

before his release. Claimant states that he eventually crossed the border into Jordan on December 12, 1990.

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.¹ Those cases were pending when, in September 2010, the United States and Iraq concluded an *en bloc* (lump-sum) settlement agreement.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ This was the State Department's second referral of claims to the Commission under the Claims Settlement Agreement, the

¹ 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).

² 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").

³ See *id.* Art. III(1)(a)(ii).

⁴ See 22 U.S.C. § 1623(a)(1)(C) (2012).

⁵ 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”).⁶

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-taking¹ by Iraq² 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 taking³ 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. . . .

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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.

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.⁷

⁶ 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.” 2012 Referral, *supra*, n.3.

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

On October 22, 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 his 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.⁸ 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 ¶ 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.⁹ Claimant satisfies the nationality requirement. He has provided a copy of his current U.S. passport, which shows his birth in the United States, and which establishes that he was a U.S. national at the time of the alleged hostage-taking and 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

⁸ See 22 U.S.C. § 1623(a)(1)(C).

⁹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 4-5 (2016).

any of the so-called Pending Litigation cases at the time of the entry into force of the Claims Settlement Agreement.¹⁰ Footnote 3 of the 2014 Referral specifically lists the Pending Litigation cases for purposes of the Referral. Claimant has averred under oath in a September 2015 declaration, and the pleadings in the cases cited in footnote 3 confirm, that he was not a plaintiff in any of those Pending Litigation cases. The Commission thus finds that Claimant has also satisfied this element of his 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 he has never “received any compensation under [the U.S.-Iraq Claims Settlement Agreement] from the Department of State.” Further, we have no evidence that the State Department has provided him any compensation under the Claims Settlement Agreement. Therefore, Claimant meets this element of his 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 him hostage from August 2, 1990, until December 12, 1990, a total of 133 days. He alleges that he was working as an oil well consultant in Basra, Iraq, when Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Claimant states that he learned of the invasion that morning when he heard “gunfire and shelling at the Iraq-Kuwaiti border” Fearing the outbreak of war and the “possible adverse consequences for American citizens,” he traveled to the Iraq-Kuwait border twice over the next several days

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

in an attempt to obtain an Iraqi exit visa, but according to Claimant, he was denied both times.

Claimant alleges that on August 12, 1990, “plainclothes Iraqi security officers armed with large assault rifles appeared at [his] front door, informing [him] that [he] was under house arrest. Consequently, [he] remained inside [his] house under armed guard for the next two weeks” Then, on August 28, 1990, Iraqi security officers “transported [Claimant] at gunpoint to a residential compound next to a petrochemical plant” He asserts that he was held there for the next three weeks along with about 300 other people, and that he was “prohibited from leaving the compound by armed Iraqi guards, who were stationed at each gate.”

Around mid-September, Iraqi soldiers moved Claimant, along with 14 other detainees, inside the petrochemical plant. Claimant alleges that they were held in a single room and were “required to remain in [the] room at all times, except for meals when [they] were escorted to a mess hall under armed guard.” During this time, Claimant was provided very limited food and water and suffered frequent illnesses. He maintains that the guards “tormented” him on several occasions, removing their revolvers and “fir[ing] them right next to [his] head” In one instance, when Claimant “challeng[ed] the authority” of one of the guards, the guard struck him on the side of the head with a pistol.

On December 6, 1990, the Iraqi government released all foreign nationals remaining in Iraq and Kuwait,¹¹ and Claimant states that on December 7, 1990, his captors informed him and his fellow captives that they “were going to be released.” He asserts that the guards then took them to Baghdad and placed them in a local hotel, where they were held before going to the airport on December 10, 1990, to board an evacuation flight.

¹¹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 12.

Claimant maintains, however, that, just prior to boarding the plane, the “Iraqi authorities informed [him] that [his] exit visa was not in order and that [he] would have to stay behind in Iraq until the problem could be resolved.” Claimant explains that he traveled to Basra and obtained the exit visa on December 11, 1990. Then, using a company vehicle, he drove to the Iraq-Jordan border and crossed into Jordan on December 12, 1990, whereupon he continued to Amman, where he made further travel arrangements and flew home on December 15, 1990.

Supporting Evidence

Claimant has supported his claim with, among other things, three of his own sworn statements, dated September 25, 2015, June 16, 2017, and March 1, 2018, in which he describes his ordeal in Iraq; and several contemporaneous news articles mentioning Claimant specifically (including quotes from Claimant himself) and describing his ordeal.

Additionally, Claimant has submitted a number of documents that provide background about the broader geopolitical situation during the First Gulf War in 1990-91, including some that relate specifically to the circumstances faced by U.S. nationals in Iraq and Kuwait at the time. These documents include statements from U.S. and Iraqi officials, resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, newspaper articles, a report from Amnesty International on human rights violations committed by Iraq in 1990, unclassified cables and a memorandum from the U.S. Department of State, and affidavits submitted in two lawsuits brought by other U.S. nationals who were also in Kuwait or Iraq during the First Gulf War.

