

Travel Warnings

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Mali Travel Warning

Thu, 18 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Mali because of ongoing conflict in northern Mali, fluid political conditions, and continuing threats of attacks and kidnappings of westerners. While the security situation in Bamako remains relatively stable, there are ongoing security concerns and military operations taking place in the northern and western parts of the country. Mali continues to face challenges including food shortages, internally displaced persons, and the presence in northern Mali of extremist and militant factions. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Mali dated March 22, 2013.

Public demonstrations in Mali were banned during the "state of emergency" in effect from January 12 through July 6, following a January 10 terrorist offensive and a January 11 military intervention by French forces. The "state of emergency" enabled the government to take extraordinary measures to deal with the crisis in the north. The state of emergency expired on July 6. Groups may once again congregate in open, public locations, and campaigning has begun for the presidential election scheduled to take place on July 28, with a second round, if necessary, to be held on August 11.

As a result of safety and security concerns following the Spring 2012 coup and counter coup, some organizations, including foreign companies, NGOs, and private aid organizations temporarily suspended operations in Mali or withdrew some family members and/or staff. Many of these organizations have now recommenced operations and started to allow family members and staff to return. The U.S. Embassy continues to operate normally and will continue to monitor the situation closely and update U.S. citizens via Security or Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens which it will post on the Embassy's website.

The U.S. Embassy has instructed embassy employees and their dependents to be cautious when traveling within Bamako. It encourages U.S. citizens to exercise caution, remain vigilant, maintain situational awareness at all times, and take appropriate security precautions to ensure personal safety. U.S. citizens throughout Mali should develop personal contingency plans, avoid all unnecessary travel, and travel on main roads. Malian security forces are regularly updating security safeguards, including checkpoints and other controls on movement in Bamako and around the country. A United Nations peacekeeping mission has also been deployed in Mali. On July 1, the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) transferred its authority to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). When fully deployed, MINUSMA is expected to have more than 12,000 personnel in Mali.

The Government of Mali may periodically impose or lift curfews as security needs may dictate. U.S. citizens should be mindful of such potential measures, stay attuned to local news announcing such curfews, and comply with such locally imposed curfews. For internal safety and security reasons, the U.S. Embassy may also, without advance notice, periodically impose a temporary curfew on U.S. Embassy employees should the need arise. Whenever possible, such restrictions will be shared with the private U.S. citizen community and posted on the Embassy's website. U.S. citizens should carefully

consider adopting similar safety measures by limiting any unnecessary travel or movements during such periods of heightened tension.

Extremist and militant elements, including al Qaeda in the Lands of Islamic Maghreb (Elements of AQIM), Ansar al-Dine, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad (MUJAO), and other groups continue to be present in northern Mali, although they have been mostly dislodged from major population centers, including Gao and Timbuktu. The situation in Kidal remains fluid, but a June 18 agreement between the Government of Mali and armed northern groups provided for an interim solution that allowed for the return of the Government of Mali's authority to that city and permitted citizens of that region the opportunity to participate in the July 28 presidential elections. Terrorist groups have stepped up their rhetoric calling for additional attacks or kidnapping attempts on westerners, particularly those linked to support for international military intervention.

U.S. citizens should also note that the Embassy has prohibited all personal travel by U.S. government employees and their dependents to all areas in Mali outside the central area of the Koulikoro Region. The Koulikoro Region includes the district of Bamako and cities of Koulikoro, Ouelessebougou, Siby, and Kangaba. Official travel outside the Koulikoro region requires prior authorization from the Ambassador. These designations are based on insecurity in areas adjacent to this area, including the presence of AQIM and the threat of kidnapping, as well as banditry in the outlying regions. U.S. citizens planning to travel to Mali, particularly to destinations outside of Bamako, should consult the U.S. Embassy's website or your host organization(s) for the most recent security assessment of the areas where you plan to travel.

Senou International Airport in Bamako is open for business and scheduled flights are proceeding normally. Some international flights have occasionally been canceled due to low travel volume, but travelers have been notified in advance. Persons wishing to depart the country should check with commercial airlines for the airport's operational status, and flight and seat availability, before traveling to the airport.

In this period of heightened tension, the U.S. Embassy reminds all U.S. citizens of the risk of terrorist activity in Mali, including in Bamako. U.S. citizens are urged to exercise caution, to be particularly alert to their surroundings, and to avoid crowds, demonstrations, or any other form of public gathering. U.S. citizens are further encouraged to exercise prudence if choosing to visit locations frequented by westerners in and around Bamako.

The U.S. Embassy may close temporarily for non-emergency business from time to time to review its security posture. U.S. citizens currently in Mali, despite this Travel Warning, should enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By enrolling, the Embassy can contact you more easily in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information for Mali and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada,

or a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and Google Play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Embassy in Bamako is located in ACI 2000 at Rue 243, Porte 297. The Embassy's mailing address is B.P. 34, Bamako, Mali. The telephone number, including for after-hour emergencies, is 223 2070-2300. The consular fax number is 223 2070-2340.

Yemen Travel Warning

Tue, 16 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the high security threat level in Yemen due to terrorist activities and civil unrest. The Department urges U.S. citizens not to travel to Yemen.

U.S. citizens currently in Yemen should depart. The U.S. Embassy in Sana'a remains a restricted staffing post. As staff levels at the Embassy are restricted, our ability to assist U.S. citizens in an emergency and provide routine consular services remains limited and may be further constrained by the fluid security situation. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Yemen issued on November 19, 2012.

The security threat level in Yemen is extremely high. In September 2012, a mob attacked the U.S. Embassy compound. Demonstrations continue to take place in various parts of the country and may quickly escalate and turn violent. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations, and to exercise extreme caution if within the vicinity of a demonstration.

Terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), continue to be active throughout Yemen. The U.S. government remains highly concerned about possible attacks on U.S. citizens (whether visiting or residing in Yemen), and U.S. facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests. A U.S. citizen was attacked and killed in Taiz on March 18, 2012 and the press reported that AQAP claimed responsibility. An ongoing risk of kidnapping exists throughout Yemen. In the last year, international and local media have reported several kidnappings of Westerners. Violent crime is also a growing problem; local media reported the murder of two U.S. citizens in Taiz and Aden in 2013. In addition, piracy in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean is a security threat to maritime activities in the region. See our International Maritime Piracy Fact Sheet.

U.S. government-facilitated evacuations occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Evacuation assistance is provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. government for travel costs. The lack of a valid U.S. passport may hinder U.S. citizens' ability to depart the country and may slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. U.S. citizens in Yemen should ensure that they have proper and current documentation at all times. For more information, see "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis" at the Department's website. Evacuation options from Yemen are extremely limited due to the lack of infrastructure, geographic constraints, and other security concerns. The U.S. government typically evacuates U.S. citizens to a safe haven, and travelers are responsible for making their own onward travel plans. Travelers should not expect to be evacuated to the United States.

U.S. citizens remaining in Yemen despite this Travel Warning should limit nonessential travel within the country, be aware of their surroundings whether in their residences or moving about, make their own contingency emergency plans, enroll their presence in Yemen through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), and provide their current contact information and next-of-kin or emergency contact information.

The U.S. Embassy in Sana'a is located at Dhahr Himyar Zone, Sheraton Hotel District, P.O. Box 22347. The telephone number of the Consular Section is (967) (1) 755-2000, extension 2153 or 2266. For after-hours emergencies, please call (967) (1) 755-2000 (press zero for extension) or (967) 733-213 509. From time to time the Embassy may temporarily close or suspend public services for security reasons. Emergency assistance to U.S. citizens during non-business hours (or when public access is restricted) is available through Embassy duty personnel.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs web site, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, and Country Specific Information can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407- 4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers in other countries by calling a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.)

The U.S. Embassy also encourages U.S. citizens to review "A Safe Trip Abroad," which includes valuable security information for those living and traveling abroad. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. Download our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes or Google Play to have travel information at your fingertips.

