session. The result of the meeting was an agreement among the main political blocs, where the IECI will retain its provincial offices until regional commissions are established. The understanding is that once established these commissions would have full powers on electoral affairs within the regional boundaries. The CoR Deputy Speaker was made aware that under federal structures central electoral commissions typically retain certain supervisory and regulatory roles over regional bodies, which appear absent in the context of the current agreement. The adoption of the text has been postponed.

The current IECI Board of Commissioners caretaker mandate expired on 10th November 2006, but the Board expects that another extension of the mandate will be passed by the CoR.

The Electoral Assistance Team continued to plan voter registration activities in Iraq.

Two meetings were held with senior staff from the Operations department to launch discussion on voter registration planning. The Voter Registration Committee (VRC), which has been dormant since June, will shortly resume its activity.

The IECI Board of Commissioners has approved a list of 72 attendees for the Scuola Sant'Anna training courses to be held in Amman in November and December as part of the on-going strategy for capacity building. The approved list does not meet all informational requirements mandated for the training program, as the Eid holidays have interfered with access to candidates. Collection of the missing information will be a priority after the holidays. The BRIDGE training course coordinators have been supplied with the names of two IECI staff participants. The IECI has nominated a woman from the IECI HQ Procedures Section and a man from the Erbil GEO Training Division.

The Office of Electoral Assistance continued advising on the preparations for the transition from the IECI to the permanent Electoral Commission. The ownership of IECI building remains unresolved; efforts are continuing to locate the relevant paperwork. Section chiefs have met on the subject of identifying data and documents for retention. Lists of such items are to be submitted by 5 November. Review of the inventory lists was conducted. Extension of the contract for international security of the building until end of February 2007 has been approved by the Board of Commissioners but not yet signed. A preliminary assessment of documentation in the Board Secretariat in preparation of the transition of the IECI to the IHEC was also conducted.

Human Rights News

Civilians continue to die in targeted killings, terrorist bombing and in cross-fires across Iraq. Targeting of minorities also continues. On 16 October, in the Baghdeda sub-district of Nineveh, KDP security officers burst into the offices of a Christian run media outlet, Ashour satellite channel, reportedly physically assaulting and detaining some staff members for several hours. On 16 October, in Mosul, unknown gunmen fired at Al-Safena Church causing damage to the church. On 17 October, in a Turkoman area of the Tozkhormato-Tikrit highway, unknown gunmen established an illegal checkpoint. Individuals passing through the checkpoint were stopped and questioned on their ethnicity.

Reports indicate that Sunnis were released but that seventeen Turkoman officials working in Tikrit were arrested and fifteen Shia were detained and have not been seen since. On 20 October, between three and five Palestinians were killed and at least fifteen were injured when mortars were fired into the Al-Baladiyat compound in Baghdad.

HRO continues to record incidents suspected to be honor killings of women in the northern parts of the country. On 14 October, in Kirkuk, a married woman set herself on fire after a family dispute. Three days later, in the Makhmour of Erbil, Ahmed Ali was arrested after stabbing his daughter during a dispute. On the same day, at the Nawroze quarter in Erbil, an 18-year-old woman died after setting herself on fire after a family argument. Midia Hashm, aged 27, was reportedly shot to death in Erbil by unknown individuals, purportedly because of "social causes". The local police are also investigating a case of a woman named Parwin Khaled, aged 30, from Qatawi village in Erbil, who died in hospital from severe burns.

Victims of extra-judicial killings continued to appear in the streets of Baghdad and other cities. As previously reported, the bodies were handcuffed, blindfolded and bore signs of torture. A significant number of kidnappings were again reported this week. On 11 November, an armed group stopped three minibuses in Al-Letifia, kidnapping and killing several persons. On 10 November, unknown gunmen in two private cars kidnapped Dr. Anas al Azzawi, the head of the administration in the Iraq Red Crescent Society HQ in Baghdad, requesting his family to pay US\$ 75,000 as a ransom or they would kill him.