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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

Application of Standard to this Claim

Claimant satisfies this standard for the period August 2, 1990, to December 12, 1990. In his sworn statement, Claimant states that he was held hostage from August 2, 1990, to the date he allegedly drove from Iraq into Jordan, December 12, 1990. While the evidence clearly establishes that Claimant was in Iraq from August 2, 1990, until sometime between December 10 and 14, 1990, the precise date that Claimant left Iraq is not entirely clear. Three of the contemporaneous news articles indicate that Claimant was unable to board a flight leaving Baghdad on December 10, 1990, due to issues concerning an exit visa. This is consistent with Claimant's assertions in his sworn statements, wherein he claims he that attempted to fly out on December 10, 1990. Several of these articles also indicate that Claimant called his wife from Amman early on December 14, 1990 (late

¹² See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 16. An estate claimant would of course need to make this showing as to its decedent.

¹³ See *id.* at 17-20.

¹⁴ See *id.* at 17.

December 13, 1990, in the U.S.). The question, however, is whether the evidence supports Claimant's assertion that he left Iraq on December 12, 1990.

In his 2018 declaration, Claimant maintains that, after being denied boarding of the December 10, 1990 flight, he spent the night in Baghdad. This appears to be supported by at least one of the news articles, which includes a quote from Claimant that he "had the hotel all to [him]self[.]" presumably referring to the night he claims to have spent in Baghdad. He then asserts that he drove to Basra the next day, obtained the necessary paperwork, then drove directly to Jordan, bypassing Baghdad. If indeed Claimant was in Baghdad the morning of December 11, 1990, it seems highly unlikely that he would have been able to drive to Basra in the south of Iraq, then all the way to the Iraq-Jordan border, a distance of some 1,100 kilometers, on the same day. As Claimant maintains, given the distances involved, it seems unlikely that he would have been able to cross into Jordan before December 12, 1990.

Therefore, given that the evidence presented reasonably supports Claimant's contention that he was in Iraq until at least that date, for the purpose of analyzing Claimant's allegation of being held hostage by Iraq, the Commission finds that he crossed from Iraq into Jordan on December 12, 1990.

(1) Armed Conflict: Claimant alleges that Iraq took him hostage in Iraq on August 2, 1990, and held him hostage for 133 days, until December 12, 1990, when he drove across the Iraq-Jordan border into Jordan. 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.¹⁵ Thus, Claimant satisfies this element of the standard.

¹⁵ See *id.* at 16-17.

(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 him and (b) threatened him 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 his release. Claimant satisfies this standard for the 133-day period from August 2, 1990 to December 12, 1990.

(a) Detention/deprivation of freedom: For purposes of analyzing Claimant's allegations of having been detained, his time in Iraq following the invasion of Kuwait can be divided into three periods: (i) between the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990 and the Iraqi government's formal closing of the borders on August 9, 1990; (ii) from that August 9th formal closing of the borders until the December 6, 1990 announcement that all foreigners could leave Iraq and Kuwait;¹⁶ and (iii) from that December 6th announcement until Claimant's departure on December 12, 1990.¹⁷

From August 2, 1990, until Iraq formally closed its borders to foreign nationals on August 9, 1990, Iraq confined Claimant to house near Basra. The Commission has previously determined that Iraq detained U.S. nationals who were in Kuwait and/or Iraq during this period by threatening them with immediate seizure and/or forcible detention.¹⁸ Although some foreign nationals did manage to leave Kuwait and/or Iraq during this period, Claimant could not reasonably be expected to have escaped.¹⁹ Claimant understandably had, as the United Nations Compensation Commission has put it, a

¹⁶ See *id.* at 12.

¹⁷ See *id.* at 20-21. While Claimant alleges that he was physically seized and held by force by Iraq during these periods, we need not decide that issue: as explained below, his presence in Kuwait and/or Iraq during this time is alone sufficient to establish that he was detained under the standard that applies here.

¹⁸ See Claim No. IRQ-II-281, Decision No. IRQ-II- 139, at 9-10; Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

¹⁹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-281, Decision No. IRQ-II- 139, at 9-10; Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

“manifestly well-founded fear” of being killed or forcibly detained if he attempted to leave the country.²⁰ For the purposes of the legal standard applicable here, putting Claimant in this situation in effect amounts to detention.²¹ Iraq thus detained Claimant from August 2, 1990, to August 9, 1990.

