



Comprehensive Global Consulting Services

Commentaries and Insights from Allawos & Company

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“Control Your Risks: Prepare for Contingencies!”

Ambassador Werner Brandstetter, International Diplomat & Strategist, Vienna



Euphrates River, Turkey, 25 miles from ISIS-embattled Kobane. Jihadists moving through the area crossing one of the world’s most dangerous borders almost at will with Turkish-Kurdish tensions rising again.

In this volatile situation, I visited a European company doing business exactly there. I was baffled. This highly respected company with a considerable number of employees from Europe as well as Turkish and Kurdish work force did not have a crisis plan. Everybody felt safe. The profits were fine. The expats enjoyed their compound on the company premises with Olympic size pool and restaurant. Occasional forays to the surrounding border towns for shopping and for some fun with lots of sun and a congenial work atmosphere. Complete obliviousness to the dangers lurking.

Any business should have a contingency plan for crises of various causes, whether you do business in Ferguson, Miss., in Ottawa, Canada, in Paris, in Oslo or anywhere else in the world. Natural disasters, riots or terrorist attacks can occur anywhere. All the more so in countries that must be considered crisis-prone in the first place.

Companies have to make sure that in a crisis everybody knows what he has to do. Employees must be familiar with escape routes and evacuation procedures. Water and unperishable food should be stored. Telephone numbers of police, disaster relief agencies and hospitals should be kept ready. The

same goes for your travel papers and a reasonable amount of local currency as well as in dollars or euros in your safe.

When you do business abroad, you live abroad or you travel abroad, first of all, get a clear picture of the actual situation in the country or region. The traditional media, social media, Foreign Ministry websites and even specialized security firms are full of information you may need.

Arriving at an airport in foreign places that you are not sufficiently familiar with arrange for somebody you know to pick you up. Make sure your hotel is located in a safe part of town and has the infrastructure to sustain your stay, even if you should have to bunker down. In earth-quake prone cities it may pay to choose the place of work, your apartment or your hotel room in a building meeting up-to-date earthquake safety standards.

Drive safely; adjust to the local rules and habits. Don't aggressively react even if other drivers maybe rude. Be defensive but no timid. Be careful where you park. Do not leave anything in the car, of course no valuables but also nothing that may identify the user of the car as a stranger (e.g. guide books, maps, foreign language papers).

Pay attention to your communication devices. It will be helpful to have multiple channels of communication (cell phones, terrestrial phone lines, computers, and even better a sat phone, if all else fails. Where admissible, your company may also want to keep radio equipment).

In cities considered unsafe, do not go out alone, especially not at night. Inform your company, your friends or family on your whereabouts at all times. Take only taxis recommended by your hotel. Do not economize on cab fares. A safe ride may be your best investment. Lock your hotel room after entering. Do not carry valuables or too much cash, but have always some cash on you. Blend in as much as possible, even knowing that there are places where you will always be discernible as a stranger. Sometimes it is better not to stand out. It is enough to stand out in the board room or in your negotiations. The street is not the right place for you to draw attention to yourself.

The two worst reactions in crisis situations are fear and exaggerated phlegm. Avoid both. Be prepared. Keep cool. Don't panic, but be realistic. Be circumspect, aware of what is going on around you and try to think straight. Always remember where you are.

I am confident that sticking to such simple rules will contribute to a safe stay abroad, to your personal security and to a successful business trip.

The good news is: now, a few weeks after my visit to the banks of the Euphrates and a fair amount of prodding, the company I visited finally does have a contingency plan for the most likely crisis situations. Of course, we hope, they will never need it.



One last piece of advice, if I may: If you are looking for further information or want to discuss your own crisis preparedness, I am confident Allawos and Company will provide your answers.

About Allawos and Company, LLC

Allawos & Company is a comprehensive global business-consulting firm, tuned to enable organizations to identify and exploit opportunities through creative engagement built on a foundation of decades of senior management experience.

Whether in corporate development, strategic planning, alliances, market development, diplomatic engagement or manufacturing optimization, our team is focused on client-specific value creation.

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