

**FOREIGN CLAIMS SETTLEMENT COMMISSION  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20579**

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In the Matter of the Claim of

5 U.S.C. §552(b)(6)

Against the Republic of Iraq  
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Claim No. IRQ-II-208

Decision No. IRQ-II-205

Counsel for Claimant:

Anthony Onorato, Esq.  
FisherBroyles, LLP

PROPOSED DECISION

Claimant brings this claim against the Republic of Iraq (“Iraq”) alleging that Iraq held her hostage in violation of international law in August 1990. Because she has established that Iraq held her hostage for 6 days, she is entitled to an award of \$180,000.

BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF THE PRESENT CLAIM

Claimant alleges that she was living with her family in Kuwait when Iraq invaded the country on August 2, 1990. She asserts that, beginning with the invasion and for six days thereafter, she and her family were held hostage in Kuwait by Iraqi authorities. On August 7, 1990, Claimant and her family drove towards the Kuwaiti-Saudi border in a convoy of vehicles that carried, among others, foreign nationals who sought to escape Kuwait. That same day, August 7, 1990, Claimant and her family crossed the border after being turned back five times by Iraqi soldiers.

Although Claimant was not among them, many of the U.S. nationals in Iraq and Kuwait at the time of the 1990-91 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait sued Iraq (and others) in federal court for, among other things, hostage-taking.<sup>1</sup> Those cases were pending when, in September 2010, the United States and Iraq concluded an *en bloc* (lump-sum) settlement agreement.<sup>2</sup> The Agreement, which entered into force in May 2011, covered a number of personal injury claims of U.S. nationals arising from acts of the former Iraqi regime occurring prior to October 7, 2004, including claims of personal injury caused by hostage-taking.<sup>3</sup> Exercising its authority to distribute money from the settlement funds, the U.S. Department of State provided compensation to numerous individuals whose claims were covered by the Agreement, including some whom Iraq had allegedly taken hostage or unlawfully detained following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 ("ICSA"), the Secretary of State has statutory authority to refer "a category of claims against a foreign government" to this Commission.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary has delegated that authority to the State Department's Legal Adviser, who, by letter dated October 7, 2014, referred three categories of claims to this Commission for adjudication and certification.<sup>5</sup> This was the State Department's second referral of claims to the Commission under the Claims Settlement Agreement, the

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *Hill v. Republic of Iraq*, 175 F. Supp. 2d 36 (D.D.C. 2001); *Vine v. Republic of Iraq*, 459 F. Supp. 2d 10 (D.D.C. 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See *Claims Settlement Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Iraq*, Sept. 2, 2010, T.I.A.S. No. 11-522 ("Claims Settlement Agreement" or "Agreement").

<sup>3</sup> See *id.* Art. III(1)(a)(ii).

<sup>4</sup> See 22 U.S.C. § 1623(a)(1)(C) (2012).

<sup>5</sup> See *Letter dated October 7, 2014, from the Honorable Mary E. McLeod, Acting Legal Adviser, Department of State, to the Honorable Anuj C. Desai and Sylvia M. Becker, Foreign Claims Settlement Commission* ("2014 Referral" or "October 2014 Referral").

first having been by letter dated November 14, 2012 (“2012 Referral” or “November 2012 Referral”).<sup>6</sup>

One category of claims from the 2014 Referral is applicable here. That category, known as Category A, consists of

claims by U.S. nationals for hostage-taking<sup>1</sup> by Iraq<sup>2</sup> in violation of international law prior to October 7, 2004, provided that the claimant was not a plaintiff in pending litigation against Iraq for hostage taking<sup>3</sup> at the time of the entry into force of the Claims Settlement Agreement and has not received compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement from the U.S. Department of State. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this referral, hostage-taking would include unlawful detention by Iraq that resulted in an inability to leave Iraq or Kuwait after Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this referral, “Iraq” shall mean the Republic of Iraq, the Government of the Republic of Iraq, any agency or instrumentality of the Republic of Iraq, and any official, employee or agent of the Republic of Iraq acting within the scope of his or her office, employment or agency.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this category, pending litigation against Iraq for hostage taking refers to the following matters: *Acree v. Iraq*, D.D.C. 02-cv-00632 and 06-cv-00723, *Hill v. Iraq*, D.D.C. 99-cv-03346, *Vine v. Iraq*, D.D.C. 01-cv-02674; *Seyam (Islamic Society of Wichita) v. Iraq*, D.D.C. 03-cv-00888; *Simon v. Iraq*, D.D.C. 03-cv-00691.