From August 9, 1990, until he departed Iraq on December 12, 1990, the Iraqi government confined Claimant to Iraq, preventing him from leaving the country by the threat of force. As the Commission has previously held, starting on August 9, 1990, the Iraqi government formally closed all borders under its control, forcibly prohibiting U.S. nationals from leaving. As of that date, Iraq formally prohibited Claimant from leaving the country, effectively detaining him within the borders of Iraq.²² For Claimant, this formal policy of prohibiting U.S. nationals from leaving Kuwait and Iraq lasted until December 6, 1990, when the Iraqi government announced that all foreigners could leave.²³ Because Iraq’s previous releases of various categories of foreign nationals did not apply to Claimant,²⁴ this was the earliest date that he was legally authorized to leave Iraq.

Although Claimant may have been legally permitted to leave Iraq on December 6, 1990, his detention did not end on that date. As the Commission has previously recognized, a claimant’s detention ends only on the date that he is released from the control of the person or entity that detained him.²⁵ Any attempt “[by the perpetrator] to restrict [the]

²⁰ 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.

²¹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

²² See *id.* at 22.

²³ See *id.* at 12.

²⁴ See *id.* at 11-12, 22 (discussing Iraq’s August 28, 1990 release of U.S. nationals who were women or minors).

²⁵ See *id.* at 22; see also Claim No. LIB-II-183, Decision No. LIB-II-178 (Proposed Decision), at 13 (2012).

movements” of a claimant establishes control,²⁶ whereas a claimant who has a reasonable opportunity to leave the site of his or her captivity is deemed no longer to be under the perpetrator’s control.²⁷

Under this standard, Claimant remained under Iraq’s control until December 12, 1990. The Commission has previously held that Iraq imposed conditions on air travel that limited the ability of foreign nationals, including U.S. nationals, to leave Iraq and/or Kuwait in both September 1990 (after the release of female and minor U.S. nationals on August 28, 1990) and December 1990 (after the release of all remaining U.S. nationals).²⁸ Indeed, the available evidence indicates that Claimant left Iraq at the first reasonable opportunity, on December 12, 1990, when he crossed into Jordan after obtaining his exit visa in Basra, after initially being refused boarding on the December 10, 1990, evacuation flight.²⁹ Because there is no evidence that Claimant remained voluntarily in Iraq at any time during this period, we conclude that he was under Iraq’s control and thus continued to be detained from December 6, 1990, to December 12, 1990.

In sum, Iraq detained Claimant from August 2, 1990, until December 12, 1990.

(b) Threat: In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission determined that the Iraqi government

²⁶ Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 22 (citing Claim No. LIB-II-183, Decision No. LIB-II-178 (Proposed Decision), at 12 (2012)).

²⁷ *See id.*

²⁸ *See* Claim No. IRQ-II-180, Decision No. IRQ-II-140, at 10-11 (2017); Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 22.

²⁹ While the reason given for Claimant’s inability to board the evacuation flight was lack of proper documentation, the contemporaneous news articles suggest this may actually have been a pretext for keeping Claimant in Iraq, given his highly specialized expertise in oil well blowouts, particularly since no one else in the group of detainees released with Claimant was reportedly subjected to this form of delay. The evidence in this program that Iraq had indeed delayed the departure of numerous hostages by imposing limits on air travel, *see supra* note 28, prolonging their hostage experience, and the suspicious circumstances of Claimant’s own experience of leaving Iraq, further supports our finding that Claimant’s detention ended only once he crossed the border into Jordan.

threatened U.S. nationals in Kuwait and Iraq numerous times with continued detention.³⁰ 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 be permitted to leave.³¹ Claimant has thus established that Iraq threatened to continue to detain him.

(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.³² 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.³³ Indeed, at the time, the U.S. government itself understood Iraq's actions to be hostage-taking.³⁴

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 133 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.

³⁰ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 23.

³¹ See *id.*

³² See *id.*

³³ See *id.* at 23-24.

³⁴ 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. United Nations S.C. Res. 674 (Oct. 29, 1990) (noting "actions by . . . Iraq authorities and occupying forces to take third-State nationals hostage" and demanding that Iraq "cease and desist" this practice).

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.³⁵ Therefore, for the 133 days Iraq held Claimant hostage, he is entitled to an award of \$815,000, which is \$150,000 plus (133 x \$5,000). This amount constitutes the 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.³⁶

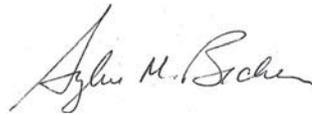
AWARD

Claimant is entitled to an award in the amount of \$815,000.

Dated at Washington, DC, August 9, 2018
and entered as the Proposed Decision
of the Commission.

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

October 15, 2018



Sylvia M. Becker, Commissioner



Patrick Hovakimian, 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) (2017).

³⁵ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 24-26.

³⁶ 22 U.S.C. §§ 1626-1627 (2012).