

RELEASE IN FULL

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**From:** Kennedy, Patrick F <KennedyPF@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2011 8:39 AM  
**To:** H.  
**Cc:** Nides, Thomas R; Sullivan, Jacob J  
**Subject:** COMPLETE TEXT of 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.

Safety and security (back to top)  
Safety and Security - Terrorism

Despite a decrease in the level of violence across Iraq, there is a high threat of terrorism in Iraq. We advise against all but essential travel to the whole of Iraq, except the Kurdistan Region (the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah) where the risk from terrorism is markedly lower than elsewhere in Iraq.

Terrorists and insurgents maintain the ability to conduct attacks throughout Iraq, including regular attacks in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk.

Major attacks include:

On 5 December 2011, bomb attacks against Shi'a pilgrims marking Ashura in al-Hilla and Baghdad killed and injured over 70 people.

On 28 November 2011 in Baghdad international zone, a car exploded near the Council of Representatives VIP entrance which killed one person and injured several others.

On 26 November 2011 in Baghdad, three improvised explosive devices in Rusafa district killed 8 and injured 13, and an attack on the Abu Ghaib-Fallujah road to the west of Baghdad killed 7 and injured 28.

On 24 November 2011, three improvised explosive devices exploded in a Basra marketplace killing 19 people and injuring 65.

On 27 October 2011, a double road-side bombing in the Urr neighbourhood of Baghdad resulted in 36 civilian deaths and more than 75 injuries.

On 28 August 2011, a suicide bomb attack on Umm al-Qura Mosque in Baghdad during Ramadan prayers killed 29 and injured 38 people.

15 August 2011 a coordinated series of suicide and car bomb attacks took place in over a dozen cities across 10 provinces in Iraq resulting in around 300 deaths and injuries.

On 13 June 2011, a double suicide car bombing near Basra Central Police Station killed 10 ISF and wounded 30 civilians and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). There are also regular attacks in the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk.

On 3 June 2011, a suicide car bombing near government buildings in Tikrit, followed by a suicide bombing at the local hospital at which the injured were being treated, killed 23 and injured 70 people.

On 29 March 2011, suicide bombers attacked government buildings in Tikrit (northern Iraq), killing 12 ISF and injuring over 60 civilians and ISF.

In January 2011, two bombs exploded near the cities of Tikrit and Karbala, resulting in the deaths of over 100 people.

See our [Terrorism Abroad](#) page.

### Safety and Security - Targets

As a foreigner in Iraq, you are a high value target to terrorists, insurgents and criminals who conduct frequent and widespread lethal attacks in Iraq (except in the Kurdistan Region). On 19 July 2010, a British national was killed in a roadside improvised explosive device attack on a British private security company convoy in Mosul. Commercial, aviation and maritime facilities, government buildings and other related political and security facilities are also at a high risk of attack. There have been attacks on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations (UN), journalists, foreign contractors and other visitors to Iraq. There have also been attacks within Baghdad's International (or Green) Zone. Indiscriminate attacks against Iraqi civilian targets also occur.

Targets have included hotels and restaurants where westerners congregate. In January 2010 there were major bomb attacks against a number of hotels in Baghdad that are popular with British and western organisations. Terrorists and insurgents continue to attack mosques, large gatherings, churches, army recruiting centres, public transport, police

stations, government buildings and party political offices. Ceremonies to mark Islamic and Christian festivals have been targeted, including near churches or holy areas. Rocket and mortar attacks occur sporadically in Baghdad (including the International Zone).

Civilian and military aircraft arriving in and departing from Baghdad International Airport and flying to other major cities in Iraq have been subject to attack by small arms and missiles. The standard of security at Baghdad International Airport's civilian terminal has improved. However, there are still concerns and you should exercise caution if using the civilian terminal. In Basra, there is a continuing threat of rocket attacks against the airport.

Methods of attack include shootings, bombings, suicide bombs, vehicle bombs, rockets and mortars.

#### Safety and Security - Kidnap

There remains a high threat of kidnapping across Iraq and caution should be exercised throughout the country. Individuals have been kidnapped at their residence, at work and in transit. Kidnappers do not discriminate on the basis of nationality, religion, gender, age or profession. Large numbers of people, including British nationals, have been kidnapped in Iraq. Many kidnappings have ended with the death of hostages.

The provision of close security protection is extremely important for those working in and moving around Iraq. But this in itself does not remove the threat - a number of those who have been kidnapped include individuals who had security arrangements in place.