Niger Travel Warning

Mon, 15 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Niger. U.S. citizens in Niger, and those considering travel to Niger, should evaluate their personal security situation in light of continuing threats to safety and security. On June 13, 2013, the Department of State approved authorized departure for family members of Embassy personnel because of security concerns. Since that time, circumstances have improved and, as of July 12, the U.S. Embassy in Niger is no longer on authorized departure status. This replaces the Travel Warning for Niger dated June 13, 2013, to update information about the current security situation.

The Government of Niger continues to erect security checkpoints in Niamey to address the security concerns in the country. The Embassy recommends that citizens traveling in Niger remain especially careful around security checkpoints, as security forces continue to be on a heightened state of alert. Do not drive away from, or through, a checkpoint until you are given clear permission to do so. If you are unsure of what to do, please request verbal confirmation before proceeding.

On June 1, prisoners in Niamey's main prison staged a prison break. Of the 32 prisoners who successfully escaped, several are suspected to have ties to terrorist organizations. The majority of the escapees remain at large.

On May 23, 2013, terrorists using suicide car bombs attacked a Nigerien military compound in Agadez and a uranium mining facility, operated by a French company, in Arlit.

Terrorist groups have called for and executed attacks against countries that have supported intervention against terrorist groups in northern Mali, including Niger. The areas bordering Mali and Libya, and the northern region of Niger continue to be of specific concern. The border is porous, and there are frequent reports of suspected terrorist and armed bandit groups crossing into Niger. The Government of Niger has increased its security forces in the border areas, but the situation remains unstable and travel to the border areas near Mali and Libya is not advised. The U.S. Embassy in Niamey will continue to monitor this situation closely and update U.S. citizens via "Security Messages for U.S. Citizens." These security messages are posted on U.S. Embassy Niamey's website.

Because of security threats, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey continues to restrict the travel of U.S. government employees and official visitors north of the latitude of Niamey. The U.S. Embassy also continues to evaluate proposed travel and official and personal activities for employees on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with Nigerien security authorities. Recently, the possibility of violence related to extremist and criminal groups coming from northern Nigeria has led the Nigerien government to recommend armed escorts for travel in far eastern Niger. The Embassy requires armed escorts for official U.S. citizen travel east of Zinder, because of the state of emergency in northern Nigeria.

Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a group designated as a terrorist organization by the Department of State since 2002, continues its threats to kidnap Westerners in Niger, including U.S. citizens, and has kidnapped Europeans in the region. On January 7, 2011, two French nationals were

kidnapped in the capital city of Niamey. They were found dead less than 24 hours later following a rescue attempt by French and Nigerien military forces. In September 2010, seven people, including five French citizens, a Togolese, and a Malagasy were kidnapped by AQIM from the northern mining town of Arlit. Four French citizens are still being held hostage by AQIM. Although there have been no kidnappings of Westerners in Niger since January 2011, the Department of State Worldwide Caution dated July 18, 2012 reminds U.S. citizens to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness when traveling in the region.

As a result of safety and security concerns, some organizations, including foreign companies, NGOs, and private aid organizations, have temporarily suspended operations in Niger or withdrawn some family members and/or staff.

Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped U.S. citizens, it is U.S. government policy not to make concessions to kidnappers.

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey strongly encourages U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Niger despite this Travel Warning to enroll in the Smart Travel Enrollment Program (STEP), so you can receive the most up-to-date security information. Please keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important when enrolling or updating information to include multiple phone numbers and email addresses to facilitate communication in the event of an emergency.

U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information for Niger and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. Download our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes and Google Play for the latest information. If you don't have internet access, current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey is located on Rue des Ambassades. The Embassy's telephone number is (227) 20-72-26-61. You can contact the Embassy after-hours for emergencies at telephone: (227) 20-72-31-41. [Click here to visit the Embassy website.](#)

Mexico Travel Warning

Fri, 12 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens about the security situation in Mexico. General information on the overall security situation is provided immediately below. For information on security conditions in specific regions of Mexico, which can vary, travelers should reference the state-by-state assessments further below.

This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Mexico dated November 20, 2012 to consolidate and update information about the security situation and to advise the public of additional restrictions on the travel of U.S. government (USG) personnel.

General Conditions:

Millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year for study, tourism, and business, including more than 150,000 who cross the border every day. More than 20 million U.S. citizens visited Mexico in 2012. The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations, and there is no evidence that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) have targeted U.S. visitors and residents based on their nationality. Resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime that is reported in the border region and in areas along major trafficking routes.

Nevertheless, U.S. travelers should be aware that the Mexican government has been engaged in an extensive effort to counter TCOs which engage in narcotics trafficking and other unlawful activities throughout Mexico. The TCOs themselves are engaged in a violent struggle to control drug trafficking routes and other criminal activity. Crime and violence are serious problems and can occur anywhere. U.S. citizens have fallen victim to criminal activity, including homicide, gun battles, kidnapping, carjacking and highway robbery. While most of those killed in narcotics-related violence have been members of TCOs, innocent persons have also been killed. The number of U.S. citizens reported to the Department of State as murdered in Mexico was 113 in 2011 and 71 in 2012.

Gun battles between rival TCOs or with Mexican authorities have taken place in towns and cities in many parts of Mexico, especially in the border region. Gun battles have occurred in broad daylight on streets and in other public venues, such as restaurants and clubs. During some of these incidents, U.S. citizens have been trapped and temporarily prevented from leaving the area. TCOs have used stolen cars, buses and trucks to create roadblocks on major thoroughfares, preventing the military and police from responding to criminal activity. The location and timing of future armed engagements is unpredictable. We recommend that you defer travel to the areas indicated in this Travel Warning and exercise extreme caution when traveling throughout the northern border region.

The number of kidnappings and disappearances throughout Mexico is of particular concern. Both local and expatriate communities have been victimized. In addition, local police have been implicated in some of these incidents. We strongly advise you to lower your profile and avoid displaying any evidence of wealth that might draw attention.

Carjacking and highway robbery are serious problems in many parts of the border region, and U.S. citizens have been murdered in such incidents. Most victims who complied with carjackers at these checkpoints have reported that they were not physically harmed. Carjackers have shot at vehicles that fail to stop at checkpoints. Incidents have occurred during the day and at night, and carjackers have used a variety of techniques, including bumping/moving vehicles to force them to stop and running vehicles off the road at high speeds. There are some indications that criminals have particularly targeted newer and larger vehicles, especially dark-colored SUVs. However, victims driving a variety of vehicles, from late model SUVs to old sedans have also been targeted. While violent incidents have occurred at all hours of the day and night on both modern toll highways ("cuotas") and on secondary roads, they have occurred most frequently at night and on isolated roads. To reduce risk, if absolutely necessary to travel by road, we strongly urge you to travel between cities throughout Mexico only during daylight hours, to avoid isolated roads, and to use toll roads whenever possible. The Mexican government has deployed federal police and military personnel throughout the country as part of its efforts to combat the TCOs. U.S. citizens traveling on Mexican roads and highways may encounter government checkpoints, which are often staffed by military personnel or law enforcement personnel. TCOs have erected their own unauthorized checkpoints, at times wearing police and military uniforms, and killed or abducted motorists who have failed to stop at them. You should cooperate at all checkpoints.

The U.S. Mission in Mexico imposes restrictions on U.S. government employees' (U.S. citizens working at the Embassy and the nine consulates throughout Mexico) travel that have been in place since July 15, 2010. USG employees and their families are not permitted to drive for personal reasons from the U.S.-Mexico border to or from the interior of Mexico or Central America. Personal travel by vehicle is permitted between Hermosillo and Nogales but is restricted to daylight hours and the Highway 15 toll road ("cuota").

USG personnel and their families are prohibited from personal travel to all areas to which it is advised to "defer non-essential travel". When travel for official purposes is essential, it is conducted with extensive security precautions. USG personnel and their families are allowed to travel for personal reasons to the areas where no advisory is in effect or where the advisory is to exercise caution. While the general public is not forbidden from visiting places categorized under "defer non-essential travel," USG personnel will not be able to respond quickly to an emergency situation in those areas due to security precautions that must be taken by USG personnel to travel to those areas.

