



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 4, 2009

American Hikers Detained In Iran Officially Identified

Officials from the autonomous Kurdish province in northern Iraq officially identified the three Americans detained by Iranian border patrol officers last week after apparently inadvertently crossing into Iran while hiking in Iraq. The Kurdish representatives reported that they planned to meet a second time with Iranian officials to discuss the matter.



The interests of the United States are being represented by the Swiss embassy in Tehran, as the United States has had no diplomatic ties with Iran since the hostage crisis in 1979. Swiss diplomats are seeking access to the American detainees through negotiations with the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton commented on the situation Monday and told reporters, "Obviously, we are concerned. We want this matter brought to a resolution as soon as possible and we call on the Iranian government to help us determine the whereabouts of the three missing Americans and return them as soon as possible."

The Americans were identified as Shane Bauer and Sarah Shroud, freelance journalists from California, but recently working in Iraq and Syria; and Joshua Fattal of Oregon. Shroud is Bauer's girlfriend. And according to Ross Borden, founder of an online travel magazine for whom Shroud had written, "She's [Shroud] obviously a professional traveler, as you can see by her latest adventure, going hiking in Iraq. Not many people go hiking in Iraq," he said. There was a fourth member of the group, Shon Meckfessel, who planned to travel with the other three as they left Turkey on Wednesday, but stayed behind with a cold. He was, however, the last person to hear from the group when they called to tell him that they were surrounded by the Iranian border patrol.

For its part, the chairman of the Iranian National Security Committee, Mohammad Karim Abedi, reported on state-run television that the three American tourists were most likely spies, but the government is still building the case against them. "If it is proven they are spies," Abedi said, "the necessary legal procedures will be sought against them." Further, the deputy governor of the Iranian Kurdistan province near the Iraqi border is reported to have said that the three illegally entered Iranian territory and were duly arrested.

Bauer, Shroud, and Fatta are said to have camped out Thursday night near the Iranian border. Later, their tents, blankets, notebooks, and other materials were found Friday at their abandoned campsite.



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