

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

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-094

Decision No. IRQ-II-144

Counsel for Claimant:

Daniel Wolf, Esq.  
Law Offices of Daniel Wolf

**PROPOSED DECISION**

Claimant brings this claim against the Republic of Iraq ("Iraq") alleging that Iraq held him hostage in violation of international law between August and December 1990. Because he has established that Iraq held him hostage for 130 days, he is entitled to an award of \$800,000.

**BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF THE PRESENT CLAIM**

Claimant alleges that he was a United States citizen working in Kuwait for an oil company when Iraq invaded the country on August 2, 1990. He asserts that, beginning with the invasion and for approximately 18 weeks thereafter, he was detained by Iraqi forces at various sites in Kuwait and Iraq. He further claims that during this entire period, the Iraqi government in effect forcibly prevented him (and other U.S. nationals) from leaving Kuwait and/or Iraq and did so with the express purpose of compelling the United States government to acquiesce to certain Iraqi government demands. After the Iraqi

government authorized all foreign nationals remaining in Iraq to leave, Claimant flew out of Iraq on December 9, 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.<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 September 3, 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.<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. He has provided a copy of birth certificate, which shows that he was a U.S. national at the time of the alleged hostage-taking in August 1990. He has also provided a copy of his current U.S. passport, which expires on

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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.



November 21, 2020, and establishes that he 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 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 not “received any compensation under the 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 9, 1990, a total of 130 days. He asserts that he was working on an oil rig site in Kuwait on

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

August 2, 1990, when Iraq invaded the country. He states that once he became aware of the attack, he returned to his guest house and stayed there until August 4, 1990, when Iraqi soldiers seized him at gunpoint and drove him and several of his colleagues to a field office near Basra, Iraq. Claimant states that he was interrogated by Iraqi security officers at the field office and that he remained in Basra until August 6, 1990. On that date, he was driven to the Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad and was subsequently held under armed guard with other U.S. nationals for approximately 10 days. Claimant maintains that on August 16, he was driven to a fertilizer plant near the Iraqi-Syrian border and held as a human shield and was similarly confined at several other industrial sites in Iraq until December 7, 1990, when he returned to the Al Rasheed Hotel. He states that during this entire period, "[he] lived in a state of constant anxiety and fear . . . not knowing where [he] might be taken, if [he] would be fed or what was going to become of [him]." After Iraq released all foreign nationals remaining in Iraq on December 6, 1990, Claimant left the country on a U.S. government-chartered evacuation flight that departed Baghdad on December 9, 1990.

#### *Supporting Evidence*

Claimant has supported his claim with, among other things, his sworn Statement of Claim, a copy of a travel document issued in lieu of a U.S. passport by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, which contains an Iraqi exit stamp dated December 9, 1990, and two newspaper articles and a declaration that describe the circumstances of his alleged detention and ultimate departure from Iraq. Claimant has also 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, affidavits submitted in a lawsuit brought by other U.S. nationals who were also in Kuwait or Iraq during the First Gulf War, and several unclassified cables from the U.S. Department of State.

### *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>

### *Application of Standard to this Claim*

(1) Armed Conflict: Claimant alleges that Iraq took him hostage in Iraq on August 2, 1990, and held him hostage for 130 days, until December 9, 1990, when Iraqi officials allowed him to leave the country. In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission held that during this entire period,

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

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

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



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 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 130-day period from August 2, 1990, to December 9, 1990.

(a) Detention/deprivation of freedom: For purposes of analyzing Claimant's allegations of having been detained, his time in Kuwait and Iraq following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can be divided into three periods: (i) between the 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;<sup>15</sup> and (iii) from that December 6th announcement until Claimant's departure on December 9, 1990.<sup>16</sup>

From August 2, 1990, until Iraq formally closed its borders to foreign nationals on August 9, 1990, Iraq confined Claimant to his guest house in Kuwait, a field office in Baghdad, and a hotel in Baghdad. While it appears that Claimant was physically seized and held by force by Iraqi soldiers during the majority of this period, his presence in Kuwait and Iraq at that time under the circumstances that he alleges is sufficient to establish that he was detained under the standard that applies here. The Commission has previously determined that Iraq detained all U.S. nationals in Kuwait by threatening them with

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

<sup>15</sup> See *id.* at 12.

