

## **United States Embassy, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

### **Message for U.S. Citizens**

### **Worldwide Caution Issued**

July 30, 2015

The Department of State is updating the Worldwide Caution to provide information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. Recent terrorist attacks, whether by those affiliated with terrorist entities, copycats, or individual perpetrators, serve as a reminder that U.S. citizens need to maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This replaces the Worldwide Caution dated January 9, 2015.

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. In August 2014, the United States and regional partners commenced military action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated terrorist organization in Syria and Iraq. In response to the airstrikes, ISIL called on supporters to attack foreigners wherever they are. Authorities believe there is an increased likelihood of reprisal attacks against U.S., Western and coalition partner interests throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Kidnappings and hostage events involving U.S. citizens have become increasingly prevalent as ISIL, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates have increased attempts to finance their operations through kidnapping for ransom operations. U.S. citizens have been kidnapped and murdered by members of terrorist and violent extremist groups. ISIL, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) are particularly effective with kidnapping for ransom and are using ransom money to fund the range of their activities.

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.

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 ISIL, al-Qa'ida, its affiliated organizations, and other terrorist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. and Western interests in Europe. On January 7, 2015, two armed gunmen entered the Paris offices of a satirical news magazine and killed 12 people, including two police officers. Al-Qa'aida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) took credit for the attack. On January 9, a man attacked a kosher market in Paris immediately killing four people. Also in January, Belgian counter-terrorist units foiled what was described as an imminent terror attack, when they killed two gunmen and wounded another in a shootout in the town of Verviers, near the German border. On February 14, at an event in Copenhagen, Denmark called Art, blasphemy and the freedom of expression, a gunman opened fire killing one person and wounding three police officers. On June 26, terrorists attacked a U.S.-owned factory near Lyon, France, killing one and injuring 12.

Authorities believe the likelihood of terror attacks in Europe will continue as European members of ISIL return from Syria and Iraq. Additionally, there is a continuing threat in Europe from unaffiliated persons planning attacks inspired by major terrorist organizations but conducted on an individual basis. European governments have taken action to guard against terrorist attacks, and some have made official declarations regarding heightened threat conditions.

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. Private U.S. citizens are strongly discouraged from traveling to Iraq, Syria, or any other country to join in armed conflict.

No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence. The security situation remains dangerous and unpredictable as a civil war between government and armed anti-government groups continues throughout the country. There is an increased threat of terrorism from groups such as ISIL, al-Nusrah, as well as other extremists whose tactics include use of suicide bombers, kidnappings, use of small and heavy arms, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In the last several years, the United States has received reports of numerous foreigners kidnapped in Syria, some of whom have been killed while others remain in captivity. The majority of the victims are journalists and aid workers. U.S. citizens and other Westerners have been murdered by ISIL in Syria. Violent extremists from various countries operate in Syria and may be planning attacks against the United States and other Western targets.

A number of extremist groups also operate in Lebanon and the potential for death or injury in Lebanon exists because of periodic terrorist bombing attacks throughout the country. As a result of

spillover violence from the Syria crisis, Sunni groups are active and Hizballah, a group designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization, has been present and active for many years.

U.S. citizens in Iraq remain at high risk for kidnapping and terrorist violence. Numerous insurgent groups, including ISIL, remain active and terrorist activity and violence persists in many areas of the country. ISIL controls Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, as well as significant territory in northern, western, and central Iraq, particularly along the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, and the group continues to attack Iraqi security forces and civilians in those areas. U.S. government facilities, and western interests remain possible targets, as evidenced by the April 17 bombing in the public area outside U.S. Consulate General Erbil where one U.S. citizen was injured. In addition, several anti-U.S. militia groups fighting ISIL, such as Kataib Hezbollah (KH) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) are operating throughout Iraq and may present a threat to U.S. citizens.

In Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria, groups affiliated with ISIL, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and other terrorist groups have conducted attacks against both foreign and local targets. In Libya, various groups have called for attacks against U.S. citizens and U.S. interests. On January 28, 2015 in Tripoli, Libya, a car bomb was detonated outside the Corinthia Hotel. Three militants rushed inside the hotel and opened fire before blowing themselves up. Five foreigners were among those killed. On March 18, several gunmen attacked the Bardo Museum in the center of Tunis, Tunisia, killing 21 people including 18 foreign tourists. On June 26, a terrorist killed 38, mostly western tourists, on a beach in Sousse, Tunisia. In Algeria's Kabylie region, an ISIS-affiliated group kidnapped and killed a Westerner in September 2014, and, in south-western Algeria, terrorists killed 39 workers, including westerners, and held hundreds hostage at a gas processing facility in January 2013.

In Yemen, the security situation has greatly deteriorated, necessitating the suspension of operations of the U.S. Embassy. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a potent force there.