HRO has learned that some schools in Baghdad have received threat letters, while some others were apparently raided by armed groups forcing students and teachers to evacuate. The Baghdad College, a secondary school for boys in al-Adhmya district, has been closed since 2 November and the administration had asked students to transfer to other schools or study at home until mid-term exams. Intermediate female school "17 Temouz" was threatened with attacks if it retains Shi'a teachers and students. An intermediate school for boys in same district received the same threat, and when it did not comply, it was attacked by a car bomb. Irregular attendance is reported in universities this week, particularly among female students.

Acts of violence continue to be reported in various parts of Iraq, in particular Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Kut and Baquba, where 33 policemen were killed in the last two days.

According to open sources, several hundred residents of Sadr City staged a protest against the five-day siege by MNF-I and were reportedly joined by members of parliament from the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance. They complained that the MNF-I operation restricted the ability of people to move or take the wounded and sick to hospitals.

Violent activities continue to claim a large number of victims throughout Iraq, especially in Baghdad. The renewal of sectarian violence followed the pronouncement of the verdict against Saddam Hussein and seven other co-defendants on 5 November. HRO notes with utmost concern that, according to local media, 20 civilians were killed and 23 wounded when Iraqi security forces fired upon a group of people peacefully demonstrating against Saddam Hussein's death sentence in Baquba.

The second trial against Saddam Hussein, his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majeed (known as "Chemical Ali") and five others for war crimes and crimes against humanity for their role in the 1988 Anfal campaign continued. On 18 October, two Kurdish witnesses described their villages being bombed by the army and how they were transferred to detention centres where they observed prisoners being shot in the head. On the same day, Prime Minister Maliki was quoted in the press stating that he hoped legal proceedings against Saddam Hussein would be short and that Hussein would be found guilty and sentenced to death. International legal rights groups protested that government pressure and sectarian violence make a fair trial of the former President impossible. On 19 October the court adjourned the trial for ten days after hearing from the two witnesses.

The draft law on Demonstrations and General Meetings is currently before the Kurdish National Assembly. It requires political parties and other organizations to obtain a written approval from the Minister of Interior prior to holding a rally or demonstration. There has been extensive debate on this law, viewed by some components of civil society and NGOs as an unjustifiable restriction on their right to expression.

On 16 October the 3rd Meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Human Rights was chaired by DSRSG Fakhouri in Amman. There was an agreement in the meeting on having a three day training session for the Iraq UNCT on human rights mainstreaming in close cooperation with the UN Staff College and OHCHR.

On 16 and 17 October HRO, in cooperation with OHCHR, conducted a workshop on the establishment of the National Commission for Human Rights in Iraq in which some 30 members of the Council of Representatives and seven NGOs participated. The participants stressed their commitment to the establishment of the National Commission and made progress on refining the draft text of the law establishing the Commission.

Consultations within the framework of the Rule of Law Sector Working Group (ROLSWG) continue with the meetings of the various core teams for the Ministries of Justice, Human Rights and High Judicial Council. Core teams were formed in order to facilitate discussions at the practical level. UNAMI/HRO, in cooperation with the Chief Justice and the Ministry of Justice, is planning to organize a rule of law conference before the end of 2006, in order to define an overall Iraqi strategic framework in the rule of law and thus the key elements for a justice reform programme. Efforts of the ROLSWG will also prepare the ground for the International Compact and UNAMI welcomes the inclusion of a Human Rights/Rule of Law component in the International Compact with Iraq (ICI).

HRO continued organizing a training course for librarians to take place in Geneva on 27 November 2006. HRO is also developing a small grant program that will provide funding (US\$ 600,000 in total) for human rights activities throughout Iraq.

