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PRESS RELEASE

PORTUGUESE JOURNALIST FREED

Portuguese journalist CARLOS RALEIRAS, who was kidnapped on Friday 14 November near Basra, Iraq, was released unharmed last night.

Mr Raleiras was taken by car to a crossroads in the town of Safwan and sought refuge in a nearby house, where he was subsequently collected by British soldiers from the Coalition Forces. He was then taken to a British Army base to rest and undergo a medical examination.

Mr Raleiras told Coalition personnel that he had not been ill-treated and had been given food during his captivity. He will now receive a full debriefing from Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Police as part of their on-going hunt for his abductors. The safe release of Mr Raleiras follows the search of a house yesterday by Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Police, during which some of his personal possessions and clothing were found and two men detained in connection with the abduction.

Captain Shay Marks, from the (British) 20 Armoured Brigade, said: "We are delighted that Mr Raleiras has been released unharmed. He has expressed his gratitude to the Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Police for their efforts to bring about his release. This happy outcome followed a combined Coalition and Iraqi Police operation to track him down. However, it is not acceptable for such attacks to take place and we will continue to make every effort to trace and arrest those responsible for his abduction".

Mr Raleiras was kidnapped near Az Zubiyar on Friday lunchtime. During the attack, a colleague received a gunshot wound and is now receiving treatment in a British Military Hospital prior to returning home in due course. His two other travelling companions managed to escape to safety.