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Medical and security assistance providers important to doing business in Iraq

International SOS, the world's leading international healthcare, medical and security assistance company, together with RMSI, recently hosted a webinar highlighting the challenges facing businesses operating in Iraq, particularly in light of the recent withdrawal of the US troops.



The webinar discussed issues ranging from the current security situation in Iraq, to the medical precautions that companies need to take to ensure the safety of their employees.

With the withdrawal of US troops, organizations which used to rely on the US military for protection and assistance must now perform careful due diligence to ensure the safety and health of their employees. With more businesses looking to operate in Iraq, companies need to plan ahead and make sure all necessary resources are in place before mobilizing employees into the country. A survey showed that 40% of companies attending the webinar had no medical or security support services in Iraq, highlighting potential risk exposure.

'Companies operating in Iraq must be self sufficient as far as medical care and security is concerned,' said Tim Daniel, Vice President from International SOS. 'With the quick reaction forces gone, companies need to perform a full risk assessment considering the limited medical access as well as insurgence capabilities. Having a detailed and tested evacuation capability is a key to success, as well as knowing who your providers are and thoroughly assessing their capabilities.'

Julian Moro the Regional Security Director of the Middle East and North Africa from International SOS spoke about the security evacuation issues. 'Companies need to define their risk tolerance for both their employees and as an organization, as well as clearly defining their evacuation strategy,' he said. 'Having up-to-date information is key to having a successful, flexible and self sufficient evacuation.'

Dr. Rikard Moen, Regional Medical Director of RMSI, addressed the medical implications of the withdrawal. 'The local medical facilities in Iraq are not up to international medical standards and many will not take in foreigners due to the added security risk that brings to the local hospital,' he said, 'Companies need to have robust medical plans, armored medical ambulance and international medical evacuation capabilities due to Iraq's remote and hostile environment.'

RMSI operates a clinic in Basra to fill such a void. With high expatriate populations and little medical services available, this clinic plays a crucial role in mitigating medical risks.

Medical transport is an important and difficult component of emergency care in Iraq. Medical

evacuations by air ambulance can prove a significant challenge due to difficulties with flight clearance, visa issues, security and airport access. It is important for a company's provider to have experience dealing with the many intricacies of Iraq as well as knowhow and personnel to execute air evacuations. Also to bear in mind there are only six airports that can be used for medical evacuation and they are located in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk, Najaf and Sulimanya. In 2011, RMSI conducted 55 air ambulance evacuations from Iraq, and that number is expected to double in 2012. It is paramount that medical providers (i.e. onsite clinic, armored ambulance and air ambulance) provide an integrated solution to deal with any type of medical emergency and therefore prevent unnecessary delay in evacuation or compromise to patient survival.

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International SOS (internationalsos.com) is the world's leading international healthcare, medical and security assistance, and concierge services company. Operating in over 70 countries, International SOS provides integrated medical, clinical, security, and customer care solutions to organizations with international operations. A global team of over 8,000 employees led by 970 full-time physicians and 200 security specialists provides services including planning, preventative programs, in-country expertise and emergency response to 69 percent of the Fortune Global 500 companies.

RMSI (rmsi-medicalsolutions.com/) helps people in situations where no one else can, in places most wouldn't dare.

RMSI are at the forefront of medical retrieval, clinic and ambulance services. With many years of wartime operation and hundreds of life saving MEDEVAC missions behind them, RMSI is the only full service western standard hostile area medical company in existence.

Headquartered in the United Arab Emirates the company abides by the highest standards of care endorsed by its corporate vision integrating core values of: Loyalty, Integrity, Courage, Knowledge, Empathy.

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