In Erbil, HRO met the Operations Officer at Khatuzeen Center to discuss their recent projects on child and women protection and the ways that HRO could support research and outreach activities dealing with honor killings and female suicides in the region. HRO also met the members of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society to discuss the IDP situation in the North. IRCS informed HRO to date there are 5500 IDP families in Erbil which includes 1500 Christian families in Ankawa. In Amman, HRO met representatives of ICRC and UNICEF regarding the question of juvenile justice, amnesty, trainings for the relevant government agencies, and possible common interventions.

Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities

The return of DSRSG Fakhouri from his mission to UNNY was followed by a series of intensive discussions within the UNCT and the individual clusters concerning the Joint Priority Action Plan (JPAP), the response to the potential Japanese contribution to the UNDG ITF and inputs to the Compact documents. The JPAP is aimed at ensuring that the UNCT's activities continue to be complementary to the Government's priorities, as indicated in the Compact, as well as the overall funding environment. The response to the Japanese was viewed as a test of the flexibility of the plan to be able to accommodate available funding without risking the integrity of the

strategy or to UNCT priorities for Iraq. Concerning the Compact, the UNCT has been regularly providing critical data and indicators to the technical committee.

The second technical level Preparatory Group meeting was held in Baghdad on 19 October, which was attended by the DSRSG and members of the UNCT. The meeting was co-chaired by the SRSR and Iraq Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh and was attended by a delegation of the Government of Iraq (GOI) including, inter alia, the Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the National Security Advisor. The ICI Preparatory Group Member-States with diplomatic representation in Baghdad (i.e. Japan, Italy, South Korea, UK, USA, Germany, France and EC) also attended. The meeting was video linked with UNHQ – DPA, the World Bank offices in Washington, D.C., Amman and Beirut, the International Monetary Fund, the Kuwait Fund, and the Finnish MoFA in Helsinki (currently holding the EU Presidency). Participants discussed the ICI "Iteration 1" Draft Document with specific regard to Iraq's Medium Term Fiscal Framework, ICI Mutual Commitments, and the ICI Implementation Mechanism.

This was followed by the High-Level Preparatory Group Meeting convened in Kuwait City on 31 October, and a broader donor meeting in New York on 13 November, during which those donors not included in the technical review group had an opportunity to voice their support as well as inputs to the documents circulated in Kuwait.

As part of the broader discussions related to the Compact, a draft paper on the UN's perspective regarding the recalibration or stock-taking of the relevance of IRFFI to the Compact was informally shared with the IRFFI Chair, the World Bank and Deputy Prime Minister Saleh. The formulation of the IRFFI papers will be extended to ensure compatibility with the development and direction of the final Compact document.

DSRSG Fakhouri met with the EC presidency and EU Member States in Brussels to provide a briefing on UN activities in Iraq in general, and on specific initiatives supported by EC/EU funding. EU Member States expressed appreciation and continued support for the UN's role in delivering assistance to Iraq despite the difficult circumstances.

While the Compact constituted a significant amount of the activity for the UNCT and UNAMI in particular during this period, DSRSG Fakhouri also undertook a strong advocacy campaign with the office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in an effort to raise awareness regarding the growing humanitarian situation in the country. To this end, the support of a Contingency Planning Advisor has been pledged by OCHA and should be on board by the end of November for a two month mission that will include

consultations with the UNCT and the relevant Iraqi government structures. Similarly, enhanced coordination on a regional level is being promoted, with a mission from the OCHA Regional Coordinator 10-11 November, to discuss improved communications and information sharing that will strengthen any regional response that may be indicated by the circumstances.

During the reporting period, the UNAMI team in Erbil has been closely monitoring the impact of the floods on various northern districts, liaising with the KRG to obtain verified data. UN agencies and their partners have shared information with the Government, and the Area Coordinator has met repeatedly with the concerned government officials to ensure strong communication.

