

News Release

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CANADIANS IN IRAQ AND THE GULF

The Canadian Embassy in Kuwait is maintaining contact with Canadian citizens there who have registered with it and who have been unable to leave the country since the invasion. To date 522 Canadians have been reached by the Embassy. The Canadian Embassy in Baghdad reports that about 200 Canadians are in Iraq. Canadians in both Kuwait and Iraq are believed to be safe. The Embassy continues to advise Canadians in Kuwait to stay put. Although some Canadians have managed to leave the area by travelling overland, the risks in doing so are considerable.

External Affairs and International Trade Canada in Ottawa and the Canadian Embassy in Baghdad continue to reiterate to the Iraqi authorities that Iraq must permit Canadians to leave Iraq and Kuwait and that it is Iraq's international obligation to do so and to ensure the safety of Canadians in both countries. The Canadian government has asked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to play a role in the protection of civilians and the Red Cross has been pursuing this question with Iraq.

Canada has told Iraq that our Embassy in Kuwait is there to protect Canadians. We have no plans to leave. Our diplomats will remain in Kuwait as long as they are permitted to do so to assist Canadian nationals. There are ongoing consultations between like-minded countries on this issue.

In the hope that Canadians will be authorized to leave, the Canadian government has positioned an aircraft in Cyprus from where it could be used to evacuate Canadians. Contingency plans have also been made for the possible use of other aircraft if circumstances warrant.

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Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

In view of the unstable situation, Canadian tourists, business and other travellers should avoid or postpone all travel to the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar unless they have compelling reasons for undertaking such travel at this time. Canadians employed in any of these countries and currently on leave should consider remaining outside the region for the present unless they consider their return essential.

Similarly, External Affairs and International Trade Canada continues to recommend that dependents and non-essential staff in the same area (Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar) should consider leaving the area until conditions improve. In addition, Canadians contemplating travel elsewhere in the Middle East area advised to exercise appropriate caution and prudence.

For more information, media representatives may contact:

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