

IRAQ—RECONSTRUCTION

■ BY CORINE HEGLAND

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Recommended by



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iraqfoundation.org

"The Iraq Foundation's Web site has always been extremely good because it gives you both a sense of news items from the region but also a sense of longer-term projects."

IRAQFOUNDATION.ORG

Founded more than a decade ago by Iraqi expatriates, the Iraq Foundation is one of the few nonprofits with feet planted firmly in both the U.S. and Iraq. Its director, Rend Rahim Francke, was named the acting Iraq ambassador to the United States in November, the first person to hold that position in 13 years. The foundation's Web site has a wealth of information of historical interest, including a remarkable archive of primary documents from Saddam Hussein's regime. It also posts current news and project updates.

WWW.RELIEFWEB.ORG

For up-to-the-minute snapshots of the aid and reconstruction scene in Iraq, no source beats ReliefWeb, a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. News outlets and nonprofits jostle to report on both progress—schools completed, repatriated refugees—and setbacks, ranging from explosions to pullouts. Click on "Iraq" to see the current news releases.

WWW.RFERL.ORG/IRAQ-REPORT

If the moment-to-moment news is too much, too fast, slow down and take a look at Radio Free Europe's *Iraq Report*. A new issue comes out every Friday, and it includes summary stories about developments within Iraq and the international relations surrounding Iraq. The report gives a quick rundown of key events within the country, and then scans the region, the United Nations, and the rest of the world.

RIVERBENDBLOG.COM

"Riverbend" is the pseudonym used by an eloquent 24-year-old Iraqi woman living in Baghdad with her parents and her younger brother. She lost her computer-programmer job in the surge of fundamentalism after the war. Now, when electricity allows, she chronicles daily life in Baghdad amid bombs and rumors. Riverbend writes with humor and empathy, and her eloquent descriptions of family struggles over whether to risk sending children to school; of hiding the family gold when

the American tanks arrive; and of her fury when the Americans begin to bomb houses in Tikrit provide a window, however small, into life in the city.

CPA-IRAQ.ORG

The official site of the de facto current government in Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority, offers lots of information, including the text of regulations and orders on issues such as de-Baathification, weapons control, and property confiscation. The site features prominent public opinion polls, the text of U.S. Administrator Paul Bremer's weekly addresses to the Iraqi people, and—if you're patient using your mouse—business guidelines and contracts for foreign and local businesses.

DEVELOPMENTGATEWAY.ORG

The international nonprofit Development Gateway is a one-stop shop for reports on Iraq by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. Click on "Select a Topic," then "Iraq: Relief and Recovery," to access information on everything from Iraq's new susceptibility to AIDS to a complete rundown of World Bank assessments on Iraq's needs.

EXPORT.GOV/IRAQ

The Commerce Department has assembled one of the best portals to Iraq within the U.S. government. The site is geared toward businesses interested in entering the shaky country, but its clarity also makes it useful for those with just a curious interest in Iraq. Both the "Business Opportunities" and the "Frequently Asked Questions" sections do an excellent job of running through conditions on the ground, answering questions such as, Do you need a visa to enter? (No.) Or, Whom do I call to hire my own security firm? (One of nine companies provided by the U.S. Consular Office in Baghdad.)

IRAQREVENUEWATCH.ORG

Iraq Revenue Watch is an initiative of financier and philanthropist George Soros's Open Society Institute. The group wants to ensure transparency in all financial matters concerning Iraq's government and oil. The Watch is currently focusing on reconstruction spending and accountability procedures within the Coalition Provisional Authority, and its "Key Documents" section juxtaposes the text of useful bills and regulations with the Watch's own insightful commentary.