

Asia/Pacific Enterprises Should Respond to War in Iraq

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The impact of war in Iraq won't be limited to the West and the Middle East. Enterprises in the Asia/Pacific region must also act to secure the well-being of employees and ensure business continuity.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 19 March 2003, a U.S.-led coalition declared war on Iraq to remove the regime of President Saddam Hussein and disarm the country.

Analysis

Enterprises in the Asia/Pacific region should prepare for the follow-on effects of the war in Iraq. Gartner reiterates the following advice:

- *Review the adequacy of scenarios for business continuity and crisis management planning.* Test any changes, even if only by a walk-through. Appoint a manager for business continuity planning. Coordinate with local authorities and police and align plans where necessary — particularly if your enterprise has direct involvement with enterprises from the United States or its coalition partners.
- *Create an emergency communications channel and ensure redundancy.* Consider a common telephone number for employees that outlines business status and emergency procedures. Also, consider an emergency intranet to support critical operations, status reporting and communication for employees, families, suppliers and customers. Gather the latest contact information for all staff. Be able to reach all key staff quickly to resolve urgent matters. Keep employees informed and ensure they are coping.
- *Consider decentralizing workforces by allowing increased telecommuting.* Depending on the level of assessed risk for an individual location, use telecommuting to reduce the concentration of key staff and critical functions.
- *Don't expose employees to unnecessary travel.* Implement alternatives to travel, such as audioconferencing or videoconferencing, and cancel travel to risky locations unless absolutely essential. Advise employees about changes to travel arrangements. Consular offices in each Asia/Pacific country provide up-to-date travel advisory information. For detailed advice, consult Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (www.dfat.gov.au/consular/advice) and the U.S. Overseas Security Advisory Council (www.ds-osac.org/news.cfm).
- *Take extra precautions with employees who must travel or be in risky locations.* Stay current on their whereabouts and how to contact them. Provide extra security at workplaces or other locations that may be targeted by protests or attacks. If your enterprise is at special risk, boost security to ensure only authorized staff or contractors have access to the premises. Areas such as power, air conditioning and perimeters may require extra security and surveillance.
- *Ensure supply chains and outsourcing continuity.* Communicate closely with suppliers, customers and partners. Work with suppliers and partners to review the adequacy of their business continuity and crisis management plans, especially for providers of telecommunications, electricity and other utilities. Develop redundancies — for example, line up alternative suppliers and have outsourcing vendors back up code, data and critical project information on site. Consider extra inventories of any crucial physical items.

For up-to-the-minute discussion of war-related developments and recommendations, follow "Conflict in Iraq: Key Issues for Business and IT" (<http://weblog.gartner.com/weblog/index.php?blogid=4>).

Analytical Sources: Richard Harris, Jim Longwood, Daniel Miklovic and Rich Mogull, Gartner Research, and Martin Stubbs-Race, Gartner Executive Programs

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "How to Respond to War in Iraq" — Implement crisis management plans but do not make sudden changes in direction or do anything drastic unless it's been thought out. **By Daniel Miklovic and Rich Mogull**
- "Risk Management for the Resilient Organization" — Business impact and risk analysis are the foundation for understanding operational vulnerabilities and developing business continuity plans. **By Simon Mingay**

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