



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

OFFICE OF SECURITY COOPERATION-IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
DPO AE 09348

January 8, 2012

Office of the Chief

DoD Contractors In-Country (Iraq) Leads:

As a follow-on to my letter dated December 22, 2011, I wanted to bring you the most current information available from the US Embassy (USEMB) and Government of Iraq (GoI) on work authorizations and visas, and let you know where we are headed.

As most of you know, under the 2008 Security Agreement, all USG contracting firms filed their contracts directly with the Directorate of Residency Affairs (Residency) in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). This procedure allowed Residency to issue work/travel authorization memos (work permits) to contract employees. With this memo and an entry stamp received in the passport when passing through the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) customs gateway, firms could obtain either a single or multi-entry visa for their employees. Information can be found at: https://www.intelink.gov/wiki/Orientation_and_In-Processing_Center:_Mission_Iraq and <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/usg-contractor.html>.

Because of the inconsistent application of these rules and processes, -- combined with confusion about the requirements and inconsistent enforcement by the Iraqis -- nearing the end of the Security Agreement we were left with a USG contractor force in various states of readiness with regard to the legal documentation necessary to work in Iraq.

Recently, negotiations between the USEMB and the GoI garnered an agreement in which the Office of Security Cooperation – Iraq (OSC-I), as the senior US DoD organization in Iraq, provided lists of all DoD contractors' names to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MoD). Through a complicated process, we were able to obtain standard, blanket coverage of our contracting population through memos that serve as multi-entry visas as follows:

1. For those who currently possess these documents, the Residency Office has offered to affix actual visas in contractors' passports. This step is not absolutely necessary to legally perform contract services; the memos are valid immigration documents, according to the GoI.
2. Contracting firms who desire to exchange their memos for actual visas will be required to take passports and corresponding memos to the Residency Office.
3. Contracting firms must notify their Contracting Officer Representative (COR) or Contracting Officer (KO), so that OSC-I can gauge the workload and coordinate with Residency. Once instructions are received from Residency, our point of contact, Lieutenant Colonel Doug Lowrey, will coordinate a schedule and notify firms through their COR or KO.

We did this as a onetime event to assist those firms that were encountering unusual difficulty. Many firms have had great success working directly with the GoI and Residency as

outlined in paragraph two above, and we encourage all USG contractors to continue to use and/or develop processes with Residency to obtain work permits and visas. For example, those companies who have contracts on file with Residency should continue to work directly with them to ensure all personnel have proper documentation, including rotational personnel and personnel not included on the lists provided to the MoD.

For those who are still encountering difficulties, including the registration of contracts with GoI, I encourage you to notify your COR or KO, who will engage the OSC-I team for possible resolution. As a reminder, USG efforts do not alleviate the contractor of their responsibility to abide by all terms and conditions of the contract with the USG concerning Iraqi employment laws.

The last few months of transition from USF-I to USM-I have been marked by intense negotiation, much "discovery learning," and significant changes in processes and requirements. The GoI has stated it will initiate an Immigration Commission in early 2012 to establish new requirements and procedures, and this will require us to be patient and flexible. As you know, we are not only experiencing the first few days of a diplomatic, vice military-led US mission, but also of Iraqi sovereignty. The Iraqis will, over time, develop and mature their governmental processes. We appreciate your dedication to this mission and stand ready to assist should you encounter significant administrative challenges.

Our point of contact is Lieutenant Colonel Doug Lowrey at DSN 318.239.5524 or at douglas.lowrey@iraq.centcom.mil.

Sincerely,



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