

# **Planning and Development in Northern Iraq**

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## **SUMMARY**

Planning and Development in Northern Iraq An introduction to working in Iraqi Kurdistan covering security, the history of the area, the main regional objectives and requirements for doing business including land tenure. The needs for planning, the change from a command economy and the management required to set up planning for regional development using a GIS system

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## SLIDE 1

Good day my name is Richard Hucker; I was until recently the General Manager of a Costain subsidiary in Iraqi Kurdistan. I was based in Erbil from 2004 to 2006. Prior to that I was a country manager for Costain in Africa and the Middle East for close to 20 years.

Iraqi Kurdistan is the part of Northern Iraq where Kurds predominate. The Kurds are the largest ethnic group in Europe and the Middle East without their own country. I propose to give a brief introduction to Iraqi Kurdistan and review some of the problems experienced moving from a highly centralised and autocratic command economy to the needs for planning and development.

The characteristics of the Kurdish society are those of a conservative, male dominated, agriculturally based society – where high value is put on pride, allegiance to the family and the tribe, and on tradition –as expressed through dress, social norms, dance and music.

## SLIDE 2

Costain opened a subsidiary company in Iraqi Kurdistan in early 2004.

For those of you who are not familiar with Costain:

The group was founded in 1865 in the Isle of Mann. International Contracting started in the Middle East with the Trans Iranian Railway in 1936. Internationally Costain carries out both Engineering and Construction.

## SLIDE 3

KP-Costain had a number of projects in Iraqi Kurdistan including:

The design and construction of a Central Medical Laboratory. The provision of advisors to the Ministry of Construction, And very importantly the provision of high-level advisors to support the production of the first Regional Development Plan for the area.

## SLIDE 4

Iraqi Kurdistan has its own regional government - The Kurdish Regional Government or KRG.

The area administered is principally the three provinces in the North of Iraq which you can see from this recent US State Department map are perceived as stable.

## **SLIDE 5**

Iraqi Kurdistan is described as stable because it has had an elected government and a separate judiciary since 1993.

It is described as secure because it has a standing army of some 150,000 Peshmerga; an established anti-terrorist securities force, the Asayish and a civil Police Force. Safety remains an issue, which must be considered, and I discuss this in more detail. The region has been seriously under funded for 20 years.

## **SLIDE 6**

Iraqi Kurdistan has been without incident since the capture of an insurgency cell in October 2005.

One of the questions, particularly after watching Baghdad on TV is how is this possible? This map shows the green line which is the approximate southern border of the Kurdish Regional Government's administrative area. This green line represents the border that existed with the rest of Iraq from 1993 and which being mined was effectively an international frontier.

The checkpoints still exist and act as international border controls

## **SLIDE 7**

The Kurdish speaking population extends beyond the green line and predominantly covers the winter rainfall belt extending from Jabal Sinjar in the North West along the East bank of the Tigris River, South East along the Jabal Hamrin.

## **SLIDE 8**

A brief history of the area must include: -

That the plains of Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Akre are part of the fertile crescent which stretched in antiquity from Iran to the Mediterranean.

That the edge of the winter rain area was the border between the pastoral Indo-European tribes and nomadic Semitic tribes.

That the border, which exists between Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, is therefore a historical line between differing styles of life.

That Erbil Citadel has been continuously inhabited for at least 4500 years.

Iraq was established in 1922 following the break-up of the Ottoman empire. Iraqi Kurdistan became independent following the introduction of the No Fly Zone in 1993. Today Iraqi Kurdistan is part of federal Iraq.

## **SLIDE 9**

The mountainous area where Iraq, Iran and Turkey join has been easier to defend being bisected by deep gorges and the continuous lines of the Zagros Mountains

## **SLIDE 10**

A Regional Assembly met on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and elected a new cabinet.

The Prime Minister's speech set out the main objectives for the region:-

Socio economic improvement.

Modern Laws and Security.

Improvements in unemployment through use of the private sector

Transparent Government

Support for a Democratic government in Iraq

## **SLIDE 11**

The KRG consists of 28 Ministries reflecting the number of Ministries in the central Government in Baghdad.

The country was governed as a command economy during the Bathist's period and it is difficult for many citizens to exercise the skill of decision making without reference to higher authority.

Despite the introduction of an elected parliament in 1993 and Federal autonomy since 2003 central decision-making is still a constraint to the development of the region.

## **SLIDE 12**

Land within defined Municipal areas is held freehold by individuals and may be bought and sold. It is administered by the Ministry of Municipality.

Land elsewhere is principally owned by the state and administered by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The settlement pattern mainly takes the form of villages, towns and cities. There are very few isolated settlements or farms. This is probably a consequence of the traditional need for security. Some experts consider that some of the earliest settlements were established in this area.

## **SLIDE 13**

Access used to be overland from Turkey or Iran. Taking the mountain roads could provide some glorious scenery but was rather slow.

## **SLIDE 14**

Now there are direct flights into Erbil and Sulaymaniyah as shown

## **SLIDE 15**

Don't forget the security team and make sure they have the right sort of ammunition

## **SLIDE 16**

The very troubled times that Iraqi Kurdistan has experienced in the last 50 years has resulted in massive displacements of the population.

Hundreds of Thousands were displaced from villages during the Bathists Anfal campaign  
Several million were displaced mainly from the cities during the fighting 1991-4  
Hundreds of thousands relocated from Turkey and Iran during 1995 to 2005 once stability improved.

Many recently families have been escaping the sectarian violence in Baghdad and some 300,000 have moved into the region.

At the same time there has been a significant shift from villages and the nomadic way of life to towns and cities. Some 70-75% of the population is now thought to be urban.  
As an example. Erbil, the centre of government had a population of 50,000 in 1945; 500,000 in 1995 and some 800,000 now.

## **SLIDE 17**

No census has been carried out since 1985 but on the basis of related studies the demography of the region shows a noticeable gap in the male 40-50 age group, and a large population under 20.

Lack of education is a key issue, which is being addressed, but a complete generation was unable to benefit from a comprehensive education.

Health care deteriorated dramatically up to 2003 and is only slowly improving.

## **SLIDE 18**

To manage these changes in population requires major development of the infrastructure  
Like everything else, infrastructure was centralised about Baghdad with, for example all roads being radial from Baghdad.

Housing is desperately required with all infrastructure to support it. The largest restraint on development since 1993 has been lack of funding.

## **SLIDE 19**

A GIS database was established during the UN presence in Iraq. This was produced to report on the large number of UN managed project in the region. It identified projects by geographical location. The KRG is now seeking to develop this data base.

The information to be added includes demographic characteristics, economic statistics and details of government and private sector projects.

## **SLIDE 20**

To promote development requires funding.

Limited central government funds are available from the exchequer in Baghdad.

Limited funding is available from the KRG

It is critically necessary to attract inward investment and private funding.

Commission 10 is looking at how project management and planning techniques may be used to encourage funding for projects.

Thank you very much.

## **CONTACTS**

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