

**The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all but essential travel to Iraq. Travel within Iraq remains dangerous given the security situation.** The Embassy in Baghdad and the Consulates General in Basrah and Erbil are open and operating. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning dated August 10, 2014.

U.S. citizens in Iraq remain at high risk for kidnapping and terrorist violence. Terrorists' methods of attack have included roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including 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. When such attacks occur, they frequently take place in public gathering places such as cafes, markets, and other public venues.

Numerous insurgent groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), remain active and terrorist activity and violence persists in many areas of the country. ISIL 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, and the group continues to attack Iraqi security forces in those areas. Terrorist attacks within the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) occur less frequently than in other parts of Iraq, although the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and western interests remain likely targets. In addition, several anti-U.S. sectarian militia groups, such as the Shia Kataib Hezbollah (KH) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) are operating throughout Iraq and may present a threat to U.S. citizens.

Due to the potential for political protests and demonstrations to become violent, U.S. citizens in Iraq are strongly urged to avoid protests and large gatherings.

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. State Department guidance to U.S. businesses in Iraq advises the use of protective security details. Detailed security information is available on [the U.S. Embassy website](#).

The U.S. Embassy is located in the International Zone (IZ) in Baghdad. The IZ is a restricted access area. Iraqi authorities are responsible for control of the IZ. Travelers to the IZ should be aware that Iraqi authorities may require special identification to enter the IZ or may issue IZ-specific access badges. Individuals residing and traveling within the IZ should continue to exercise good personal safety precautions.

Increasingly, many U.S. and third-country business people travel throughout much of Iraq; however, their movement is restricted and they travel with security advisors and protective security teams.

The Government of Iraq strictly enforces requirements regarding visas and stamps for entry and exit, vehicle registration, authorizations for weapons, and movements through checkpoints. The Embassy

highly recommends that all U.S. citizens in Iraq carefully review the status of their travel documents and any necessary licenses and government authorizations to ensure that they are current and valid. U.S. citizens are urged to immediately correct any deficiencies in their travel documents. U.S. citizens are strongly advised against entering or traveling within Iraq with invalid documents. For more information about entry/exit requirements for U.S. citizens, please see our Country Specific Information page for Iraq.

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](#).

U.S. citizens should avoid areas near the Syrian, Turkish, or Iranian borders, which are especially dangerous and not always clearly defined. The Governments of Turkey and Iran continue to carry out military operations against insurgent groups in the mountainous regions bordering Iraq. These operations have included troop movements and both aerial and artillery bombardments. Extensive unmarked minefields also remain along these borders. Border skirmishes with smugglers have become commonplace. Unrest in Syria has resulted in large numbers of people seeking refuge in the area. Iranian authorities previously detained, for an extended period, U.S. citizens who were hiking in the IKR in the vicinity of the Iranian border. The resources available to the U.S. Embassy to assist U.S. citizens who venture close to or cross Iraq's border with Iran are extremely limited. The Department of State discourages travel in close proximity to the Iranian border.

The ability of the U.S. Embassy to provide consular services to U.S. citizens throughout Iraq, including Baghdad, is extremely limited given the security environment. The U.S. Consulate General in Basrah cannot provide routine services such as passport applications, notary services, or Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. U.S. citizens in need of these services in Erbil must make an appointment with the Consulate on-line, either through the Embassy's website or the website for the Consulate General in Erbil. The Embassy's website includes consular information and the most recent messages to U.S. citizens in Iraq. U.S. citizens in Iraq who need emergency assistance should call 0770-443-1286 or 0770-030-4888.

For information on "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis," please visit the [Bureau of Consular Affairs' Emergencies and Crisis page](#). Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

U.S. citizens who choose to visit or reside in Iraq despite this Travel Warning are urged to take responsibility for their own personal security and belongings and should be aware that Iraqi authorities have arrested or detained U.S. citizens whose purpose of travel is not readily apparent. Persons also have been detained for taking photographs of buildings, monuments, or other sites, especially in the International Zone in Baghdad, where photography is forbidden.

All U.S. citizens in Iraq, including those working on contract for the U.S. government, are urged to inform the U.S. Embassy of their presence in Iraq by enrolling in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) in order to obtain updated travel information. By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it possible for the Embassy to provide updated security information or to contact them in emergencies. The Embassy also offers [SMS text alerts delivered to your mobile phone](#) when new security and emergency messages are released.

U.S. citizens may obtain the latest security information or other information about Iraq by contacting the U.S. Embassy, located in the International Zone, 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.

Stay up-to-date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov), which contains current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and the [Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook](#) as well.