If you are in Iraq, you are strongly advised to regularly reassess your security arrangements and consider carefully when planning movements throughout Iraq, especially when moving outside the International Zone in Baghdad.

The motives of hostage takers vary from political to profit. British nationals should be aware that the long-standing policy of the British Government is not to make substantive concessions to hostage takers. The British Government considers that paying ransoms and releasing prisoners increases the risk of further hostage taking.

#### Safety and Security - The Kurdistan Region

There are no travel restrictions in place on travel to the Kurdistan Region (the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah).

The three provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah form the Kurdistan Region (KR) and are administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government which, under the 2005 constitution, has considerable powers of autonomy within a federal Iraq. The KR is significantly more stable than the rest of Iraq and has been largely successful in its counter-terrorism efforts. The threat of terrorism and kidnap in the KR nevertheless remains, although it is markedly lower than elsewhere in Iraq. Islamist terrorist groups, including al-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I) and Ansar al-Islam, have infrequently carried out attacks in the KR. A network of Iranian-based Kurdish extremists, affiliated with AQ-I, also mount occasional cross-border attacks. Where they have occurred, attacks have generally targeted the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The last civilian death to terrorism in the KR was in 2007. On 10 March 2008, a suicide vehicle bomb exploded outside Sulaimaniyah Palace Hotel. Throughout 2010 and 2011, sporadic roadside bombs have targeted the Peshmerga (Kurdish security forces). Ten people (8 demonstrators and 2 policemen) were killed during demonstrations in Sulaimaniyah during February and March 2011. These demonstrations have since come to an end and the situation is now calm. You should still consider taking appropriate security precautions.

Shelling in the border areas with Turkey and Iran in the Kurdistan Region still occurs. In August and October 2011, Turkish security forces carried out air strikes and an incursion into the border areas of Kurdistan, targeting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). You should seek advice locally on the situation in these remote border areas before travelling there.

### Safety and Security - Curfews

There are currently no countrywide curfews. However, curfews and vehicle bans can be enforced at short notice, particularly around religious holidays, pilgrimages and key political dates, such as elections.

Ensure you check with the relevant local authorities for curfews before travelling.

### 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](mailto:baghdad.commercial@fco.gov.uk); in the UK: 020 7215 4949 or [carl.bruce@ukti.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carl.bruce@ukti.gsi.gov.uk)).

### Safety and Security - Transport

International commercial carriers serve Baghdad and Erbil International Airports. These airports are generally considered secure, but you should exercise caution within the terminals and not leave Baghdad International Airport without adequate security precautions (see Safety and Security - Travelling to Iraq).

Maritime and sailing craft should exercise extreme caution if entering the northern Persian Gulf.

The Government of Iraq has closed four border crossings with Iran at Kella, Saranban-Golle, Taiwella and Parweez Khan. The Kuwait/Iraq border is open in both directions at Safwan (Iraq) and al-Abdali (Kuwait) 0800-1600 (local) on most days. These border posts have previously been closed at short notice for indefinite periods.

Road travel within Iraq remains highly dangerous and there continue to be fatal roadside bombings and both random and premeditated attacks on military and civilian vehicles. False vehicle checkpoints have been used to launch attacks. In addition to the threat from terrorism/kidnapping, there is also a risk of carjacking, robbery and road traffic accidents.

Local laws and customs (back to top)

Local laws reflect that Iraq is a predominantly Islamic country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religious customs at all times, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or visits to places of religious significance.

See our Travelling During Ramadan page.

See our Your Trip page.

#### Entry requirements (back to top)

**Entry Requirements - Visas and Documentation** You must have a visa before travelling to Iraq. You can apply for a visa at Iraqi missions overseas, including the Iraqi Embassy in London. See the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. If you are only travelling to the Kurdistan Region, you may obtain a visa on arrival.

Ensure that you have the appropriate documentation for entering Iraq. This includes, but is not limited to, a valid visa, in-date Weapon Authority Cards (WAC) (if carrying weapons) and registration documentation from the Ministry of the Interior and/or military ID if using military routes. The Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) has made a number of arrests, including of British nationals, for failure to provide the appropriate documentation when requested. For more details on required documentation, you should see the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs website or contact the Iraqi Embassy in London.

#### Entry Requirements Passport Validity

You must hold a valid passport to enter Iraq. Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of three months from the date of entry into Iraq.

