

MESSAGE TO U.S. CITIZENS

Thursday, September 26, 2013

Worldwide Caution Issued From The Department of State



United States Embassy, Nassau, The Bahamas

The Department of State has issued this Worldwide Caution to update information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This replaces the Worldwide Caution dated February 19, 2013, to provide updated information on security threats and terrorist activities worldwide.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. Current information suggests that al-Qa'ida, its affiliated organizations, and other terrorist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in multiple regions, including Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, and bombings.

Extremists may elect to use conventional or non-conventional weapons, and target both official and private interests. Examples of such targets include high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas, shopping malls, and other tourist destinations both in the United States and abroad where U.S. citizens gather in large numbers, including during holidays.

In early August 2013, the Department of State instructed certain U.S. embassies and consulates to remain closed or to suspend operations August 4 through August 10 because of security information received. The U.S. government took these precautionary steps out of an abundance of caution and care for our employees and others who may have planned to visit our installations.

U.S. citizens are reminded of the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure. Extremists have targeted and attempted attacks on subway and rail systems, aviation, and maritime services. In the past, these types of attacks have occurred in cities such as Moscow, London, Madrid, Glasgow, and New York City.

EUROPE: Current information suggests that al-Qa'ida, its affiliated organizations, and other terrorist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. and Western interests in Europe. Additionally, there is a continuing threat in Europe from unaffiliated persons planning attacks inspired by major terrorist organizations but conducted on an individual basis. On February 1, 2013, an individual detonated a bomb at a side entrance to the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, killing one Embassy guard and injuring others. The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi/Cephesi or DHKP/C) claimed responsibility on its website for the attack. The DHKP/C has stated its intention to commit further attacks against the United States, NATO, and Turkey. In May 2013, in London, two Islamic extremists, unaffiliated with any group, killed a British soldier. The reported reason for the attack was to avenge the deaths of Muslims killed by British soldiers. European governments have taken action to guard against terrorist attacks, and some have made official declarations regarding heightened threat conditions. In the past several years, organized extremist attacks have been planned or carried out in various European countries. On February 5, the Bulgarian government announced its judgment that Hezbollah was responsible for a July 2012 terrorist attack in Burgas which resulted in the deaths of five tourists and a bus driver.

MIDDLE EAST and NORTH AFRICA: Credible information indicates terrorist groups also seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. The U.S. government remains highly concerned about possible attacks against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests. Terrorist organizations continue to be active in Yemen, including al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Security threat levels remain high in Yemen due to terrorist activities and civil unrest. In September 2012, a mob of Yemeni protestors attacked the U.S. Embassy compound. U.S. citizens have also been the targets of numerous terrorist attacks in Lebanon in the past (though none recently) and the threat of anti-Western terrorist activity continues to exist there. There are a number of extremist groups operating in Lebanon, including Hezbollah, a group designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization. Iraq is experiencing levels of violence not seen since 2007, and al-Qa'ida in Iraq is increasingly resurgent. Although U.S. interests have not been targeted directly, the threat of attacks against U.S. citizens, including kidnapping and terrorist violence, continues, even in Baghdad's International Zone. Bahrain continues to see bouts of sectarian violence, with Shi'a insurgents conducting IED attacks against Bahraini government and security facilities. Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its affiliates are active throughout North Africa. In Algeria, terrorists sporadically attack Westerners and Algerian government targets, particularly in the Kabylie region, and near Algeria's borders with Libya and Mali. In January 2013, terrorists attacked a natural gas facility at In Amenas resulting in the deaths of dozens, including three U.S. citizens. Terrorists have also targeted oil processing plants in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The In Amenas attack was staged from southern Libya, which has become a haven for regional terrorist organizations that present a threat to U.S. interests in Tripoli. Libyan security is largely provided by militias that occasionally fight one another, and that have been

unable to protect U.S. persons from past attacks, such as the September 2012 attack against the U.S. Temporary Mission Facility in Benghazi that led to the deaths of four U.S. citizens, including the U.S. Ambassador to Libya. Some elements in Iran remain hostile to the United States. U.S. citizens should remain cautious and be aware that there may be a more aggressive focus by the Iranian government on terrorist activity against U.S. citizens. Continuing political and social unrest in Egypt has led to large demonstrations that have turned violent. Westerners and U.S. citizens have occasionally been caught in the middle of clashes and demonstrations. On June 28, a U.S. citizen was killed during a demonstration in Alexandria. On May 9, a private U.S. citizen was attacked with a knife outside the U.S. Embassy after being asked whether he was an American. Political and social unrest in Tunisia has also led to large demonstrations that occasionally turn violent. In September 2012, a large group of demonstrators breached the U.S. Embassy compound in Tunis, causing significant damage.

No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence, and throughout the country the potential exists for unpredictable and hostile acts, including kidnappings, sniper assaults, large and small-scale bombings, and chemical attacks, as well as arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture. The conflict in Syria has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths with many thousands wounded and over one million displaced persons.

