



Travel Warning: Iraq

Terrorism; Political Violence

Near East > Iraq

7/6/2016

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Iraq. Travel within Iraq remains very dangerous, and the ability of the Embassy to assist U.S. citizens facing difficulty is extremely limited. This supersedes the Travel Warning dated December 4, 2015.

U.S. citizens in Iraq are at high risk for kidnapping and terrorist violence. Anti-U.S. sectarian militias may threaten U.S. citizens and western companies throughout Iraq. Kidnappings and attacks by improvised explosive devices (IED) occur frequently in many areas of the country, including Baghdad. Methods of attack have included explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), magnetic IEDs placed on vehicles, human and vehicle-borne IEDs, mines placed on or concealed near roads, mortars and rockets, and shootings using various direct fire weapons. Such attacks often take place in public venues such as cafes and markets. Facilities of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the U.S. Government, and western interests remain possible targets, as evidenced by the April 17, 2015, bombing near the entrance to U.S. Consulate General Erbil.

Numerous terrorist and insurgent groups are active in Iraq, including Da'esh (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL). Da'esh controls Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, as well as significant territory in northern, western, and central Iraq, particularly along the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. They regularly attack Iraqi security forces in those areas. The Embassy is unable to assist U.S. citizens who face difficulty in Da'esh-controlled areas. The U.S. Government particularly warns private U.S. citizens against traveling to Iraq to engage in armed conflict. In addition to the extreme personal risks of kidnapping, injury, or death posed by such actions, legal risks include arrest, fines, and expulsion. Since the closure of the border between Syria and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), the government of the IKR has stated that it will impose prison sentences of up to ten years on individuals who illegally cross the border. U.S. citizens are reminded that fighting on behalf of or providing other forms of support to designated terrorist organizations, including Da'esh, can constitute

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



the provision of material support for terrorism, which is a crime in the United States that can result in penalties including prison time and large fines.

The Embassy urges U.S. citizens in Iraq to avoid protests and large gatherings. Iraqi authorities have responded forcefully when violence has occurred, including on two occasions in April and May 2016 when protestors gained access to the International Zone (IZ) in Baghdad and attacked Iraqi government buildings. Demonstrations in Basrah have occurred at the offices of the Provincial Council and governor. Demonstrations in Baghdad have occurred in and around Tahrir Square and have also penetrated the IZ, resulting in personal injury.

The Department of State discourages U.S. citizens from traveling near the Syrian, Turkish, or Iranian borders, which are especially dangerous and not always clearly defined. U.S. citizens traveling near border areas may encounter aerial or artillery bombardments, unmarked minefields, border skirmishes with smugglers, and large refugee flows. Neighboring governments, including Iran, have detained U.S. citizens who approach these borders. The Government of Iraq strictly enforces regulations regarding visas and entry, authorizations for weapons, and movements through checkpoints. U.S. citizens traveling to Iraq without the proper authorization or whose purpose for travel is not readily apparent have been detained without warning. For more information on entry/exit requirements, please see our Country Specific Information page for Iraq.

The Government of Iraq has begun to take measures to improve the structural integrity of the Mosul Dam. A dam failure could cause significant flooding and interruption of essential services from Mosul to Baghdad. While it is impossible to accurately predict the likelihood of the dam failing, the Embassy has made contingency plans to relocate its personnel in such an event. The Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens in Iraq, especially those who reside in the floodplain of the Tigris River, prepare their own contingency plans, have valid U.S. passports, and stay informed of local media reports and Embassy security messages for updates.

The U.S. government considers the potential threat to U.S. government personnel in Iraq to be serious enough to require them to live and work under strict security guidelines. All U.S. government employees under the authority of the U.S. Chief of Mission must follow strict safety and security procedures when traveling outside the Embassy and Consulates. The internal security policies of the U.S. Mission in Iraq may be changed or adjusted at any time and without advance notice. The Mission will regularly restrict or prohibit movements by its personnel, often on short notice and for security threats or demonstrations.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has determined that U.S. civil aviation flying in Iraqi airspace is at risk from ongoing combat operations involving military forces (military aerial combat operations and other militarily-related activity) and militant groups. As a result, the FAA currently prohibits U.S. civil aviation from operating in or overflying Iraqi airspace with very limited exceptions. Foreign airlines operating in Iraq may cancel their operations without warning due to the security environment or other factors. Travelers should remain vigilant and reconfirm all flight schedules with their airline prior to commencing any travel. For further background information regarding FAA prohibitions on U.S. civil aviation, U.S. citizens should consult the Federal Aviation Administration's Prohibitions, Restrictions and Notices website. For more information:

See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Specific Information for Iraq.

Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

Contact the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, located in the International Zone, Baghdad, via email, or by accessing U.S. Embassy Baghdad's website. The after-hours emergency numbers are 011-964-770-443-1286 or 011-964-770-030-4888 (from the United States) or 0770-443-1286 or 0770-030-4888 (within Iraq).

As cell phone service is unreliable in Iraq, emergency calls may also be placed through the Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries.

Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.