

**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-213

Decision No. IRQ-II-154

Counsel for Claimant:

Anthony Onorato Esq.
FisherBroyles, LLP

PROPOSED DECISION

Claimant brings this claim against the Republic of Iraq (“Iraq”) alleging that Iraq held him hostage in violation of international law in August 1990. Because he has established that Iraq held him hostage for 27 days, he is entitled to an award of \$285,000.

BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF THE PRESENT CLAIM

Claimant alleges that he was a United States citizen living in Kuwait with his wife and children when Iraq invaded the country on August 2, 1990. Claimant states that after the invasion he and his family hid in his mother’s house, in constant fear of being captured by Iraqi authorities. Claimant and his wife then hired a taxi driver to help them escape. They took their U.S. passports with them but for safety reasons traveled on papers issued by the Palestinian Authority. The taxi driver drove them across the Kuwaiti border into Iraq, and the family then continued through Iraq and crossed the border into Jordan on August 28, 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

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").

Settlement Agreement, the 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.

On October 27, 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. By letters dated March 10, 2017, and August 2, 2017, Claimant provided additional material to substantiate 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 March 25, 1985 U.S. Certificate of Naturalization and his U.S. passport valid from May 28, 1985 to May 27, 1995, which shows that he was a U.S. national at the time of the alleged hostage-taking (August of 1990). He has also provided a copy of his U.S. passport valid

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

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.

from May 19, 2015 through May 18, 2025, which thus 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 must 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.¹⁰ Footnote 3 of the 2014 Referral specifically lists the Pending Litigation cases for purposes of the Referral. Claimant has averred under oath in his Statement of Claim, 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 attested 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 August 28, 1990, a total of 27 days. Claimant states that, in the weeks after the August 2, 1990

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

invasion, he and his family hid in his mother's house, in constant fear of being captured by Iraqi authorities. Claimant and his wife then hired a taxi driver to help them escape. They took their U.S. passports with them but for safety reasons traveled on papers issued by the Palestinian Authority. The taxi driver drove them across the Kuwaiti border into Iraq, and the family then continued through Iraq and crossed the border into Jordan on August 28, 1990.

Supporting Evidence

Claimant has supported his claim with his sworn Statement of Claim, and his two declarations as well as the declarations of his family members, which describe some of the circumstances of his alleged detention and ultimate departure from Kuwait.¹¹ Claimant has also provided his U.S. passport from the time of the invasion which contains a Kuwaiti entry stamp dated July 28, 1990, as well as an entry stamp from Jordan, dated August 28, 1990.¹² Claimant has additionally provided a copy of an article published in the *Northville Record* in November 1990, which identifies Claimant by his first name and also identifies August 28, 1990 as the date Claimant and his family crossed over the Iraqi border into Jordan.

The Commission also takes notice of a number of other documents, submitted by other claimants in this Iraq Claims Program, 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

¹¹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-212, Decision No. IRQ-II-153; Claim No. IRQ-II-314, Decision No. IRQ-II-155; Claim No. IRQ-II-381, Decision No. IRQ-II-156; and Claim No. IRQ-II-387, Decision No. IRQ-II-157.

¹² Claimant's states his U.S. passport does not contain an Iraqi exit stamp because he used travel papers issued by the Palestinian Authority to leave Iraq. He did not, however, submit those travel papers as evidence.

United Nations Security Council, newspaper articles, an Amnesty International report 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 a lawsuit 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

Application of Standard to this Claim

(1) Armed Conflict: Claimant alleges that Iraq took him hostage in Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and held him hostage for 27 days, until August 28, 1990, when he and his family escaped across the border between Iraq and Jordan. In its first decision awarding compensation for hostage-taking under the 2014 Referral, the Commission held

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ See *id.* at 17-20.

¹⁵ See *id.* at 17.

that during this entire period, Iraq was engaged in an armed conflict with Kuwait.¹⁶ 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 27-day period from August 2, 1990, to August 28, 1990.

(a) Detention/deprivation of freedom: For purposes of analyzing Claimant's allegations of having been detained, his time in Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion can be divided into two 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 Claimant escaped across the Jordanian border on August 28, 1990.¹⁷

From August 2, 1990, until Iraq formally closed its borders to foreign nationals on August 9, 1990, Iraq confined Claimant to hiding in Kuwait by threatening all U.S. nationals with immediate seizure and 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 Iraqi authorities were forcibly detaining foreign nationals (including U.S. nationals) in Kuwait, relocating many to Baghdad

¹⁶ *See id.* at 16-17.

¹⁷ *See id.* at 20-21.

¹⁸ *See id.* at 21.

¹⁹ *See id.*

against their will.²⁰ Claimant understandably had, as the United Nations Compensation Commission has put it, a “manifestly well-founded fear” of being killed or forcibly detained if he had left his mother’s home at this time.²¹ The Commission has previously recognized that for the purposes of the legal standard applicable here, putting Claimant in this situation in effect amounts to detaining him in his mother’s residence.²² Iraq thus detained Claimant in his mother’s residence from August 2, 1990, to August 9, 1990.

From August 9, 1990, until he crossed the border with Jordan on August 28, 1990, the Iraqi government confined Claimant to Kuwait (and Iraq for the limited time he drove through Iraq on the way to the Jordanian border), preventing him from leaving the country by the threat of force. Starting on August 9, 1990, the Iraqi government formally closed Kuwait’s borders.²³ As the Commission has previously held, as of that date, Iraq prohibited all U.S. nationals from leaving the country, effectively detaining Claimant within the borders of Kuwait and Iraq until he escaped.²⁴ Iraq thus detained Claimant from August 2, 1990, to August 28, 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.²⁵ This included Claimant.²⁶ Both Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Speaker of

²⁰ *See id.*

²¹ 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.

²² *See* Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 21.

²³ *See id.* at 21-22.

²⁴ *See id.* at 22.

²⁵ *See id.* at 23.

²⁶ 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

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.²⁷

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 Kuwait 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 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.²⁸ 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.²⁹ Indeed, at the time, the U.S. government itself understood Iraq's actions to be hostage-taking.³⁰

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 27 days, and Claimant is thus entitled to compensation.

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>.

²⁷ *See* Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 23.

²⁸ *See id.*

²⁹ *See id.* at 23-24.

³⁰ *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).

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.³¹ Therefore, for the 27 days Iraq held Claimant hostage, he is entitled to an award of \$285,000, which is \$150,000 plus (27 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.³²

AWARD

Claimant is entitled to an award in the amount of \$285,000.

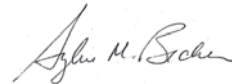
Dated at Washington, DC, September 14, 2017
and entered as the Proposed Decision
of the Commission.

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

December 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).

³¹ See Claim No. IRQ-II-161, Decision No. IRQ-II-003, at 24-26.

³² 22 U.S.C. §§ 1626-1627 (2012).