<sup>16</sup> See *id.* at 20-21.

immediate seizure and forcible detention during this period,<sup>17</sup> and we conclude that U.S. nationals in Iraq were treated similarly.<sup>18</sup> Although some foreign nationals did manage to leave Kuwait and/or Iraq during this period, Claimant could not reasonably be expected to have escaped.<sup>19</sup> He 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 attempted to leave Kuwait and/or Iraq.<sup>20</sup> The Commission has previously recognized that for the purposes of the legal standard applicable here, putting Claimant in this situation in effect amounts to detention.<sup>21</sup> Iraq thus detained Claimant from August 2, 1990, to August 9, 1990.

From August 9, 1990, until he departed Iraq on December 9, 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 Iraq’s borders, forcibly prohibiting U.S. nationals from leaving.<sup>22</sup> As of that date, Iraq formally prohibited Claimant from leaving the country, effectively detaining him within the borders of Iraq.<sup>23</sup> For Claimant, this formal policy of prohibiting U.S. nationals from leaving Iraq lasted until December 6, 1990, when the Iraqi government announced that all foreigners could leave Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>24</sup> Because Iraq’s

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<sup>17</sup> See *id.* at 21.

<sup>18</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-281, Decision No. IRQ-II-139, at 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

<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 Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 7, 21-22.

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

<sup>24</sup> See *id.* at 12.

previous releases of various categories of foreign nationals did not apply to Claimant,<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> Any attempt "[by the perpetrator] to restrict [the] movements" of a claimant establishes control,<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

Under this standard, Claimant remained under Iraq's control until December 9, 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 immediately after the August 28, 1990 release announcement applicable to women and minor U.S. nationals,<sup>29</sup> and we conclude that U.S. nationals who sought to leave Iraq and Kuwait after December 6, 1990, were treated similarly.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the available evidence indicates that Claimant left Iraq at the first reasonable opportunity, on the December 9, 1990 U.S. government-chartered flight that left Iraq. Because there is no evidence that Claimant remained voluntarily in Iraq at any time during this period, we

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<sup>25</sup> See *id.* at 11-12, 22 (discussing Iraq's August 28, 1990 release of U.S. nationals who were women or minors).

<sup>26</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 22; see also Claim No. LIB-II-183, Decision No. LIB-II-178 (Proposed Decision), at 13 (2012).

<sup>27</sup> 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)).

<sup>28</sup> See *id.*

<sup>29</sup> See *id.* at 22.

<sup>30</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-180, Decision No. IRQ-II-140, at 10-11.



conclude that he was under Iraq's control and thus continued to be detained from December 6, 1990, to December 9, 1990.

In sum, Iraq thus detained Claimant from August 2, 1990 until December 9, 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>31</sup> This included Claimant.<sup>32</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 be permitted to leave.<sup>33</sup>

In short, the Iraqi government made unequivocal threats to continue to detain U.S. nationals in Kuwait and Iraq. Claimant was a U.S. national in Iraq at the time. 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 and 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>34</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

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<sup>31</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 23.

<sup>32</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>.

<sup>33</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 23.

<sup>34</sup> See *id.*

Saudi Arabia; and/or (iii) to end the economic embargo imposed on Iraq.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, at the time, the U.S. government itself understood Iraq's actions to be hostage-taking.<sup>36</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 130 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>37</sup> Therefore, for the 130 days Iraq held Claimant hostage, he is entitled to an award of \$800,000, which is \$150,000 plus (130 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.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See *id.* at 23-24.

<sup>36</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>37</sup> See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 24-26.

<sup>38</sup> 22 U.S.C. §§ 1626-1627 (2012).

AWARD

Claimant is entitled to an award in the amount of \$800,000.

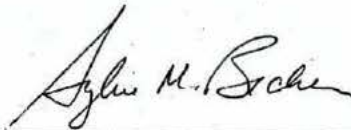
Dated at Washington, DC, August 22, 2017  
and entered as the Proposed Decision  
of the Commission.

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

**October 19, 2017**



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).