

February 20th, 2013

Security Message for U.S. Citizens: Worldwide Caution

1. 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 July 18, 2012, to provide updated information on security threats and terrorist activities worldwide.
2. 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-Qaida, its affiliated organizations, and other terrorist 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.
3. 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 other tourist destinations both in the United States and abroad where U.S. citizens gather in large numbers, including during holidays.
4. 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.
5. EUROPE: Current information suggests that al-Qaida, 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 for the attack on its website. The DHKP/C has stated its intention to commit further attacks against the United States, NATO, and Turkey. 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, attacks have been planned or carried out in various European countries. On February 5, the Bulgarian government announced its judgment that Hizbollah was responsible for a July 2012 terrorist attack in Burgas which resulted in the deaths of five tourists and a bus driver.

6. 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-Qaida 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 Hizbollah, a group designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization. Iraq remains dangerous and unpredictable. U.S. military forces departed as of December 31, 2011, but the threat of attacks against U.S. citizens, including kidnapping and terrorist violence, continues. In Algeria, Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active and operates throughout the country. Terrorists sporadically attack westerners and Algerian targets, particularly in the Kabylie region, and near Algeria's borders with Libya and Mali. In January, 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. 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. No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence, and the potential exists throughout the country for unpredictable and hostile acts, including kidnappings, sniper assaults, large and small-scale bombings, 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.

7. In September 2012, civil unrest, large scale protests and demonstrations as well as violent attacks - some of which were in reaction to an anti-Islamic video and cartoons - targeted U.S. missions and schools overseas including in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen. U.S. citizens are warned that demonstrations intended to be peaceful can escalate into violent clashes. U.S. citizens are also reminded that demonstrations and riots can occur with little or no warning. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations if possible and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of a demonstration.

8. AFRICA: A number of al-Qaida 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-Qaida's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced the alliance of the two organizations. Al-Shabaab assassinations, suicide bombings, 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, African Union Missions in Somalia and non-military targets. Additionally, the terrorist group al-Qaida 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. 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 increased since their attack on the UN building in the capital of Abuja last year. The president of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in certain areas in response to activities of extremist groups. AQIM and related extremist groups have threatened to attack and kidnap Westerners in Mali and the region in response to the U.S.-supported French intervention in Northern and Central Mali, where the political conditions remain fluid, and the Malian government has yet to reassert control over its northern provinces.

9. U.S. citizens considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there have been 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.

10. 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 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.

11. 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-Qaida, 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 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.

12. 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. Kidnappings of U.S. citizens are also on the increase. No part of Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence, and the potential exists throughout the country for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against U.S. and other Western nationals at any time. Elements of the Taliban and the al-Qaida terrorist network, as well as other groups hostile to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military operations, remain active. 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 which may affect U.S. citizens directly or indirectly. Anti-Western terrorist groups, some 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.

13. 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.

14. CENTRAL ASIA: Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al-Qaida, 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

15. The Department of State encourages 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.

16. 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" on our website, <http://travel.state.gov/>.

17. 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.

18. 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 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 Android App for travel information at your fingertips. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.

19. 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).

20. Minimize considered.

American citizens in Paraguay are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion through the State Department's travel registration website.

U.S. Embassy Asuncion contact information:

Telephone: 011-595 21-213-715,

After-hours 011-595 21-213-715 extension 2210

Fax: 595-21-228-603

E-mail: ParaguayConsular@state.gov