

Success Story

Tension in a trouble zone sparks BCD Travel evacuation plan

Planning and cooperation contribute to the successful evacuation of expatriates in Egypt

In the midst of growing political unrest in early July, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo closed and the State Department advised all non-essential U.S. citizens to leave Egypt. Our client, an aerospace and defense contractor, knew evacuations were imminent for their expatriates living in the region and they asked BCD Travel to handle the evacuation plan.

A look back

In 2010, a similar evacuation took place. The customer handled a majority of the evacuation process internally, using one member of their Travel Risk Management team. In this instance, all expats and their families were evacuated from Egypt via military aircraft to Paris, France. Their coordinator was sent to Paris to set up a base to greet incoming expats and prepare them for their final destination. BCD provided a single point of contact to work with their coordinator to book flights out of Paris for everyone. Many of the expats had to layover in Paris for two days or more while documentation was verified and decisions about flight arrangements were made. Although successful, the process involved added expense and time. Based on the information from that event, BCD devised a more efficient plan for future evacuations.

Safe in 72 hours

This time, BCD Travel led the evacuation, quickly securing flights for travelers during the busy Fourth of July holiday period. Rather than relying on the efforts of just one person, we had three virtual agents working in two time zones to help get travelers to safety and to provide around-the-clock support during the event.

Within hours of the closing of the U.S. Embassy, our contingency plan was activated. We coordinated information from multiple sources—our client’s global security team, operations manager and travel manager. We gathered all employee profiles and created new ones for their dependents.

Then we:

- Secured flights on U.S. preferred carriers to gateway cities within 24 hours and during daylight hours
- Got approvals and waivers for tickets that fell outside travel policy
- Monitored travelers’ progress and communicated flight information in real time—from departure to arrival
- Reserved preferred hotels in gateway cities and followed up with properties to confirm employees’ arrivals
- Held conference calls every two hours with our client to provide updates on the evacuation as it was happening
- Provided a total cost analysis using DecisionSource

The results

Within 24 hours of receiving the evacuation request, we had booked flights for all travelers, their dependents and their pets. All were safely at their final destinations within 72 hours. Compared to the 2010 event, we cut travelers’ transient time by 75 percent.

When events like these occur, our clients rely on us to support their travelers as well as their travel and security teams. Our revised plan, plus open communication and cooperation with our client and their preferred suppliers, played a key role in the successful and safe relocation of impacted employees in just three days.

What our client had to say?

“I cannot thank you enough for all of your hard work and dedication in assisting with the Egypt evacuation over the past few days. I spoke to the agents this morning and challenged them to tell me what could have been done better, because from my perspective, the effort was flawless! We expected a lot from all of you and you didn't disappoint us. Thank you for your flexibility also, since I

know our strategies changed from what we put into action on Tuesday to what you had to ultimately execute on Wednesday. The success of a Travel Program is contingent on the front line of support. You are the ones that interface with our travelers on a daily basis and if they didn't have confidence in your abilities and expertise, our Customer Satisfaction scores would not be in the 90s!

“You all should be as proud of your efforts as we are proud of you. No small feat given that we worked you around the clock over the biggest holiday of the summer. Everyone is safe and sound and accounted for. Thank you again for making this happen! The best travel team I have worked with my entire career!”
Travel Commodity Manager, Supply Chain Operations

“Thanks to everyone for all your work. There are only a few times in my career that I have worked with a team that is so focused on getting the job done....and nothing else matters. I love working like that...it makes success so much easier to come by. We have a few more miles to go, but a lot of this evacuation is behind us....thanks in no small part to you and your team's efforts.” ***Manager, Global Operations Enterprise Services Human Resources***

“BCD has been fantastic. Appreciate everyone’s support especially with the long weekend involved.” ***VP, International Security***