For more information on road safety and crime along Mexico's roadways, see the Department of State's Country Specific Information.

State-by-State Assessment:

Below is a state-by-state assessment of security conditions throughout Mexico. The accompanying map will help in identifying individual locations. Travelers should be mindful that even if no advisories are in effect for a given state, crime and violence can occur anywhere. For general information about travel and other conditions in Mexico, see our Country Specific Information.

Aguascalientes: You should exercise caution when traveling to the areas of the state that border the state of Zacatecas, as TCO activity in that region continues. There is no advisory in effect for daytime travel to the areas of the state that do not border Zacatecas; however, intercity travel at night is not recommended.

Baja California (north): Tijuana, Ensenada and Mexicali are major cities/travel destinations in the state of Baja California -see map to identify their exact locations: You should exercise caution in the northern state of Baja California, particularly at night. There were 278 homicides in Tijuana from January to June 2013. Mexicali's murder rate has climbed from 14.3 per 100,000 in 2011 to 15.8 per 100,000 in 2012. In the majority of these cases, the killings appeared to be targeted TCO assassinations. Turf battles between criminal groups resulted in some assassinations in areas of Tijuana and Mexicali frequented by U.S. citizens. Shooting incidents, in which innocent bystanders have been injured, have occurred during daylight hours.

Baja California (South): Cabo San Lucas and La Paz are major cities/travel destinations in the state of Southern Baja California -see map to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Campeche: No advisory is in effect.

Chiapas: San Cristobal de las Casas is a major city/travel destination in Chiapas -see map to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Chihuahua: Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua City, and Copper Canyon are major cities/travel destinations in Chihuahua -see map to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Chihuahua. In Ciudad Juarez, personal travel by USG employees outside the northeast portion of the city (the area near the Consulate General) is restricted. Although homicides have decreased markedly—from a high of 3,100 homicides in 2010 to 749 in 2012—Ciudad Juarez still has one of the highest homicide rates in Mexico. Crime and violence remain serious problems throughout the state of Chihuahua, particularly in the southern portion of the state and in the Sierra Mountains, including Copper Canyon. U.S. citizens do not, however, appear to be targeted based on their nationality.

Coahuila: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Coahuila. The State of Coahuila continues to experience high rates of violent crimes and narcotics-related murders. TCOs continue to compete for territory and coveted border crossings to the United States. The cities of Torreón, Saltillo, Piedras Negras, and Ciudad Acuña have seen an increase of violent crimes within the last six months, including murder, kidnapping, and armed carjacking. Of particular safety concern are casinos, sportsbooks, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments, which USG personnel are not permitted to frequent.

Colima:Manzanillo is a major city/travel destination in Colima -see map to identify its exact location: You should defer non-essential travel to the areas of the state of Colima that border the state of Michoacán, including the city of Tecomán. You should also exercise caution when travelling to other parts of the state, including Colima City and Manzanillo. The security situation along the Michoacan border continues to be the most unstable in the state with gun battles occurring between rival criminal

groups and with Mexican authorities. Homicides throughout the state rose sharply from 113 in 2011 to 179 in 2012, according to official Mexican government sources.

Durango: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Durango, except the city of Durango where you should exercise caution. Cartel violence and highway lawlessness are a continuing security concern. Several areas in the state continue to experience high rates of violence and remain volatile and unpredictable. The Mexican government deployed troops in March 2013 to quell TCO violence in the La Laguna area, which is comprised of the cities of Gomez Palacio and Lerdo in the state of Durango and the city of Torreon in the state of Coahuila. Of particular safety concern are casinos, sportsbooks, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments, which USG personnel are not permitted to frequent. USG personnel may not travel outside the city of Durango and must abide by a curfew of 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. within a secured venue.

Estado de Mexico: Toluca and Teotihuacan are major travel destinations in Estado de Mexico -see map to identify exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the municipalities of Coacalco, Ecatepec, Nezahualcoyotl, La Paz, Valle del Chalco, Solidaridad, Chalco, and Ixtapaluca, which are eastern portions of the greater Mexico City metropolitan area, located just to the east of the Federal District of Mexico and Benito Juarez airport, unless traveling directly through the areas on major thoroughfares. These areas have seen high rates of crime and insecurity. You should also defer non-essential travel on any roads between Santa Marta in the southeast portion of the state and Huitzilac in the state of Morelos, including the Lagunas de Zempoala National Park and surrounding areas.

Guanajuato: San Miguel de Allende and Leon are major cities/travel destinations in Guanajuato -see map to identify their exact locations: No advisory is in effect.

Guerrero: Acapulco, Ixtapa, Taxco and Zihuatanejo are major cities/travel destinations in Guerrero - see map to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the northwestern and southern portions of the state (the area west and south of the town of Arcelia on the border with Estado de Mexico in the north and the town of Tlapa near the border with Oaxaca), except for the cities of Acapulco, Zihuatanejo, and Ixtapa. In those cities, you should exercise caution and stay within tourist areas. You should also exercise caution and travel only during daylight hours on toll highway ("cuota") 95D between Mexico City and Acapulco and highway 200 between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa. In Acapulco, defer non-essential travel to areas further than 2 blocks inland of the Costera Miguel Aleman Boulevard, which parallels the popular beach areas. Lodging for USG personnel is limited to the "Hotel Zone" of Acapulco, beginning from the Hotel Avalon Excalibur Acapulco in the north and going south through Puerto Marquez including the Playa Diamante area. Any activity outside the Hotel Zone for USG personnel is limited to the coastal area from La Quebrada to the beginning of the Hotel Zone and only during daylight hours. In general, the popular tourist area of Diamante, just south of the city, has been less affected by violence. Flying into the coastal cities in southern Guerrero remains the preferred method of travel. You should defer non-essential travel by land between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa, travel to Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa only by air, and exercise caution while in Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa. If travelling by automobile between Mexico City and Acapulco you should exercise caution and travel only during daylight hours on toll highway ("cuota") 95D, staying on the toll road

towards the Playa Diamante area and avoiding the highway running through the city of Acapulco. You should also exercise caution in the northern region of Guerrero (the area north of the town of Arcelia on the border with Estado de Mexico in the north and the town of Tlapa near the border with Oaxaca). The state of Guerrero has seen an increase in violence among rival criminal organizations. Acapulco's murder rates increased dramatically since 2009; in response, in 2011 the Government of Mexico sent additional military and federal police to the state to assist State security forces in implementing ongoing operation "Guerrero Seguro" (Secure Guerrero) that focuses on combating organized crime and returning security to the environs of popular tourist areas. Self-defense groups operate independently of the government in the Costa Chica region of eastern Guerrero. Armed members of these groups frequently maintain roadblocks, and although not considered hostile to foreigners or tourists, are suspicious of outsiders and should be considered volatile and unpredictable.

Hidalgo: No advisory is in effect.

Jalisco: Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta, and Lake Chapala are major cities/travel destinations in Jalisco - see map to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to areas of the state that borders the state of Michoacán. The security situation along the Michoacán and Zacatecas borders continues to be unstable and gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur. Concerns include roadblocks placed by individuals posing as police or military personnel and recent gun battles between rival TCOs involving automatic weapons. You should exercise caution in rural areas and when using secondary highways, particularly along the northern border of the state. Except for the areas of the state that border Michoacan, there is no advisory in effect for daytime travel within major population centers or major highways in the state of Jalisco. Intercity travel at night is not recommended. There is no recommendation against travel to Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta. There is also no recommendation against travel on principal highways in Jalisco between Guadalajara including the portions that cross in to the southern portions of the state of Nayarit.

Mexico City (also known as the Federal District): No advisory is in effect. See also the discussion in the section on Estado de Mexico for areas within the greater Mexico City metropolitan area.