AFRICA: Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Murabitun remain active in northern Mali and Niger. Terrorist groups have stepped up their rhetoric calling for additional attacks or kidnapping attempts on westerners and others, particularly those linked to support for international military intervention.

15. The terrorist group 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, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Eritrea). It has claimed

responsibility for kidnappings, attempted kidnappings, and the murder of several Westerners throughout the region.

Al-Shabaab assassinations, suicide bombings, hostage taking, and indiscriminate attacks in civilian-populated areas are 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. Al-Shabaab retains its demonstrated capability to carry out attacks in government-controlled territory in Somalia and in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Djibouti.

In fact, al-Qa'ida and its affiliate, al-Shabaab, have attacked targets in Kenya for years. Since late 2013, there have been numerous attacks killing hundreds and causing injury to hundreds more within the Nairobi area, along the coast, and in the northeastern region of the country. Most of these attacks occurred in northeastern Kenya, mainly in Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera counties. The most deadly of these took place on April 2 at the Garissa University College, where al-Shabaab terrorists killed 148 people, primarily students, and wounded many others. Grenade and improvised explosive device attacks have occurred in Nairobi, including the January 2014 attack at a restaurant in the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. In 2014 and 2015, the Mombasa area had at least eight such attacks.

Boko Haram, an extremist group based in northeast Nigeria, has claimed responsibility for many attacks, mainly in northern Nigeria. Thus far, 2015 has seen a continued increase in Boko Haram attacks and clashes with Nigerian government security forces in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram has also targeted women and children for kidnapping, reportedly kidnapping women in northern states for marriage as "slave brides." Boko Haram is known to descend on whole towns, robbing banks and businesses, attacking police and military installations, and setting fire to private homes. U.S. citizen missionaries in northern Nigeria have received specific written threats to their safety and well-being, although none have yet been harmed. Boko Haram has carried out attacks in Cameroon's Far North Region, and has targeted foreign expatriates, tourists, and government leaders in this region. In Chad, the entire Lake Chad region – not only Chad's border with Nigeria – is vulnerable because of rising activities by Boko Haram.

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.

**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.

The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a danger to U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan. Across the country, terrorist attacks frequently occur against civilian, government, and foreign targets. Attacks have included armed assaults on heavily guarded sites, including Pakistani military installations and airports. The Government of Pakistan maintains heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities. Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.

No province in Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence and crime, and the strong possibility exists throughout the country for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against U.S. and other foreign nationals at any time. Elements of the former Taliban regime and members of other terrorist organizations hostile to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and foreign nationals remain active in every province of the country. Furthermore, travel to all areas of Afghanistan remains unsafe due to ongoing military combat operations, landmines, banditry, armed rivalry between political and tribal groups, and the possibility of insurgent attacks, including attacks using vehicle-borne or other improvised explosive devices. U.S. citizens are increasingly targeted for kidnapping. The threat situation in Afghanistan is still considered critical and is expected to remain so through the current political and military transition.

India continues to experience terrorist and insurgent activities which may affect U.S. citizens directly or indirectly. Anti-Western terrorist groups active in India include Islamist extremist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Indian Mujahideen, Jaish-e-

Mohammed, and Lashkar-e Tayyiba. Past attacks have targeted public places, including some frequented by Westerners, such as luxury and other hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas. Attacks have taken place during the busy evening hours in markets and other crowded places, but could occur at any time.

**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.

**EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC:** Information from credible sources suggests that there is a continued risk of armed terrorist and criminal groups operating and planning attacks against foreigners, including U.S. citizens, in the East Asian and Pacific region. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group, have cells operating throughout Southeast Asia and JI is linked to al-Qa'ida and other regional terrorist groups.

There is a risk of travel to the southern Philippines, specifically related to kidnapping threats in the Sulu Archipelago and the ongoing threat of violence on the island of Mindanao, particularly in Central Mindanao.

Over the past year there have been several kidnappings-for-ransom targeting foreigners in the Eastern Sabah province of Malaysia and in the southern Sulu Sea area by terrorist or insurgent groups based in the Sulu Archipelago of the Philippines. In addition to incursions on the coastal and island resorts themselves, criminal or terrorist bands may attempt to intercept boats ferrying tourists in the area.

Indonesian security forces have disrupted a number of terrorist cells, including JI, a terrorist organization that carried out several significant bombings in Jakarta and Bali over the past decade. Although Indonesian counterterrorism efforts have been successful in preventing terrorists from conducting large-scale attacks in recent years, extremists in Indonesia may demonstrate a willingness and ability to carry out small-scale violent attacks with little or no warning.

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.

For further information:

- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for the [Worldwide Caution](#), Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and [Country Specific Information](#).
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
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