

Worldwide Caution

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Washington, DC 20520



Worldwide Caution

January 31, 2011

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 August 12, 2010, 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. U.S. citizens are reminded that demonstrations and rioting can occur with little or no warning. Current information suggests that Al-Qaida and affiliated organizations 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, and locales 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 attacked subway and rail systems, as well as aviation and maritime services. In the past several years, these types of attacks have occurred in cities such as Moscow, London, Madrid, and Glasgow.

Current information suggests that Al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. and Western interests in Europe. European governments have taken action to guard against terrorist attack and some have spoken publicly about the heightened threat conditions. In the past several years, attacks have been planned or occurred in various European cities.

Credible information indicates terrorist groups also seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. For example, Iraq remains dangerous and unpredictable.

Attacks against military and civilian targets throughout Iraq continue. Methods of attack have included roadside improvised explosive devices, mortars, and shootings; kidnappings still occur as well. Security threat levels remain high in Yemen due to terrorist activities there. The U.S. Embassy has had to close several times in response to ongoing threats by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). U.S. citizens as well as other Westerners have been targeted for attack in Yemen. 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. In Algeria, terrorist attacks occur regularly, particularly in the Kabylie region of the country. In the past, terrorists have targeted oil processing facilities in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

A number of Al-Qaida operatives and other extremists are believed to be operating in and around Africa. Since the July 11, 2010, terrorist bombings in Kampala, Uganda, for which the Somalia-based, U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility, there have been increased threats against public areas across East Africa. The terrorist attacks of August and September 2010 against the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and African Union (AU) peacekeeping forces in Somalia, as well as the bombing of hotels and minibuses in Somalia, highlight the vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks in East Africa and around the world. Additionally, the terrorist group, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has declared its intention to attack Western targets throughout the Sahel (which includes Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), and has claimed responsibility for kidnappings, attempted kidnappings, and the murder of several Westerners.

U.S. citizens considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there has been a notable increase in armed attacks, robberies, and kidnappings for ransom by pirates. Merchant vessels continue to be hijacked in Somali territorial waters, while others have been hijacked as far as 1,000 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia, Yemen, and Kenya in international waters.

The 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 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](#) suggested piracy countermeasures for vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden.

The U.S. government continues to receive information that terrorist groups in South and Central 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-Qaida and its affiliates, Taliban elements, Lashkar-e-Taiba, indigenous sectarian groups, and other terror organizations, many of which are on the U.S. government's list of Foreign Terror Organizations (FTOs), poses a potential danger to U.S. citizens in the region. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and ability to attack targets where Americans 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.

Examples of potential attacks in South Asian states include Pakistan, where a number of extremist groups continue to target U.S. and other Western citizens and interests, and Pakistani government officials 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. In Afghanistan, remnants of the former Taliban regime and the Al-Qaida terrorist network, as well as other groups hostile to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)/NATO military operations, remain active. There is an ongoing threat to kidnap and assassinate U.S. citizens and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers throughout the country. In India, there is a continuing threat of terrorism as attacks have randomly targeted public places frequented by Westerners, including luxury and other hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas.

Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al-Qaida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement are active in the Central Asian region. Members of these groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and have attacked U.S. government interests in the past. Previous terrorist attacks conducted in Central Asia have involved improvised explosive devices, suicide bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings.

Before You Go

The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad are encouraged to enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). By enrolling in STEP, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. Enrolling in STEP 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](#), such as Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as [Country Specific Information](#),

which are available on the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#). Stay up to date by bookmarking our [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#). 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, outside the United States and Canada, 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).