



Iraq Field Report

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C O N T E N T S

Before you go

In Amman

**On arrival
at Baghdad
airport**

**On arrival at
your office in
Baghdad**

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modus
operandi of
suicide bomber**

The key to working in a hostile environment is maximum preparation in order to ensure minimum risk. This Field Report from Centurion Safety Advisors in Iraq tells you how to prepare, what to expect and how to stay safe.

Before you go

- Attend Centurion's Hostile Environments and First Aid Training (HEFAT®) course.
- Arrange your Iraqi visa and make the appointment for its collection prior to arrival. If you leave it until you get to Amman you will need two visits to the Iraqi Embassy and a two-day stopover.
- Book accommodation in Amman. The better hotels have better security. The best, at the moment, is at the Four Seasons Hotel.
- Have the correct ID cards and passport with you. Make sure your documents are in-date and that you have no Israeli stamps in your passport.
- Make sure you have all the correct telephone numbers for Amman and Baghdad.
- Learn some Arabic words and phrases.
- Learn the local customs and etiquette.
- Invest in a personal panic alarm.
- Most pharmaceuticals can be had over the counter in Baghdad but you should take any prescription medicine you may require and on arrival tell your Security Advisor of any medical problems and medication.
- Take mosquito repellent.
- Take minimal kit, but take the correct clothing including something to keep you warm if you will be there in winter.
- Get a camel back water bag drinking system.

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In Amman

Whether arriving by land from Jordan or by air from Dubai, the threat starts before you get to Iraq. In both places there is potential danger, especially in hotels frequented by Westerners.

- Be careful when taking taxis. Get your office to arrange reliable and trustworthy transportation to and from the airport. In the city, ask the hotel concierge to get one for you.
- Don't leave any sensitive information – your name and address, for example – or valuables lying around in your hotel room.

On arrival at Baghdad airport

- Arrange visa collection at Baghdad International Air Port (BIAP). If you are visiting Iraq at short notice and arrive in Baghdad without a visa it is possible to get one at the airport, but you will need to pay baksheesh – a bribe. Notify your in-country Security Advisor who will be able to help.
- Expect to be met by your Security Advisor. If your Advisor is not there, wait in the Arrivals lounge; he will turn up.
- Call your pick-up as soon as you arrive.
- On no account get into a local taxi outside Arrivals. The situation in Iraq is still very dangerous and kidnappings are still prevalent. Take no risks.
- Expect a security briefing about travelling into the city on arrival at the airport. If this does not happen, insist on it.
- Use only good drivers with proper training. Make sure your driver knows his drills and is able to do anything to avoid a suspect suicide vehicle. Your driver should be able to weave his way through heavy traffic whilst using other vehicles as cover and not look like a convoy although still covering each other.
- Understand actions on breakdown / road traffic accident / ambush / injuries / cross decking (emergency vehicle transfer).
- Check the location of medical kits.
- Understand the panic alarm and how it works.
- Clip seatbelt on when travelling fast; unclip it when slow-moving or stationary.
- Keep a low profile in the vehicle at all times.
- Wear a local-looking shirt over your body armour.
- Women should wear a headscarf.



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- Don't leave cameras on show when in vehicles and don't take photographs whilst in transit – US forces don't like it!
- Never open or unlock the doors or open windows whilst in transit.
- Try to give a possible attacker an element of doubt as to who is in the vehicle.
- The trip to central Baghdad should take 30-40 minutes but can take a lot longer if US military are manning vehicle checkpoints.

On arrival at your office in Baghdad

- Expect a full security briefing. If this does not happen, insist on it.
- Ensure you are issued with body armour and a helmet. If you expect to travel by helicopter you will also need a long-sleeved shirt, proper shoes, ear plugs and ballistic glasses.
- Don't leave valuables lying around.
- Shred all sensitive information.
- Check the attack, evacuation and fire procedures and walk through the drills, covering escape routes and medical and fire equipment.
- AIDS tests are carried out by government doctors, usually by arrangement at your location. The needles supplied are in sealed packages. Your Security Advisor uses our own.
- Register with your Embassy.
- Kidnap and ransom brief – Next of Kin, Proof of Life.
- Media require Combined Press Information Center (CPIC) accreditation. This necessitates two visits to the International Zone, first to get Biometric testing and second to collect your CPIC cards. This usually takes three days. You will need to send a letter to CPIC prior to your appointment.
- Be careful about what you say – your personal details and movements, for example – in front of Iraqis.
- Don't drink tap water. Drink plenty of bottled water and take water with you on all trips.
- Expect stomach upsets while you are in Iraq and expect to lose weight.
- Medical treatment is available at the US hospital in the International Zone, which has good facilities. Your Security Advisor will organise everything.
- Burger King, Pizza Inn, Subway, etc are in the PX area of the International Zone, but it requires your Security Advisor to enter there.



