



U.S. Embassy, Manila, Philippines

THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD.

Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens: Updated Travel Warning for the Philippines

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to the Sulu Archipelago and through the southern Sulu Sea, and to exercise extreme caution when traveling to the island of Mindanao, due to continued terrorist threats, insurgent activities and kidnappings. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated October 21, 2015.

U.S. citizens should continue to defer non-essential travel to the Sulu Archipelago, due to the high threat of kidnapping of international travelers, increased threat of maritime kidnappings against small boats in the vicinity of the Sulu Archipelago, and violence linked to insurgency and terrorism there.

U.S. citizens should defer non-essential travel through the southern Sulu Sea region from the southern tip of Palawan, along the coast of Sabah, Malaysia and the islands of the Sulu Archipelago, up to Zamboanga City, Mindanao. Terrorist and insurgent groups based in the Sulu Archipelago continue to target foreigners for kidnapping in the Eastern Sabah province of Malaysia and in the southern Sulu Sea area.

U.S. citizens should also continue to exercise extreme caution if traveling to certain regions and cities of the island of Mindanao. Separatist and terrorist groups continue to carry out attacks and kidnappings against civilians, foreigners, political leaders, and Philippine security forces in Mindanao. Since January 2015, at least 15 separate kidnappings have been reported across Mindanao. In western Mindanao, terrorist, insurgent, and criminal gangs regularly conduct kidnappings for ransom, including the kidnapping of a foreigner in Dipolog City in early October 2015 by unknown assailants. In central Mindanao, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) remains active in the Cotabato City area, and in the Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat provinces, where the government maintains a state of emergency and a greater police presence. While there have been no recent reported terrorist threats or incidents within the Davao City or Surigao city limits, eastern Mindanao is not free from threats. In September 2015, assailants belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group kidnapped four individuals, including three foreigners, from the popular resort island of Samal, a 15 minute boat ride from Davao City. There have been no reports of U.S. citizens in Mindanao targeted specifically for their nationality; however, general threats to U.S. citizens and other foreigners throughout Mindanao remain a concern.

Although U.S. government officials in the Philippines travel to Mindanao for official business without incident, the Embassy has imposed strict restrictions on all but the most essential travel to the area, and Embassy employees must receive special authorization from Embassy security officials to travel to any location in Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago.

Note: The timestamp on this e-mail message may reflect Washington, D.C., time, which may differ from local time.

For further information:

- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for the [Worldwide Caution](#), Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the [Philippines 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.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines, located at 1201 Roxas Boulevard, at +(63) (2) 301-2000, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +(63) (2) 301-2000.
- 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).