

《50多位被困伊拉克的中国人乘飞机抵达巴格达》

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More than 50 Chinese nationals trapped in conflict-torn northern Iraq arrived in Baghdad by helicopter on Wednesday night.

The rest of the 1,200 China Machinery Engineering Corp employees trapped in the country are expected to be taken to the Iraqi capital by bus within three days.

One Chinese transported by military helicopter told Caixin magazine that by about 3 pm on Thursday they were heading for Baghdad airport. It is not known if the workers have since left Iraq.

A PetroChina contractor in Baghdad said cellphone signals had been cut for more than 10 days and people were using WiFi.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said most of the 1,200 workers reportedly trapped in Samarra, a city north of Baghdad, were safe in their workplace residences.

Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing is monitoring the security situation before deciding on any large-scale evacuation in Iraq such as that conducted for Chinese workers in Libya in 2011.

Hua said at a daily briefing, "Coordination and communication between China's embassy in Iraq and the Iraqi government and army has been smooth.

"Our embassy in Iraq is in close touch with the relevant Iraqi bodies to ensure workers at Chinese companies can be evacuated to safe places, if needed, in a safe, smooth and timely manner."

The security situation in Iraq has deteriorated sharply in the past two weeks as armed Sunni insurgents launched a surprise offensive.

Reports said a number of China Machinery Engineering Corp employees, who are building a power plant in Samarra, about 120 km north of Baghdad, tried to reach the capital by bus on Tuesday but were stopped by government forces just outside Baghdad.

"The vast majority of the more than 10,000 employees of Chinese enterprises working in Iraq are in safe areas, but a small number are in areas of great concern," Hua said.

Sun Runhai, director of the office of the board at China Machinery Engineering Corp, said the residence and construction site in Samarra had been closed to ensure workers' safety.

Yin Gang, a researcher of Middle East affairs at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said: "It's unlikely that China will evacuate its citizens in Iraq as it did in Libya. At that time, all of Libya was convulsed in fighting, while the conflict in Iraq is mainly in traditional Sunni territory."

Most Chinese nationals are in southern or central areas that have not seen fighting.

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