

Travel safeguards in armoured or soft-skinned vehicles

The following are suggestions for improved safety, whether driving a soft-skinned or an armoured vehicle, and are based on training given on our 2-day Refresher Course. The aim is to highlight safety procedures to implement and the need for vehicle security whilst on assignment in any environment, but concentrating on the latest deployment in the Gulf.

Main objectives with safe travel should be:

- Establish a risk assessment strategy.
- Be aware of the importance of route selection and the value of local intelligence.
- Appreciate the importance in having alternative routes.
- Discuss the need for predetermined actions (known by all passengers).
- Evaluate the use of individual personal protective equipment (PPE).
- If individuals are not wearing body armour then utilize it around doors, floors, etc, especially in soft-skinned vehicles.
- Establish the purpose of comprehensive vehicle inspection and preparation.
- Understand the importance of vehicle first aid equipment, and know how to use it.
- Understand the importance of knowing your location, and where to access local and military emergency medical services (if and when available).
- Examine the problems of vehicle security.
- Ensure the correct vehicle repair equipment is carried and instruct personnel in how to use it.
- Equip each vehicle with an emergency 'grab bag'.
- Let the office/bureau know of departure times/arrival times/route/equipment carried/personnel onboard, etc.
- Brief all personnel thoroughly about the journey and ensure the local drivers etc fully understand what to do and what is expected of them.
- Vehicles should be staggered if travelling in hostile open terrain.
- If driving along regular roads in convoy, vehicles should be sensibly spaced in case of hostile action.
- No driver/vehicle should overtake the leading vehicle, get left behind, or leave the convoy.
- The leading vehicle should ideally be an armoured vehicle.
- All personnel should be fully briefed and made aware of 'actions on' (what to do if shot at from the front, side, rear/what to do at checkpoints/what to do if you have to leave the convoy in an emergency/what to do if you have casualties/what to do on breakdowns, etc).
- Seek local intelligence from taxi drivers/locals who have just travelled the route in question, but do not give out information about your own travel plans.
- Ideally all convoys should have communications between vehicles. This will enable the lead vehicle to warn the other vehicles of imminent danger. Check all communications prior to departure.
- All equipment should be packed for deployment, especially if moving with military vehicles which set off at short notice.
- On stopping all vehicles should allow themselves sufficient space to be able to manoeuvre in any direction in case of attack.
- Do not go off the roads unless in a dire emergency.
- Ensure all personnel know of their location en route at all times.
- Always be prepared to take evasive action.
- Move at the safest speed possible – normally at the slowest vehicle's speed.
- Always park in a position that you can easily move off from.
- Always be vigilant when arriving at a location and do not get out until you are happy with the situation.