

Stewart Henderson had been through a lot of difficult episodes in his diplomatic career, but nothing prepared him for the 117 days that would follow the kidnapping of two Canadians in Iraq.

ANOTHER BAD DAY IN BAGHDAD



FM BAGHDAD - URGENT FOR OTTAWA TASK FORCE: NOTE: NO/NO BGHDD STAFF WERE INJURED IN THIS INCIDENT

"On 31Jan at 12h15, BGHDD official vehicle driven by Charge and carrying three BGHDD staff en route from UK Embassy Compound to Canadian Embassy building took three rounds from a stationary US forces Humvee... Cdn vehicle experienced loud noise and vibration. Charge immediately stopped vehicle, exposed his hands outside the driver side window; all passengers remained in the vehicle. Some moments later, a US soldier from the gatehouse of the compound approached the Canadian vehicle to ask if everyone was ok. Passengers then exited the Cdn vehicle and then discovered three points of entry (two in the hood; one below the windscreen) as well as a shell fragment inside the vehicle."

If Foreign Affairs teaches you anything, it is to use the driest prose possible when writing official messages. "Loud noise and vibration" doesn't quite capture the terror of being shot at.

I had been in Baghdad for four months, long enough to learn about different sounds made by different ordnance. My initial thought was that an IED (improvised explosive device) had gone off, and that the soldiers in their armoured vehicles—the ubiquitous Humvees—would think we had something to do with it. That's why I rolled down the window and put my hands in plain sight. The vehicles were about 20 metres away, but five Humvees pack