Michoacán: Morelia is a major city/travel destination in Michoacán - see map to identify exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Michoacán except the cities of Morelia and Lázaro Cardenas where you should exercise caution. Flying into Morelia and Lázaro Cardenas is the recommended method of travel. Attacks on Mexican government officials, law enforcement and military personnel, and other incidents of TCO-related violence, have occurred throughout Michoacán. In the northwestern portion of the state, self-defense groups operate independently of the government. Armed members of the groups frequently maintain roadblocks, and although not considered hostile to foreigners or tourists, are suspicious of outsiders and should be considered volatile and unpredictable. Groups in Michoacan are reputed to be linked to TCOs.

Morelos: Cuernavaca is a major city/travel destination in Morelos - see attached map to identify their exact locations: You should exercise caution in the state of Morelos due to the unpredictable nature of TCO violence. You should also defer non-essential travel on any roads between Huitzilac in the

northwest corner of the state and Santa Marta in the state of Mexico, including the Lagunas de Zempoala National Park and surrounding areas. On August 24, 2012 two USG employees were injured after being fired upon by Federal Police officers on an isolated road north of Tres Marias, Morelos. Numerous incidents of narcotics-related violence have also occurred in the city of Cuernavaca.

Nayarit: You should defer non-essential travel to areas of the state of Nayarit that border the states of Sinaloa or Durango, as well as all rural areas and secondary highways. You should exercise caution when traveling to the cities of Tepic, Xalisco, or San Blas. There is no recommendation against travel to the Vallarta-Nayarit area in the southern portion of the state also known as the Riviera Nayarit or to principal highways in the southern portion of the state used to travel from Guadalajara to Puerto Vallarta.

Nuevo Leon: Monterrey is a major city/travel destination in Nuevo Leon- see map to identify its exact location: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Nuevo Leon, except the metropolitan area of Monterrey where you should exercise caution. Although the level of TCO violence and general insecurity in Monterrey has decreased within the last 12 months, sporadic gun battles continue to occur in the greater Monterrey area. Adult entertainment establishments and casinos continue to be targets of TCO activity. TCOs have kidnapped, and in some cases murdered American citizens, even when ransom demands are met. TCOs have been known to attack local government facilities, prisons and police stations, and are engaged in public shootouts with the military and between themselves. TCOs have used vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices against military and law enforcement units as well as incendiary devices against several types of businesses. Pedestrians and innocent bystanders have been killed in these incidents. Local police and private patrols have limited capacity to deter criminal elements or respond effectively to security incidents. As a result of a Department of State assessment of the overall security situation, the Consulate General in Monterrey is a partially unaccompanied post with no minor dependents of USG personnel permitted. USG personnel serving at the U.S. Consulate General in Monterrey may not frequent casinos, sportsbooks, or other gambling establishments. USG personnel may not travel outside the San Pedro Garza Garcia municipal boundaries between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m., except for travel to the airport after 5 a.m.

Oaxaca: Oaxaca, Huatulco and Puerto Escondido are major cities/travel destinations in Oaxaca -see map to identify their exact locations: No advisory is in effect.

Puebla: No advisory is in effect.

Queretaro: No advisory is in effect.

Quintana Roo: Cancun, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen, Riviera Maya and Tulum are major cities/travel destinations in Quintana Roo - see attached map to identify their exact locations: No advisory is in effect.

San Luis Potosi: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of San Luis Potosi, except the city of San Luis Potosi where you should exercise caution. The entire stretch of highway 57D in San Luis Potosi and portions of the state east of highway 57D towards Tamaulipas are particularly dangerous. A USG

employee was killed and another wounded when they were attacked in their U.S. government vehicle on Highway 57 near Santa Maria del Rio in 2011. Cartel violence and highway lawlessness are a continuing security concern. USG personnel may not frequent casinos, sportsbooks, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments. USG personnel may not travel outside the City of San Luis Potosi and must abide by a curfew of 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. within a secured venue.

Sinaloa: Mazatlan is a major city/travel destination in Sinaloa -see map to identify its exact location: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Sinaloa except the city of Mazatlan where you should exercise caution, particularly late at night and in the early morning. One of Mexico's most powerful TCOs is based in the state of Sinaloa. With the exception of Ciudad Juarez, since 2006 more homicides have occurred in the state's capital city of Culiacan than in any other city in Mexico. Travel off the toll roads ("cuotas") in remote areas of Sinaloa is especially dangerous and should be avoided. We recommend that any travel in Mazatlan be limited to Zona Dorada and the historic town center, as well as direct routes to/from these locations and the airport.

Sonora: Nogales, Puerto Peñasco, Hermosillo, and San Carlos are major cities/travel destinations in Sonora -see map to identify their exact locations: U.S. citizens visiting Puerto Peñasco should exercise caution and use the Lukeville, Arizona/Sonoyta, Sonora border crossing, in order to limit driving through Mexico. You should defer non-essential travel between the city of Nogales and the cities of Sonoyta and Caborca (which area also includes the smaller cities of Saric, Tubutama, and Altar), defer non-essential travel to the eastern edge of the State of Sonora which borders the State of Chihuahua (all points along that border east of the northern city of Agua Prieta and the southern town of Alamos), and defer non-essential travel within the city of Ciudad Obregon and southward with the exception of travel to Alamos (traveling only during daylight hours and using only the Highway 15 toll road, or "cuota", and Sonora State Road 162). Sonora is a key region in the international drug and human trafficking trades, and can be extremely dangerous for travelers. The region west of Nogales, east of Sonoyta, and from Caborca north, including the towns of Saric, Tubutama and Altar, and the eastern edge of Sonora bordering Chihuahua, are known centers of illegal activity. Travelers throughout Sonora are encouraged to limit travel to main roads during daylight hours.

Tabasco: Villahermosa is a major city/travel destination in Tabasco -see attached map to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Tamaulipas: Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, and Tampico are major cities/travel destinations in Tamaulipas -see map to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Tamaulipas. All USG employees are prohibited from personal travel on Tamaulipas highways outside of Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo due to the tenuous security situation. In Matamoros, USG employees are subject to further movement restrictions between midnight and 6 a.m. USG employees may not frequent casinos and adult entertainment establishments. Matamoros, Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, and Ciudad Victoria have experienced grenade attacks in the past year, as well as numerous reported gun battles. Nuevo Laredo has seen a marked increase in the number of murders, carjackings, and robberies in the past year. For example, the numbers of murders are up 92.5% over last year. These crimes occur in all parts of the city at all times of the day. The kidnapping rate for Tamaulipas, the highest for all

states in Mexico, more than doubled in the past year. In February 2013, four masked and armed individuals attempted to kidnap a USG employee in Matamoros during daylight hours. All travelers should be aware of the risks posed by armed robbery and carjacking on state highways throughout Tamaulipas, particularly on highways and roads outside of urban areas along the northern border. Traveling outside of cities after dark is particularly dangerous. While no highway routes through Tamaulipas are considered safe, many of the crimes reported to the U.S. Consulate General in Matamoros have taken place along the Matamoros-Tampico highway.

Tlaxcala: No advisory is in effect.

Veracruz: You should exercise caution when traveling in the state of Veracruz. The state of Veracruz continues to experience violence among rival criminal organizations. Mexican federal security forces continue to assist state and local security forces in providing security and combating organized crime.

Yucatan: Merida and Chichen Itza are major cities/travel destinations in Yucatan -see map to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Zacatecas: You should defer non-essential travel within the state of Zacatecas to the area bordering the states of Aguascalientes, Coahuila, Durango, and Jalisco and exercise caution in the interior of the state including the city of Zacatecas. The regions of the state bordering Durango and Coahuila as well as the cities of Fresnillo and Fresnillo-Sombrete and surrounding area are particularly dangerous. The northwestern portion of the state of Zacatecas has become notably dangerous and insecure. Robberies and carjackings are occurring with increased frequency and both local authorities and residents have reported a surge in observed TCO activity. This area is remote, and local authorities are unable to regularly patrol it or quickly respond to incidents that occur there. Gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur in the area of the state bordering the state of Jalisco. There have also been reports of roadblocks and false checkpoints on highways between the states of Zacatecas and Jalisco. The city of Fresnillo, the area extending northwest from Fresnillo along Highway 45 (Fresnillo-Sombrete) between Highways 44 and 49, and highway 49 northwards from Fresnillo through Durango and in to Chihuahua are considered dangerous. Extreme caution should be taken when traveling in the remainder of the state. Of particular safety concern are casinos, sportsbooks, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments, which USG personnel may not frequent. USG personnel may not travel outside the City of Zacatecas after dark and must abide by a curfew of 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. within a secured venue.