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- Most things can be had in Baghdad. European food can be obtained in Honey Market if you wish to cook for yourself.
- Organise your emergency grab bag. We recommend that you prepare two:

Priority 1 bag ►

This is “grab and go” for immediate evacuation and should be a small shoulder ruck sack. Keep it within easy reach at all times along with your body armour and helmet. Recommended contents:

- 24-hour rations
- 2-3 litres of water
- Warm clothes in colder months
- Passport and ID card
- Flight tickets
- Mobile phone/satellite phone and chargers
- Small wash kit
- Leatherman / matches / torch
- Personal first aid kit
- Valuables / credit cards / cash
- Laptop, memory stick
- Important documents (NB: Some important documents should be kept on the person).

Priority 2 bag ►

This is for prior notice evacuation. It should be big and durable enough to store the rest of your equipment and belongings. It should be packed and remain in your room where it can be picked up later and will be moved to the baggage vehicle.

Out and about - in the thick of it

- Maintain a low profile at all times.
- Generally, expats are escorted everywhere by Security Advisors.
- Always inform your Security Advisor of your movements. Keep your movements as secret as possible.
- Make sure you know who you are meeting, the location and mobile phone number, and how long you will be.



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- Have all relevant numbers for your office and security with you.
- Know your evacuation plan.
- Always ask for advice and intelligence.
- Generally travel in low-profile armoured cars (BMW's and Mercedes). Medical packs are carried in each vehicle.
- Journalists tend to run outside when they hear gunfire but often it is only warning shots by police or celebratory fire at a wedding or after a local football team has won. Remember that what goes up must come down. Many people have been killed or wounded by shots fired into the air. A 7.62mm short round can enter a man's shoulder and lodge in the lung or bowels.
- Don't take photographs at a bomb scene – watch out for secondary explosions and small arms fire.
- Be alert for suicide bombers (*see profile and modus operandi, below*).
- Don't film US military without permission and even then it is not advisable. You can get all the pictures you need from Iraqi journalists.
- Don't go out on the street yourself and don't do stand-ups. All it takes is a phone call from a criminal who sees a financial opportunity to hand you over to al-Qaeda for a monetary reward.
- Take cover when you hear a mortar being fired or landing as there will be more.
- Checkpoints are dangerous: you won't know whether they are real police until you are in the checkpoint.

Profile and modus operandi of suicide bomber

- Usually in his 20s or early 30s. Smart, clean. Most likely alone. But note that vehicles rigged as IEDs have been found with mannequins in them to make it look like the driver has a female, sometimes even a whole family, with him.
- Possibly drugged. Some drivers have been known to be chained or handcuffed to the steering wheel. In these cases the bomber is unlikely to be a willing volunteer and the explosives will be remotely detonated. His family may be held hostage.
- All types of vehicles are used from motorcycles to tankers, police vehicles and ambulances. The vehicle will be travelling low to the ground due to the weight of explosives. The driver will look nervous, may sweat and be looking around for his target. He may drive erratically.
- Be aware of secondary attacks aimed to target first responders.
- Bombers may dress as Iraqi army officers, police officers or women in traditional dress.



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- Targets are high-profile vehicles and high volume gatherings – bus queues, recruitment queues, Iraqi Police vehicle checkpoints, security forces patrols, convoys, mosques, cafes, restaurants, especially those frequented by police, etc – for maximum casualties. Avoid these places when out and about and be extra vigilant when approaching checkpoints.
- Do not accept tissue boxes given out to cars at the road side. They may contain explosives and a timer.
- IEDS – Improvised Explosive Devices – are disguised as anything imaginable including children's toys.
- Booby trap bombs with mobile phones and magnets are used under cars.
- Recces will be conducted prior to suicide bombings.
- If the bomber can't find his / her originally intended target they will drive around and seek the next best target.

This advice is based on the experience of Centurion Safety Advisors, our clients and others who have been working in Iraq since the start of the conflict. We strongly suggest you follow it. We wish you well during your time in the region and a safe return home. If you would like us to help before, during or after your time in Iraq, please get in touch.

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