2014 Referral at ¶ 3.

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<sup>6</sup> Although the November 2012 Referral involved claims of U.S. nationals who were held hostage or unlawfully detained by Iraq, it did not involve hostage-taking claims *per se*. Rather, it consisted of certain claimants who had *already received* compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement from the State Department for their hostage-taking claims, and it authorized the Commission to award additional compensation to those claimants, provided they could show, among other things, that they suffered a “serious personal injury” during their detention. The 2012 Referral expressly noted that the “payment already received by the claimant under the Claims Settlement Agreement compensated the claimant for his or her experience for the entire duration of the period in which the claimant was held hostage or was subject to unlawful detention and encompassed physical, mental, and emotional injuries generally associated with such captivity or detention.” *Letter dated November 14, 2012, from the Honorable Harold Hongju Koh, Legal Adviser, Department of State, to the Honorable Timothy J. Feighery, Chairman, Foreign Claims Settlement Commission*, at ¶3 n.3.

On October 23, 2014, the Commission published notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the commencement of the second Iraq Claims Program pursuant to the ICSA and the 2014 Referral.<sup>7</sup>

On November 2, 2015, the Commission received from Claimant a completed Statement of Claim seeking compensation under Category A of the 2014 Referral, together with exhibits supporting the elements of her claim.

## DISCUSSION

### Jurisdiction

This Commission's authority to hear claims is limited to the category of claims referred to it by the United States Department of State.<sup>8</sup> The Commission's jurisdiction under the "Category A" paragraph of the 2014 Referral is limited to claims for hostage-taking of (1) "U.S. nationals," provided that the claimant (2) was not a plaintiff in any litigation against Iraq for hostage taking pending on May 22, 2011 (the "Pending Litigation"), and (3) has not received compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement from the Department of State. 2014 Referral at ¶ 3.

### *Nationality*

This claims program is limited to claims of "U.S. nationals." Here, that means a claimant must have been a national of the United States when the claim arose and continuously thereafter until May 22, 2011, the date the Agreement entered into force.<sup>9</sup> Claimant satisfies the nationality requirement. Claimant has provided a copy of her birth certificate, which shows that she was a U.S. national at the time of the alleged hostage-taking (August 1990). She has also provided a copy of a recent U.S. passport, which

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<sup>7</sup> *Program for Adjudication: Commencement of Claims Program*, 79 Fed. Reg. 63,439 (Oct. 23, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> See 22 U.S.C. § 1623(a)(1)(C) (2012).

<sup>9</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 4-5.

expired in November 2017 and establishes that she remained a U.S. national through the effective date of the Claims Settlement Agreement.

*No Pending Litigation*

Additionally, Category A states that the claimant may not have been a plaintiff in any of the so-called Pending Litigation cases at the time of the entry into force of the Claims Settlement Agreement.<sup>10</sup> Footnote 3 of the 2014 Referral specifically lists the Pending Litigation cases for purposes of the Referral. Claimant has averred, and the pleadings in the cases cited in footnote 3 confirm, that she was not a plaintiff in any of those Pending Litigation cases. The Commission thus finds that Claimant has also satisfied this element of her claim.

*No Compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement  
from the Department of State*

The Claimant also satisfies the final jurisdictional requirement. Claimant has stated that she has not “received compensation from the U.S. Department of State under the United States-Iraq Settlement Agreement dated September 2, 2010.” Further, we have no evidence that the State Department has provided her any compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement. Therefore, Claimant meets this element of her claim.

In summary, this claim is within the Commission’s jurisdiction pursuant to the 2014 Referral and is entitled to adjudication on the merits.

Merits

*Factual Allegations*

Claimant states that Iraq held her hostage from August 2, 1990, until August 7, 1990, a total of six days. Claimant alleges that she was living in Kuwait with her family

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<sup>10</sup> The Agreement entered into force on May 22, 2011. *See* Claims Settlement Agreement, art. IX.

when Iraq invaded the country on August 2, 1990. She further alleges that immediately after the invasion, she heard that Iraqi soldiers were rounding up U.S. nationals. On August 7, 1990, Claimant, who was eight months pregnant at that time, and her family drove towards Bahrain in a convoy of vehicles that carried foreign nationals who sought to escape Kuwait. That same day, August 7, 1990, they crossed the Kuwaiti-Saudi border after being turned back five times by Iraqi soldiers and continued on until they reached Bahrain. Claimant states that she remained in Bahrain until August 10, 1990, when she flew to San Francisco.