Further Information

For more detailed information on staying safe in Mexico, please see the State Department's Country Specific Information for Mexico.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the State Department's internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the

United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 001-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). U.S. citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to enroll with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens in Mexico, please contact the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate with responsibility for that person's location in Mexico. For information on the ten U.S. consular districts in Mexico, complete with links to Embassy and Consulate websites, please consult the Mexico U.S. Consular District map. The numbers provided below for the Embassy and Consulates are available around the clock. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. U.S. citizens may also contact the Embassy by e-mail.

Consulates (with consular districts):

- Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua): Paseo de la Victoria 3650, tel. (011)(52)(656) 227-3000.
- Guadalajara (Nayarit, Jalisco, Aguas Calientes, and Colima): Progreso 175, telephone (011)(52)(333) 268-2100.
- Hermosillo (Sinaloa and the southern part of the state of Sonora): Avenida Monterrey 141, telephone (011)(52)(662) 289-3500.
- Matamoros (the southern part of Tamaulipas with the exception of the city of Tampico): Avenida Primera 2002, telephone (011)(52)(868) 812-4402.
- Merida (Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo): Calle 60 no. 338-K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico 97050, telephone (011)(52)(999) 942-5700 or 202-250-3711 (U.S. number).
- Monterrey (Nuevo Leon, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, and the southern part of Coahuila): Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente, telephone (011)(52)(818) 047-3100.
- Nogales (the northern part of Sonora): Calle San Jose, Nogales, Sonora, telephone (011)(52)(631) 311-8150.
- Nuevo Laredo (the northern part of Coahuila and the northwestern part of Tamaulipas): Calle Allende 3330, col. Jardin, telephone (011)(52)(867) 714-0512.
- Tijuana (Baja California Norte and Baja California Sur): Paseo de Las Culturas s/n Mesa de Otay, telephone (011) (52) (664) 977-2000.

All other Mexican states, the Federal District of Mexico City, and the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas, are part of the Embassy's consular district.

Consular Agencies:

- Acapulco: Hotel Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 – Suite 14, telephone (011)(52)(744) 481-0100 or (011)(52)(744) 484-0300.
- Cancún: Blvd. Kukulcan Km 13 ZH Torre La Europea, Despacho 301 Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico C.P. 77500; telephone (011)(52)(998) 883-0272.
- Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en el Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th Ave.) 2nd floor, locales #8 and 9, telephone (011)(52)(987) 872-4574 or, 202-459-4661 (a U.S. number).
- Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa, telephone (011)(52)(755) 553-2100.
- Los Cabos: Las Tiendas de Palmilla Local B221, Carretera Transpeninsular Km. 27.5, San José del Cabo, BCS, Mexico 23406 Telephone: (624) 143-3566 Fax: (624) 143-6750.
- Mazatlán: Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada, telephone (011)(52)(669) 916-5889.
- Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcalá no. 407, interior 20, telephone (011)(52)(951) 514-3054, (011)(52)(951) 516-2853.
- Piedras Negras: Abasolo #211, Zona Centro, Piedras Negras, Coah., Tel. (011)(52)(878) 782-5586.
- Playa del Carmen: "The Palapa," Calle 1 Sur, between Avenida 15 and Avenida 20, telephone (011)(52)(984) 873-0303 or 202-370-6708(a U.S. number).
- Puerto Vallarta: Paradise Plaza, Paseo de los Cocoteros #1, Local #4, Interior #17, Nuevo Vallarta, Nayarit, telephone (011)(52)(322) 222-0069.
- San Luis Potosí: Edificio "Las Terrazas", Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco, telephone: (011)(52)(444) 811-7802/7803.
- San Miguel de Allende: Centro Comercial La Luciernaga, Libramiento Manuel Zavala (Pepe KBZON), telephone (011)(52)(415) 152-2357.

Kenya Travel Warning

Fri, 05 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Kenya. U.S. citizens in Kenya, and those considering travel to Kenya, should evaluate their personal security situation in light of continuing and recently heightened threats from terrorism and the high rate of violent crime in some areas. The levels of risk vary throughout the country. This replaces the Travel Warning of January 14, 2013, to update information about the current security situation.

The U.S. government continues to receive information about potential terrorist threats aimed at U.S., Western, and Kenyan interests in Kenya. Terrorist acts can include suicide operations, bombings, kidnappings, attacks on civil aviation, and attacks on maritime vessels in or near Kenyan ports. Although the pursuit of those responsible for previous terrorist activities continues, many of those involved remain at large and still operate in the region. Travelers should consult the Worldwide Caution for further information and details.

Kenya initiated military action against al-Qaida affiliate al-Shabaab by crossing into Somalia on October 16, 2011, and on June 2, 2012, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) whereby it formally joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Kenyan troops within AMISOM are now actively pursuing al-Shabaab in southeastern Somalia. In response to the Kenyan intervention, al-Shabaab and its sympathizers have conducted retaliatory attacks against civilian and government targets in Kenya.

In the past year and a half, there have been numerous incidents involving shootings, grenades, or other explosive devices in Kenya. At least 125 people died in these attacks, and around 270 people were injured. No U.S. citizens were among the casualties. More than two dozen of these attacks occurred in North Eastern Province, mainly in Dadaab, Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera. Four attacks occurred in Mombasa. Twelve grenade and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks have occurred in Nairobi, illustrating an increase in the number of attacks and an advance in the sophistication of attacks. Targets included police stations and police vehicles, nightclubs and bars, churches, a mosque, a religious gathering, a downtown building of small shops, and a bus station. One of the deadliest attacks occurred in Nairobi on November 18, 2012, when an IED detonated on a passenger bus in Eastleigh, killing ten.

Seventeen people were killed and about 50 people were injured in a deadly attack on July 1, 2012, with two simultaneous assaults on churches in Garissa. Additionally, Kenyan law enforcement has disrupted several terrorist plots, which resulted in the discoveries of weapons caches and other dangerous materials, and the arrests of several individuals.

Multiple kidnappings of Westerners have occurred in Kenya. In September 2011, a British woman was kidnapped and her husband murdered at a coastal resort near the Kenya-Somali border. The British hostage was released in March 2012 after payment of ransom. In October 2011, a French national was kidnapped from a private residence on the popular tourist destination of Lamu Island on Kenya's north coast. She died while in captivity in Somalia. Also in October 2011, two Spanish nationals working for a NGO were kidnapped in a Dadaab refugee camp, in northeastern Kenya. They are still being held. On

June 29, 2012, four international aid workers (from Canada, Pakistan, Norway, and the Philippines) were kidnapped in Dadaab. All were rescued on July 1, 2012.

Following a series of security incidents attributed to violent extremists, including al-Shabaab, the Government of Kenya announced on December 13, 2012 that all urban refugees (primarily Somalis) should relocate to refugee camps. This directive is being challenged in court and is not currently being enforced; however, U.S. citizens of Somali descent should be aware that they may encounter interruptions in their travel due to increased police scrutiny based on this directive. It is very important to carry at all times proof of identity and legal status in Kenya (i.e., valid visa). If you are detained by police or immigration officials, you should request to speak to someone from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

As a result of these recent events and threats, U.S. Embassy personnel are prohibited from traveling to the North Eastern Province, including the cities of El Wak, Wajir, Garissa, Mandera, and Liboi. U.S. Embassy personnel are also restricted from traveling to the coastal area north of Pate Island, including Kiwavu and north to Kiunga on the Kenya/Somalia border.

