

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Kennedy, Patrick F <KennedyPF@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2011 8:38 AM
To: H
Cc: Nides, Thomas R; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Iraq travel warning

Madame Secretary

I have appended the summary of the UK travel warning and a portion of their longer text which discusses business travel.

There is not general exemption for business

Separately, I am also sending you the US travel warning which is very similar to the UK's

DS also reports the same results.

Our Overseas Security Advisory Council staff [both in DC and in Baghdad] works regularly with American business to assist them in their desire to do business.

Of note, is that the American businesses report that their greatest problem in doing business in Iraq is the extreme difficulty in getting visas for their personnel.

I will send you separately both the complete UK travel warning and the complete USG travel warning

Regards

pat

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UK TRAVEL WARNING

We advise against all but essential travel to the whole of Iraq, except to the Kurdistan Region, where there are no restrictions. There is a high threat of terrorism in Iraq. This includes violence and kidnapping targeting foreign nationals, including individuals of non-Western appearance.

There are no restrictions in place against travel to the Kurdistan Region (the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah), as the risk of terrorism in these provinces is markedly lower than elsewhere in Iraq.

However, you should seek local advice before travelling to the remote areas bordering Turkey and Iran, where there have been incidents of shelling, unexploded ordnances and mines. Turkish security forces carried out air strikes and an incursion into the border areas of Kurdistan, targeting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in August and October 2011. See Safety and Security - Kurdistan Region.

You should employ a professional security company and take all necessary security precautions if you intend to travel to areas of Iraq which are subject to travel restrictions. You should exercise extreme caution at all times in these areas. See Safety and Security - Travel in Iraq.

There are ongoing, regular demonstrations in all regions of Iraq, particularly after Friday prayers. Demonstrations in Sulaimaniyah in February 2011 resulted in the deaths of several protestors. You are advised to avoid large gatherings, crowds and demonstrations.

Curfews can be and are imposed at short notice, often around religious holidays. When in place curfew times must be strictly adhered to and large gatherings should be avoided. See the Safety and Security - Curfews.

27 British nationals required consular assistance in Iraq in the period
1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011. See General - Consular Assistance Statistics.

The British Embassy in Baghdad is able to offer only limited consular assistance. The British Embassy Offices in Basra and Erbil are able to offer limited consular assistance, in the event of an emergency. You should register your presence with LOCATE.

You should seek professional advice and it is strongly advised that you take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling.
See General - Insurance.

<<In expanded text, this is the only specific reference to Business>>

Safety and Security - Travelling to Iraq

The British Government considers that the threat to British officials serving in Iraq is serious enough that they must live and work under strict security rules. All British officials working in Iraq live in secure, guarded accommodation and must travel with close protection teams at all times. Depending on the threat level, they may also be prevented from travelling to certain areas of Iraq.

Similarly, if you decide to travel to areas of Iraq to which we advise against all but essential travel, you should take appropriate security precautions before travelling. You are strongly advised to employ a private security company, make arrangements for secure accommodation and transport and consider pre-deployment training on travelling under close protection.

Appropriate security arrangements will not fully remove the risks of travelling to areas to which we advise only essential travel. You should exercise extreme caution at all times and remember that the UK can only offer limited consular support in Iraq. See General - Consular Services.

International and British companies do operate in and visit Iraq. If you are working for British or other businesses and intend to travel to any part of Iraq, you should follow the above advice and contact UK Trade & Investment (in Iraq: +964 (0)7901 904987 or baghdad.commercial@fco.gov.uk; in the UK: 020 7215 4949 or carl.bruce@ukti.gsi.gov.uk).