*Supporting Evidence*

Claimant has supported her claim with, among other things, declarations from her, her husband, and a family friend that state that she escaped from Kuwait on August 7, 1990, and provide further information about her alleged detention and ultimate departure from Kuwait; an undated medical certificate from a hospital in Bahrain that states that Claimant was expected to give birth on September 10, 1990, and that she was fit to fly on commercial aircraft; a passport issued to Claimant at the U.S. Embassy in Manama, Bahrain on August 9, 1990; a plane ticket dated August 10, 1990, from Bahrain to San Francisco that was issued in Claimant's name; a letter dated January 28, 1992, from the U.S. Department of State listing some benefits Claimant had received under a law providing benefits for U.S. nationals detained in Iraq and Kuwait and their family members; a letter dated July 23, 1992, from the U.S. Department of State that stated that Claimant's application for benefits could not be completed until she submitted evidence that her husband was employed and was not compensated during the period he was detained; and a letter dated September 15, 1990, that Claimant sent to the Kuwait Embassy in Washington requesting medical and financial assistance for her and her children and stating that she left Kuwait on August 7,

1990, and entered Bahrain that same day. The Commission also takes notice of a transcript of an announcement made on September 1, 1990, by Sheikh Saud Nasir Al-Sabah, Kuwait's then ambassador to the United States, that states that the Kuwaiti government would provide financial assistance to family members of individuals who were being detained in Kuwait and instructs individuals seeking additional information to contact the Kuwait Embassy in Washington. This record provides additional context to Claimant's September 15, 1990 letter to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington and thus supports her assertion that she was in Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and that she left Kuwait for Bahrain (via Saudi Arabia) on August 7, 1990.

#### *Legal Standard*

To make out a substantive claim under Category A of the 2014 Referral, a claimant must show that (1) Iraq was engaged in an armed conflict and (2) during that conflict, Iraq took the claimant hostage.<sup>11</sup> The Commission has previously held that, to establish a hostage-taking claim, a claimant must show that Iraq (a) seized or detained the claimant and (b) threatened the claimant with death, injury, or continued detention (c) in order to compel a third party, such as the United States government, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the claimant's release.<sup>12</sup> A claimant can establish the first element of this standard by showing that the Iraqi government confined the claimant to a particular location or locations within Iraq or Kuwait, or prohibited the claimant from leaving Iraq and/or Kuwait.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *See id.* at 16. An estate claimant would of course need to make this showing as to its decedent.

<sup>12</sup> *See id.* at 17-20.

<sup>13</sup> *See id.* at 17.

*Application of Standard to this Claim*

(1) Armed Conflict: Claimant alleges that Iraq took her hostage in Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and held her hostage for six days, until August 7, 1990, when Iraqi officials allowed her to leave Iraq. In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission held that during this entire period, Iraq was engaged in an armed conflict with Kuwait.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Claimant satisfies this element of the standard.

(2) Hostage-taking: To satisfy the hostage-taking requirement of Category A of the 2014 Referral, Claimant must show that Iraq (a) seized or detained her and (b) threatened her with death, injury, or continued detention (c) in order to compel a third party, such as the United States government, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for her release. Claimant satisfies this standard for the six-day period from August 2, 1990, to August 7, 1990.

(a) Detention/deprivation of freedom: For purposes of analyzing Claimant's allegations of having been detained, her time in Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion falls into the period between the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990, and the Iraqi government's formal closing of the borders on August 9, 1990.<sup>15</sup>

From August 2, 1990, until she crossed the Kuwaiti-Saudi border on August 7, 1990, Iraq confined Claimant to Kuwait by threatening all U.S. nationals with immediate seizure and forcible detention.<sup>16</sup> Although some foreign nationals did manage to leave Kuwait and/or Iraq prior to August 7, 1990,<sup>17</sup> Claimant could not reasonably be expected

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<sup>14</sup> See *id.* at 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> See *id.* at 20-21.

<sup>16</sup> See *id.* at 21.

<sup>17</sup> See Elizabeth Thames, *American Couple Flee Amid Sounds of War*, SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, Aug. 4, 1990, at 16A.



to have escaped any earlier than she did.<sup>18</sup> Iraqi authorities were forcibly detaining foreign nationals (including U.S. nationals) in Kuwait, relocating many to Baghdad against their will.<sup>19</sup> Claimant and her family understandably had, as the United Nations Compensation Commission has put it, a “manifestly well-founded fear” of being killed or forcibly detained if they had made any earlier attempt to leave the country.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the facts suggest that they risked their lives to attempt to leave when they did. The Commission has previously recognized that for the purposes of the legal standard applicable here, putting Claimant and her family in this situation in effect amounts to detention.<sup>21</sup> Iraq thus detained Claimant from August 2, 1990, to August 7, 1990.