Although these restrictions do not apply to travelers not associated with the U.S. government, U.S. citizens already in Kenya should take these restrictions into account when planning travel. The Embassy regularly reviews the security of these areas for possible modification.

Clashes occasionally occur in and around Isiolo and Moyale and in 2012 there were numerous instances of sporadic violence and protests elsewhere in the country. Rioting occurred in Mombasa shortly after a local Muslim cleric with alleged ties to al-Shabaab was killed in a drive-by shooting, resulting in the deaths of three policemen and four church burnings. Demonstrations in Kisumu (Western Kenya) following the murder of two prominent Kenyan citizens in October 2012 turned violent, leaving at least four protestors dead. More than 160 people were killed in clashes in late 2012 between two communities in Tana River County, in Kenya's Coast Province. While this violence is not directed at foreigners, protests and ethnic clashes are unpredictable. U.S. citizens are advised to check conditions and monitor local media reports before traveling to these areas.

There are no restrictions on travel to Kenya's most popular tourist destinations such as Masai Mara, Amboseli, Lake Nakuru, Tsavo, Lamu Island, Hell's Gate, Samburu, Mount Kenya, Malindi, and Nairobi. Travelers should keep informed of local developments by following local press, radio, and television reports prior to their visits. Visitors should also consult their hosts, including U.S. and Kenyan business contacts, hotels, tour guides, and travel organizers.

Violent and sometimes fatal criminal attacks, including armed carjackings, grenade attacks, home invasions and burglaries, and kidnappings can occur at any time and in any location, particularly in Nairobi. U.S. citizens, including U.S. Embassy employees, have been victims of such crimes within the past year.

U.S. citizens in Kenya should be extremely vigilant with regard to their personal security, particularly in crowded public places such as clubs, hotels, resorts, shopping centers, restaurants, bus stations, and

places of worship. U.S. citizens should also remain alert in residential areas, at schools, and at outdoor recreational events. U.S. citizens should use commonsense precautions at all times, to include the following practices: avoid crowded transportation venues; visit only legitimate businesses and tourist areas only during daylight hours; use well-marked taxis and be sure to lock vehicle doors and keep windows up; lock all lodging doors and windows; carry minimal amounts of cash and credit cards; do not wear jewelry which attracts undue attention; know emergency phone numbers; do not resist or antagonize armed criminals; and always be aware of your surroundings. These measures can help ensure your travel to Kenya is safe and enjoyable.

U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Kenya are urged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) in order to receive the most up-to-date security information. By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens without internet access may enroll directly with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254) (20) 363-6000; fax (254) (20) 363-6410. In the event of an after-hours emergency, the Embassy duty officer may be contacted at (254) (20) 363-6000. Travelers may also consult the U.S. Embassy Nairobi website for more information.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Kenya, the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts, which are all available on the U.S. Department of State's, Bureau of Consular Affairs website. 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 on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well, or you can download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google play store, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Philippines Travel Warning

Fri, 05 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to the Philippines, in particular to the Sulu Archipelago and the island of Mindanao. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated January 30, 2013, and reflects continuing threats in those areas due to terrorist and insurgent activities.

U.S. citizens should continue to defer non-essential travel to the Sulu Archipelago, due to the high threat of kidnapping of international travelers and violence linked to insurgency and terrorism there.

U.S. citizens should continue to exercise extreme caution if traveling to the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines. Throughout Mindanao, criminal groups have clashed sporadically with the Philippine Armed Forces, particularly in rural areas, and terrorist groups have kidnapped international travelers and carried out bombings that have resulted in injuries and deaths. In Cotabato City, and in the Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces, the government maintains a state of emergency that compels a greater police presence in those areas.

Security and safety conditions in the urban centers of Davao City, General Santos City, and Cagayan de Oro City in Mindanao are generally more controlled. Nevertheless, U.S. Embassy employees must receive special authorization from Embassy security officials to travel to any location in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, including these urban centers.

U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in the Philippines should review the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Philippines, which contains additional information about conditions throughout the country.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. The Department's current message recommending Worldwide Caution reminds U.S. citizens that terrorism can occur anywhere.

We encourage all U.S. citizens in the Philippines to enroll with the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program or at the U.S. Embassy in Manila. By enrolling, you can receive the Embassy's most recent security and safety updates during your trip. Enrolling also ensures that we can reach you, or your designated emergency points of contact, during an emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizens Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017, and you may reach the ACS Section by email at ACSinfoManila@state.gov. The ACS Section's website includes consular information and the most recent messages to the U.S. citizen community in the Philippines.

U.S. citizens traveling in the region are encouraged to stay up to date on conditions across the globe by bookmarking the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and become a fan of the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App through the iTunes store or the Google Play store to have travel information at your fingertips. If you don't have

internet access, current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Egypt Travel Warning

Wed, 03 Jul 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer travel to Egypt and U.S. citizens living in Egypt to depart at this time because of the continuing political and social unrest. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning issued on June 28, 2013.

On July 3, 2013, the Department of State ordered the departure of non-emergency U.S. government personnel and family members from Egypt due to the ongoing political and social unrest.

Political unrest, which intensified prior to the constitutional referendum in December 2012 and the anniversary in 2013 of Egypt's 25th January Revolution, is likely to worsen in the near future due to unrest focused on the first anniversary of the President's assumption of office. Demonstrations have, on occasion, degenerated into violent clashes between police and protesters, and between protesters supporting different factions, resulting in deaths, injuries, and extensive property damage. Participants have thrown rocks and Molotov cocktails and security forces have used tear gas and other crowd control measures against demonstrators. There are numerous reports of the use of firearms as well. While violent protests have occurred in major metropolitan areas, including downtown Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said, the security situation in most tourist centers, including Luxor, Aswan, and Red Sea resorts such as Sharm el Sheikh, continues to be calm. Of specific concern is a rise in gender-based violence in and around protest areas where women have been the specific targets of sexual assault.

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 of the U.S. Embassy after being asked whether he was an American. Additionally, Westerners and U.S. citizens have occasionally been caught in the middle of clashes and demonstrations. U.S. citizens are urged to remain alert to local security developments and to be vigilant regarding their personal security by knowing the locations of police and fire stations, hospitals, and the U.S. Embassy.

If you wish to depart Egypt, you should make plans and depart as soon as possible. The airport is open and commercial flights are still operating, although cancellations may occur. Travelers should check with their airlines prior to their planned travel to verify the flight schedule. There are no plans for charter flights or other U.S. government-sponsored evacuations. U.S. citizens seeking to depart Egypt are responsible for making their own travel arrangements.

The U.S. Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to avoid all demonstrations in Egypt, as even peaceful ones can quickly become violent, and a foreigner could become a target of harassment or worse. Because of the proximity of the U.S. Embassy to Tahrir Square in Cairo, the U.S. Embassy has sometimes been closed to the public on short notice due to violent protests. The Embassy will notify U.S. citizens as quickly as possible of any closing and the types of emergency consular services that will be available. Should security forces block off the area around the U.S. Embassy during demonstrations, U.S. citizens should contact the American Citizens Services section before attempting to come to the U.S. Embassy during that time. U.S. citizens are urged to remain alert to local security developments

and to carry identification and, if moving about alone, a cell phone or other means of communication that works in Egypt.

The U.S. Embassy restricts its employees and their family members from traveling to specific areas listed in the Country Specific Information Sheet and advises all U.S. citizens to do the same. We continue to urge U.S. citizens to stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Please check our Country Specific Information Sheet for further security guidance.