Deputy Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator (DRHC) Yacoub El-Hillo departed from Baghdad during this reporting period. He leaves UNAMI to rejoin UNHCR at his new posting in Tanzania. His contributions to the mission were numerous and recognized by all. Recruitment for his replacement is underway, and it is anticipated that there will be a new DRHC within early 2007.

Brief from PIO

In addition to continued regular daily Arabic and English monitoring of Iraqi, regional and international media news outlets UNAMI PIO arranged multiple press events during the reporting period. On 16 October, UNAMI PIO organized an informal meeting between the SRSR and the Washington Post and Newsweek Magazine. On 19 October, UNAMI PIO arranged for a joint press conference that was held by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Barham Saleh and SRSR Qazi following UNAMI's hosting of the Second Technical Level Preparatory Group Meeting for the International Compact for Iraq .

UNAMI PIO also issued press releases wishing Iraqis a happy and peaceful Eid Al-Fitr (22 October) and supporting the Declaration of Makkah al-Mukaramah (22 October). The latter press release noted UNAMI's willingness to provide any assistance required to facilitate the implementation of this declaration.

The Kurdish version of the UNAMI website was officially launched on 30 October, 2006, making it the third language in which the web-site can be viewed (in addition to English and Arabic)

The PIO also worked with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to prepare for a press conference to be held at the headquarters of the Fund in Kuwait 31 October 2006. Finally, PIO compiled all media stories related to a leaked UN code cable regarding the release of Iraq mortality data.

The regular daily bilingual monitoring of Iraqi, regional and international media, and security situation news monitoring continued during the reporting period. On 12 November, UNAMI PIO issued a press release on a workshop on Strengthening the Human Rights Protection in Iraq held by UNAMI Human Rights Office together with the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights. This was followed by PIO organizing a press conference for the workshop at the Al-Rasheed Hotel on 13 November. On the same date, PIO organized an interview for DSRSG Fakhouri with Corriere della Sera, an Italian daily newspaper, to discuss the International Compact with Iraq and other issues relating to humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.

Fiji Guard Activities

The UNGU BATT 5 flew into Baghdad and Irbil in two different chalks. The first chalk left on 1 November 06 followed by Chalk 2 on 9 November 06. We were billeted at Camp Virginia courtesy of the US Army. We enjoyed our stay there and exchanged news with the BATT 4. The routine involved church services at 8.00am and 5.00pm, cleaning and physical training. The gym, internet and library were used by the soldiers to catch up on the latest news at home and abroad .

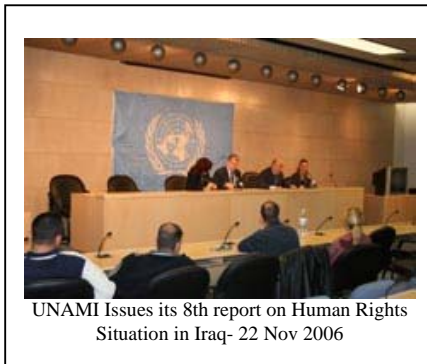
Handover between the respective Commanding Officers of the outgoing and incoming Commanding Officers was successfully done. There was also a handover between logistics officers of all stores. The transition was a smooth one despite the mission being a different one.

This mission is a security operation and not a peacekeeping one hence the mission requirements would change slightly. The rules of engagement would essentially be the same.

Our trip north on an MNFI plane was uneventful. We were met at the airport by UNAMI movement controller. We were taken to Camp Stryker where we had our meal and waited for our transport to UNAMI HQ.

On 18 November 06 the Battalion welcomed Fijians who were working for the various security firms in Baghdad. After the traditional formalities and a speech by the Commanding Officer, everyone got into the kava and catching up with old friends and making new acquaintances.

Photos from UNAMI Activities



UNAMI Issues its 8th report on Human Rights Situation in Iraq- 22 Nov 2006



From Fiji Guard Activities



Handover between the outgoing and incoming Commanding Officers

UNAMI Focus

Is an internal bulletin produced by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The views printed in it do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

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