#### Entry Requirements - Blood Test

All visitors to Iraq, with the exception of those travelling on a tourist visa, are required under Iraqi health regulations to submit to a blood test within ten days of arrival. The test is for HIV and hepatitis. Guidance on where to go for the blood test is available at your airport of arrival. In the Kurdistan Region, this is only required for those staying for more than ten days.

#### Health (back to top)

Limited medical facilities are available. In the event of serious accident or illness, an evacuation by air ambulance may be required.

Malaria is common in some rural areas in the north and in Basra province in the south.

In 2008, twelve out of the eighteen provinces across Iraq had outbreaks of cholera. As a precaution you should drink or use only boiled or bottled water and avoid ice in drinks. If you suffer from diarrhoea during a visit to Iraq seek immediate medical attention. If you are travelling to Jordan, you may either be asked to prove you have been vaccinated against cholera or be required to take antibiotics.

The temperature in summer months can exceed 50 °C (122°F), which can result in dehydration and serious health problems. Drink plenty of water. Weather conditions are arduous.

You should exercise precautions to avoid exposure to HIV/AIDS. See our HIV and AIDS page.

You should seek medical advice before travelling and ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up-to-date. NHS Direct (0845 46 47) can provide you with advice on the vaccination requirements for Iraq.

For further information on endemic diseases, like malaria, health outbreaks and vaccination requirements for Iraq you should check the websites of NaTHNaC or NHS Scotland's Fit For Travel. See our Travel Health page.

#### General (back to top)

##### General - Insurance

You should take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance for your proposed trip prior to travel, however long you plan to stay in Iraq. You should check any exclusions and that your policy covers you for medical assistance and repatriation, and all activities you want to undertake. See our Travel Insurance page.

If things do go wrong while you are overseas see our When Things Go Wrong page.

##### General - Consular Services

The British Embassy in Baghdad operates a limited consular service by appointment only, due to security constraints at our current location. If you require consular assistance, emergency passports or notarial services, you must book an appointment before coming to the Embassy. You can book an appointment by contacting us directly on +964 (0)7901 911684 between 08.00 and 16.00, Sunday-Thursday. For all other services, including if you have been arrested or hospitalised, please speak to the Consular Section within these hours. If you have a consular emergency outside these hours, please contact the British Embassy's Duty Officer on +44 (0)7901 935149; the Basra Consulate's Duty Officer on +964 (0)7400 248868; or the Erbil Consulate's Duty Officer on +964 (0)781 883 7576.

Due to the security situation in Baghdad, it is highly unlikely that the Consular Section will be able to assist with the following:

- i) Any Iraqi visa-related matters on entry into Iraq. You are responsible for ensuring that your Iraqi visa and immigration arrangements are in good order before you travel to Iraq. It is extremely unlikely that we will be able to intervene should you encounter immigration difficulties at Baghdad International Airport, either on arrival or departure.
- ii) Provide routine consular assistance in unsecure areas of Baghdad outside the International Zone, due to the risk to our consular staff of travelling to these areas.

In line with our policy elsewhere in the world, we cannot provide legal advice. We can, however, provide a list of English-speaking lawyers.

If you need information on how to apply for a UK visa, you should visit [www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk). The Consular section is unable to intervene in UK visa issues.

The British Consulates in Erbil and Basra are unable to accept personal callers without appointments, or telephone calls about visas. If you have a query about visas please visit the website [www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk). Alternatively, for enquiries in Erbil, you can email [Erbil.VisaEnquiries@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Erbil.VisaEnquiries@fco.gov.uk) and receive an auto-reply with general advice and details of useful websites.

**General - Registering Your Presence in Iraq** You should register your presence in Iraq. You can do this in the UK before you leave by using our LOCATE service to tell us when and where you are travelling abroad (or if you live abroad) so that our consular and crisis staff can provide better assistance to you in an emergency.

For general enquiries please contact the Iraq Team in writing at Iraq Team, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, SW1A 2AH; by telephone on 020 7008 1500; or by email to: [iraqtraveladvice@fco.gov.uk](mailto:iraqtraveladvice@fco.gov.uk).

**General - Forced Marriage and Child Abductions** Some of our consular assistance is provided to victims of forced marriage or international parental child abduction. See our separate guidance on forced marriage and child abduction.

**General - Purchasing Property**

We are often asked to give assistance in land or property ownership disputes. You should consider taking legal advice before entering into any agreement over the ownership or use of property or other assets. The British Embassy cannot help in these matters.

**General - Consular Assistance Statistics**

27 British nationals required consular assistance in Iraq in the period 1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011. This included three deaths, four hospitalisations, and six arrests.