Unless otherwise indicated in a public announcement, the U.S. Embassy is open for all routine American Citizens Services by appointment. U.S. citizens needing emergency assistance do not need an appointment. Visit the Embassy website to check the latest changes to Embassy hours or services. U.S. citizens with routine phone inquiries may call the Embassy's American Citizens Services section at 2797-2301, Sunday to Thursday from 9:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. For emergencies after business hours and on weekends and holidays, U.S. citizens can contact the Embassy Duty Officer via the Embassy switchboard on 2797-3300. The U.S. Embassy is closed on U.S. federal holidays. U.S. citizens in Egypt are encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State's Internet website at travel.state.gov where the Worldwide Caution, Country Specific Information for Egypt, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. Download our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes or Google Play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). The U.S. Department of State can receive information about U.S. citizens who are in Egypt and may be in need of assistance through email at EgyptEmergencyUSC@state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Egypt is located at 5 Tawfik Diab Street (formerly known as Latin America Street), Garden City, Cairo. For emergencies after business hours and on weekends and holidays, U.S. citizens can contact the Embassy Duty Officer via the Embassy switchboard on 2797-3300.

Somalia Travel Warning

Fri, 21 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Somalia. This replaces the Travel Warning dated December 26, 2012, to update information on security concerns.

There is no U.S. Embassy or other formal U.S. diplomatic presence in Somalia. Consequently, the U.S. government is not in a position to assist or effectively provide services to U.S. citizens in Somalia. In light of this and continuous security threats, the U.S. government recommends that you avoid all travel to Somalia.

The security situation inside Somalia remains unstable and dangerous. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated their intent to attack the Somali authorities, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and other non-military targets. Kidnapping, bombings, murder, illegal roadblocks, banditry, and other violent incidents and threats to U.S. citizens and other foreigners can occur in any region. In addition, there is a particular threat to foreigners in places where large crowds gather and westerners frequent, including airports, government buildings, and shopping areas. Inter-clan and inter-factional fighting flares up with little or no warning. This has resulted in the deaths of countless Somali nationals and the displacement of more than one million people.

In February 2012, Al-Shabaab announced that it had merged with Al-Qaida. Al-Shabaab-planned assassinations, suicide bombings, and indiscriminate armed attacks in civilian populated areas are frequent in Somalia. While Mogadishu and parts of south/central Somalia are now under Somali government control with the military support of African Union forces, al-Shabaab continues to demonstrate the capability to carry out attacks in government-controlled territory with particular emphasis on targeting government facilities. On June 19, 2013, Islamist militants carried out a deadly assault on the main U.N. compound in Mogadishu killing at least 17 people. African Union (AU) soldiers restored order after a 90 minute gun battle. On April 14, a combined suicide bombing/armed assault by al-Shabaab gunmen killed 29 and wounded 58. On May 5, an attack on a government convoy carrying foreign diplomats killed eight bystanders. In addition to larger attacks, assassinations, grenade throwing, and kidnappings remain a daily threat in Mogadishu and elsewhere.

Pirates and other criminals have specifically targeted and kidnapped foreigners working in Somalia. In October 2011, a U.S. citizen aid worker living in Somalia was kidnapped, and in January 2012, another U.S. citizen was kidnapped while on work-related travel in Somalia. In both cases, as well as in recent kidnappings of other westerners, the victims took precautionary measures by hiring local security personnel, but those hired to protect them appear to have played a key role in the abductions. A strong familiarity with Somalia and/or extensive prior travel to the region does not reduce travel risk. U.S. citizens contemplating travel to Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland, are advised to obtain kidnap and recovery insurance, as well as medical evacuation insurance, prior to travel.

Additionally, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid sailing close to the coast of Somalia as attacks have occurred as far as 1,000 nautical miles off the coast in international waters. Merchant vessels, fishing boats, and recreational craft all risk seizure by pirates and having their crews held for ransom in the

waters off the Horn of Africa, especially in the international waters near Somalia. Somali pirates captured and killed four U.S. citizens aboard their boat on February 22, 2011. If transit around the Horn of Africa is necessary, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, maintain good communications contact at all times, and follow the guidance provided by the Maritime Security Center – Horn of Africa (MSC-HOA). You should consult the Maritime Administration's Horn of Africa Piracy page for information on maritime advisories, self-protection measures, and naval forces in the region.

U.S. citizens who choose to travel to Somalia despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) in order to receive the most up-to-date security information and be included in our emergency communication system. Travelers to Somalia should enroll with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. U.S. citizens traveling by sea to the area of high threat are urged to inform MSC-HOA by emailing postmaster@mschoa.org, with the subject line 'Yacht Vessel Movement.' The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254)(20) 363-6000; after-hours emergencies (254)(20) 363-6170. The mailing address is P.O. Box 606 Village Market 00621, Nairobi, Kenya.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Somalia, the Worldwide Caution, and the International Maritime Piracy Fact Sheet, which are located on the Department of State's website. 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 on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google play store, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Travel Warning

Wed, 19 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The security environment remains complex in Israel and the West Bank, and U.S. citizens need to be aware of the continuing risks of travel to these areas, particularly to areas described in this Travel Warning, where there are heightened tensions and security risks. The Department of State strongly warns U.S. citizens against travel to the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, it cautions them that, with the exception of Jericho and Bethlehem, personal travel to the West Bank by U.S. government employees is prohibited. This replaces the Travel Warning issued December 20, 2012, to update information on the general security environment.

Over three million foreign citizens, including hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens, safely visit Israel and the West Bank each year for study, tourism, and business. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority make considerable efforts to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations. Nonetheless, U.S. citizens should also take into consideration that U.S. government personnel are not permitted to use public buses due to past attacks on public transportation and that U.S. government personnel must notify the Embassy's Regional Security Officer before traveling in the areas surrounding Gaza and south of Beersheva, as well as to the Golan Heights. Furthermore, U.S. government personnel are restricted from conducting personal travel to most parts of the West Bank.

Major Metropolitan Areas in Israel

Personal safety conditions in major metropolitan areas, including Tel Aviv and Haifa and their surrounding regions, are comparable to or better than those in other major global cities. Tourists, students, and businesspeople from around the world are welcome. Visitors should observe appropriate personal security practices to reduce their vulnerability to crime, particularly late at night or in isolated or economically depressed areas, including in the countryside. Visitors are advised to avoid large gatherings or demonstrations and keep current with local news, which is available through numerous English language sources.

U.S. citizen employees of the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General and their families are prohibited from using public buses and their associated terminals and bus stops throughout the country. On November 21, 2012, a bomb exploded on a public bus in downtown Tel Aviv, causing several injuries. Additionally, between November 15 and 20, 2012, long-range rockets launched from Gaza reached as far north as Tel Aviv. In light of the threat of rocket or missile attacks, visitors and U.S. citizens living in Israel should also familiarize themselves with the location of the nearest bomb shelter (often referred to as a secure or protected room). Since the early 1990s, the Government of Israel has required that all new homes and buildings include a designated shelter. Visitors should seek information on shelters from hotel staff or building managers. Additionally, the government of Israel has had a long-standing policy of issuing gas masks to its citizens and is currently in the process of issuing replacement masks, an initiative that began in 2010. Visitors and foreign residents in Israel are not issued masks and must individually procure them, if desired. For further emergency preparedness guidance, please visit the website of the Government of Israel's Home Front Command, which provides information on how to

choose a secure space in a home or apartment as well as includes a page listing the types of protective kits (gas masks) issued by the government of Israel to its citizens.

Gaza Vicinity

Travelers to areas of Israel in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip should be aware of the risks presented by small arms fire, anti-tank weapons, rockets, and mortars launched from inside Gaza toward Israeli cities and towns. These attacks can come with little warning. Some rockets have traveled more than 40 km (24 miles) from Gaza and landed as far north as Yavne and Gadera and as far east as Beersheva. Gunfire, rocket, and mortar attacks in the regions bordering Gaza have been a regular occurrence. Visitors to these areas should remain aware of their surroundings and of the location of bomb shelters and should take note of announcements and guidance provided by the Home Front Command.

Travelers should also be aware of the heightened state of alert maintained by Israeli authorities along Israel's border with Egypt since an August 18, 2011, terrorist attack that killed eight and injured nearly 40 people along Route 12, north of Eilat. There have been subsequent cross-border incidents from Egypt including rocket attacks and ground incursions, such as an attack that took place on August 5, 2012.