AFRICA: A number of al-Qa'ida operatives and other extremists are believed to be operating in and around Africa. In February 2012, the emir of U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization al-Shabaab and al-Qa'ida's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced the alliance of the two organizations. Al-Shabaab has taken credit for the attack on the shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya on September 21, 2013, which claimed the lives of over 60 people and injured over a hundred more, including U.S. citizens. Al-Shabaab assassinations, suicide bombings, hostage taking, and indiscriminate attacks in civilian-populated areas are also frequent in Somalia. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated their intent to attack Somali authorities, the African Union Mission in Somalia, and non-military targets such as international donor offices and humanitarian assistance providers. Additionally, the terrorist group al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has declared its intention to attack Western targets throughout the Sahel (an area that stretches across the African continent between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea to include Senegal, Mali, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Eritrea). It has claimed responsibility for kidnappings, attempted kidnappings, and the murder of several Westerners throughout the region, including southern Algeria. AQIM-related threats against Westerners in Mali and elsewhere increased following the initiation of the U.S.-supported, French-led intervention in northern and central Mali, where the security environment remains fluid. In neighboring Niger, terrorists formerly associated with AQIM conducted suicide attacks targeting a French mining facility and a Nigerien military compound in Agadez in late May. The loosely organized group of factions known as Boko Haram continues to carry out significant improvised explosive device and suicide bombings in northern Nigeria, mainly targeting government forces and innocent civilians; attacks have continued at a high rate since their attack

on the UN building in the capital of Abuja in 2011. Boko Haram and splinter group Ansaru have also claimed responsibility for the kidnappings of several Western workers and tourists, both in northern Nigeria and northern Cameroon; Ansaru has murdered virtually all of its hostages in the face of real or perceived rescue attempts, while Boko Haram allegedly received a large ransom payment for the release of a French family abducted near a tourist park in northern Cameroon. In 2013, extremists have also targeted both Nigerians and foreign nationals involved in polio eradication efforts in northern Nigeria. Extremists attacked a school in northeast Nigeria, killing over 40 students, and have called for further attacks on educational institutions. Several agencies that have partnered with the U.S. government in the field of public health development in northern Nigeria have curtailed their activities in response to these threats. The president of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in three northeastern states in response to activities of extremist groups.

U.S. citizens considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there have been armed attacks, robberies, and kidnappings for ransom by pirates. The threat of hijacking to merchant vessels continues to exist in Somali territorial waters and as far as 1,000 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia, Yemen, and Kenya in international waters. There has also been a recent rise in piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, including hijackings.

U.S. government maritime authorities advise mariners to avoid the port of Mogadishu and to remain at least 200 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. In addition, when transiting around the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, or in the Red Sea, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys and maintain good communications at all times. U.S. citizens traveling on commercial passenger vessels should consult with the shipping or cruise ship company regarding precautions that will be taken to avoid hijacking incidents. Commercial vessels should review the Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's Horn of Africa Piracy page for information on maritime advisories, self-protection measures, and naval forces in the region. Review our International Maritime Piracy [Fact Sheet](#) for information on piracy in the southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean.

SOUTH ASIA: The U.S. government continues to receive information that terrorist groups in South Asia may also be planning attacks in the region, possibly against U.S. government facilities, U.S. citizens, or U.S. interests. The presence of al-Qa'ida, Taliban elements, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, indigenous sectarian groups, and other terror organizations, many of which are on the U.S. government's list of designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, poses a potential danger to U.S. citizens in the region. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and ability to attack locations where U.S. citizens or Westerners are known to congregate or visit. Their actions may include, but are not limited to, vehicle-borne explosive attacks,

improvised explosive device attacks, assassinations, carjackings, rocket attacks, assaults, or kidnappings.

Such attacks have occurred in a number of South Asian states, including Pakistan, where a number of extremist groups continue to target U.S. and other Western citizens and interests, and Pakistani government and military/law enforcement personnel. Suicide bombing attacks continue to occur throughout the country on a regular basis, often targeting government authorities such as police checkpoints and military installations, as well as public areas such as mosques, and shopping areas. U.S. citizens are increasingly targeted for kidnapping. No part of Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence, and throughout the country the potential exists for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against U.S. and other Western nationals at any time. Elements of the Taliban and the al-Qa'ida terrorist network, as well as other insurgent groups hostile to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, remain active. Insurgents continue to target various U.S. and Afghan government facilities in Kabul City, including the June 25, 2013 attack against a U.S. government facility adjacent to the Afghan Presidential Palace and U.S. Embassy. There is an ongoing threat of kidnapping and assassination of U.S. citizens and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers throughout the country. India has experienced terrorist and insurgent activities that may affect U.S. citizens directly or indirectly. Anti-Western terrorist groups, some of which are on the U.S. government's list of designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, have been active in India, including Islamist extremist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Indian Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e Tayyiba. Terrorists have targeted public places in India frequented by Westerners, including luxury and other hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas.

Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and other countries experienced civil unrest, large scale protests and demonstrations following the release of anti-Islamic videos and cartoons in September 2012.

CENTRAL ASIA: Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al-Qa'ida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. government interests.

Before You Go

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). When you enroll in STEP, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. Enrolling will also make it

easier for the Embassy to contact you in the event of an emergency. You should remember to keep all of your information in STEP up to date; it is particularly important when you enroll or update your information to include a current phone number and e-mail address.

U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events, and take the appropriate steps to bolster their personal security. For additional information, please refer to "[A Safe Trip Abroad](#)."

U.S. government facilities worldwide remain at a heightened state of alert. These facilities may temporarily close or periodically suspend public services to assess their security posture. In those instances, U.S. embassies and consulates will make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. U.S. citizens abroad are urged to monitor the local news and maintain contact with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

As the Department of State continues to develop information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its [Consular Information Program](#) documents, including Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, Country Specific Information, and Emergency and Security Messages, all of which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Stay up to date by bookmarking our [website](#) or downloading our free Smart Traveler [iPhone](#) or [Google Play](#) App for travel and timely security information at your fingertips. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on [Facebook](#) as well.

In addition to information on the internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, from other countries, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, Eastern Time (except U.S. federal holidays).

For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens, please contact the U.S. Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section, located 42 Queen Street (across from the British Colonial Hilton Hotel), Nassau; telephone: 242-322-1181; after hours emergency telephone: 242-357-7004; ACS unit fax: 242-356-7174; e-mail: ACSNASSAU@state.gov; web page: <http://nassau.usembassy.gov>.

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