(b) Threat: In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission determined that the Iraqi government threatened U.S. nationals in Kuwait and Iraq numerous times with continued detention.<sup>22</sup> Both Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Speaker of Iraq’s National Assembly Saadi Mahdi made clear that American nationals (as well as those from numerous other countries) would not have been permitted to leave Kuwait and/or Iraq at the time Claimant escaped from Kuwait.<sup>23</sup> Claimant has thus established that Iraq threatened to continue to detain her.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

<sup>19</sup> See *id.*

<sup>20</sup> Report and Recommendations Made by the Panel of Commissioners Concerning the First Instalment of Individual Claims for Damages up to US \$100,000 (Category “C” Claims), UN Doc. S/AC.26/1994/3 (1994), at 93.

<sup>21</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

<sup>22</sup> See *id.* at 23.

<sup>23</sup> See *id.*

<sup>24</sup> While we determine that these statements apply to Claimant and other similarly situated U.S. nationals who were prevented from leaving Iraq or Kuwait after the invasion, we do not make any findings as to whether they also apply to U.S. nationals with diplomatic status: Iraqi officials made specific representations about the ability of diplomatic and consular staff members with U.S. nationality (and their relatives) to leave Iraq and Kuwait throughout the crisis. See *In Iraq: ‘We Have A Problem’ Iraq Holds Fleeing U.S. Diplomats Staff from Kuwait Reaches Baghdad, But Can’t Leave*, PHILA. INQUIRER, Aug. 24, 1990, <https://perma.cc/B2YF-79AY>.

(c) Third party coercion: The Commission has previously held that Iraq detained all U.S. nationals in Kuwait or Iraq at the time and threatened them with continued detention in order to compel the United States government to act in certain ways as an explicit and/or implicit condition for their release.<sup>25</sup> Iraq itself stated that it sought three things from the United States government before it would release the detained U.S. nationals; it wanted the United States (i) not to attack Iraq, (ii) to withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia; and/or (iii) to end the economic embargo imposed on Iraq.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the U.S. government itself understood Iraq's actions to be hostage-taking.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, this claim meets the standard for hostage-taking within the meaning of the 2014 Referral. Iraq held Claimant hostage in violation of international law for a period of six days, and Claimant is thus entitled to compensation.

#### COMPENSATION

Having concluded that the present claim is compensable, the Commission must next determine the appropriate amount of compensation.

In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission held that successful claimants should be awarded compensation in the amount of \$150,000 plus an additional \$5,000 for each day the claimant was in captivity.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, for the six days Iraq held Claimant hostage, she is entitled to an award of \$180,000, which is \$150,000 plus (6 x \$5,000). This amount constitutes the

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<sup>25</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 23.

<sup>26</sup> See *id.* at 23-24.

<sup>27</sup> See George H. W. Bush, "These Innocent People . . . Are, In Fact, Hostages" in U.S. Dep't of State, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1990* 484 (Sherrill Brown Wells ed. 1991); see also 2014 Referral at ¶ 3; cf. S.C. Res. 674 (Oct. 29, 1990) ("actions by . . . Iraq authorities and occupying forces to take third-State nationals hostage" and demanded that Iraq "cease and desist" this practice).

<sup>28</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 24-26.

entirety of the compensation to which Claimant is entitled under the Claims Settlement Agreement.

The Commission hereby enters the following award, which will be certified to the Secretary of the Treasury for payment under sections 7 and 8 of the ICSA.<sup>29</sup>

AWARD

Claimant is entitled to an award in the amount of \$180,000.

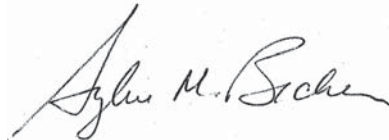
Dated at Washington, DC, December 14, 2017  
and entered as the Proposed Decision  
of the Commission.

**This decision was entered as the  
Commission's Final Decision  
on**

**January 19, 2018**



Anuj C. Desai, Commissioner



Sylvia M. Becker, Commissioner

NOTICE: Pursuant to the Regulations of the Commission, any objections must be filed within 15 days of delivery of this Proposed Decision. Absent objection, this decision will be entered as the Final Decision of the Commission upon the expiration of 30 days after delivery, unless the Commission otherwise orders. FCSC Regulations, 45 C.F.R. § 509.5 (e), (g) (2016).

<sup>29</sup> 22 U.S.C. §§ 1626-1627 (2012).