Due to the threats in these areas, U.S. government personnel must notify the Embassy's Regional Security Office in advance if they plan to visit the vicinity of the Gaza Strip or south of Beersheva. Added security measures, such as the use of armored vehicles, are commonly used for such travel. U.S. citizens considering travel overland into Egypt from Israel should review the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Egypt.

Northern Israel

Rocket attacks into Israel from Lebanon have occurred without warning along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Tensions have increased along portions of the Disengagement Zone with Syria in the Golan Heights as a result of the internal conflict occurring in that country. Sporadic gunfire has occurred along the border region. There have been several incidents of mortar shells and light arms fire impacting on the Israeli-controlled side of the zone as a result of spillover from the fighting in Syria. Travelers should be aware that cross-border gunfire could occur without warning. Furthermore, there are active land mines in areas of the Golan Heights, so visitors should walk only on established roads or trails. Due to the sporadic, unpredictable nature of the Syrian conflict in these areas, U.S. government personnel must notify the Embassy's Regional Security Office in advance if they plan to visit the Golan Heights.

Jerusalem

U.S. citizens should be aware of the possibility of isolated street protests, particularly within the Old City and areas around Salah Ed-Din Street, Damascus Gate, Silwan, and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. Travelers should exercise caution at religious sites on holy days, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. U.S. government employees are prohibited from entering the Old City on Fridays during the month of Ramadan due to congestion and security-related access restrictions.

U.S. government employees are also prohibited from transiting Independence Park in central Jerusalem during the hours of darkness due to reports of criminal activity.

In October 2012, a tour bus operating on an established route within East Jerusalem was the target of a stone-throwing attack that resulted in injury to a U.S. citizen tourist. Such attacks, however, are not common in the city of Jerusalem.

In mid-November 2012, long-range rockets launched from Gaza in the direction of Jerusalem reached as far as the outskirts of Bethlehem.

The West Bank

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to exercise caution when traveling to the West Bank. Demonstrations and violent incidents can occur without warning, and vehicles are regularly targeted by rocks, Molotov cocktails, and gunfire on West Bank roads. U.S. citizens can be caught in the middle of potentially dangerous situations, and some U.S. citizens involved in political demonstrations in the West Bank have sustained serious injuries. The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens, for their own safety, avoid demonstrations. During periods of unrest, the Israeli Government may restrict access to the West Bank, and some areas may be placed under curfew. All persons in areas under curfew should remain indoors to avoid arrest or injury. Security conditions in the West Bank may hinder the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens.

Personal travel in the West Bank by U.S. government personnel and their families is permitted to the towns of Bethlehem and Jericho and to transit the West Bank using Routes 1, 443, and 90. Personal travel is also permitted to Qumran off Route 90 by the Dead Sea, as are stops at roadside facilities along routes 1 and 90. All other personal travel in the West Bank, unless specifically authorized for official purposes, is prohibited.

The Gaza Strip

The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip, which is under the control of Hamas, a foreign terrorist organization. U.S. citizens in Gaza are advised to depart immediately. The security environment within Gaza, including its border with Egypt and its seacoast, is dangerous and volatile. Exchanges of fire between the Israel Defense Forces and militant groups in Gaza take place regularly, and civilians have been caught in the crossfire in the past. Although the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt allows for some passenger travel, prior coordination with local authorities -- which could take days or weeks to process -- is generally required, and crossing points may be closed for days or weeks. Travelers who enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing must also exit through the Rafah crossing, and those entering the Gaza Strip may not be able to depart at a time of their choosing. Because U.S. citizen employees of the U.S. government are not allowed to enter the Gaza Strip or have contact with Hamas, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens is extremely limited.

Entry/Exit Difficulties

Some U.S. citizens holding Israeli nationality, possessing a Palestinian identity card, or of Arab or Muslim origin have experienced significant difficulties in entering or exiting Israel or the West Bank. Such U.S. citizens planning to travel to Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza should consult the detailed information concerning entry and exit difficulties in the Country Specific Information.

Contact the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy for information and assistance in Israel, the Golan Heights, and ports of entry at Ben Gurion Airport, Haifa Port, the northern (Jordan River/Sheikh Hussein) and southern (Arava) border crossings connecting Israel and Jordan, and the border crossings between Israel and Egypt. An embassy officer can be contacted at (972) (3) 519-7575 from Monday through Friday during working hours. The after-hours emergency number is (972) (3) 519-7551.

Contact the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem for information and assistance in Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, at (972) (2) 630-4000 from Monday through Friday during working hours. The after-hours emergency number is (972) (2) 622-7250.

For More Information

Occasional public messages issued by the Embassy and the Consulate General are e-mailed to registered U.S. citizens and are posted on State Department websites to highlight time-sensitive security concerns. To receive such messages, travelers should register with the Embassy or the Consulate General via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program and visit the Consular Affairs website.

Current information on travel and security in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. For additional and more in-depth information about specific aspects of travel to these areas, travelers should consult the Country Specific Information for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza and the Worldwide Caution. Travelers transiting or visiting Jordan and Egypt during their trip to Israel should also consult their respective Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and Country Specific Information, all of which are available on the Department of State's Consular Affairs website.

Honduras Travel Warning

Mon, 17 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens that the crime and violence levels in Honduras remain critically high. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning dated November 21, 2012, to include additional information about reported kidnappings, information for victims of crime, as well as the Honduran police force's ability to respond to reports of crime, and also serves to update contact information.

Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens visit Honduras each year for study, tourism, business, and volunteer work without incident. However, crime and violence are serious problems throughout the country and the Government of Honduras lacks sufficient resources to address these issues. Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world. These threats have increased substantially over the past several years and remain high. Incidents can occur anywhere.

U.S. citizens do not appear to be targeted based on their nationality. Crimes are committed against expatriates at levels similar to those committed against locals. Most resort areas and tourist destinations have lower levels of crime and violence than other areas of the country, though still high by international standards. Moreover, tourists traveling with group tours report fewer criminal incidents. In 2012, the government agreed to increase police presence in areas frequented by tourists, such as the Copan Mayan ruins and Roatan. The government also established special tourist police forces in Copan and Roatan and is evaluating this option in other locations. Additionally, major hotels and other tourist installations have increased security, including with the help of police, in response to the crime epidemic. These efforts are in various stages of implementation.

A majority of serious crimes are never solved; of the 18 murders committed against U.S. citizens since January 2011, police have closed none. Members of the Honduran National Police have been known to engage in criminal activity, including murder. The Government of Honduras lacks sufficient resources to properly investigate and prosecute cases, and to deter violent crime. In practice, this means police may take hours to arrive at the scene of a violent crime or not respond at all. The police often lack vehicles or fuel to respond to calls for assistance. As a result, criminals operate with a high degree of impunity throughout Honduras. The Honduran government is in the early stages of substantial reforms to its criminal justice institutions.

Transnational criminal organizations conduct narcotics trafficking and other unlawful activities throughout the country and use violence to control drug trafficking routes and carry out other criminal activity. Other criminals, acting both individually and in gangs in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, commit crimes such as murder, kidnapping, carjacking, armed robbery, rapes, and other aggravated assaults.

Kidnappings and disappearances are an ongoing concern throughout the country. Kidnapping affects both the local and expatriate communities, with victims sometimes paying large ransoms for the prospect of release. Kidnapping is believed to be underreported. Since January 1, 2012, four cases of

U.S. citizens being kidnapped were reported to the U.S. Embassy. The kidnapping victims were all subsequently released.

U.S. citizens should be vigilant of their surroundings at all times and in all locations, especially when entering or exiting their homes, hotels, cars, garages, schools, and workplaces. Whenever possible, U.S. citizens should travel in groups of two or more persons; avoid wearing jewelry and carrying large sums of money or displaying cash, ATM/credit cards, or other valuables; and avoid walking at night in most areas of Honduras or walking alone on beaches, historic ruins, and trails. Incidents of crime along roads, including carjacking and kidnapping, are common in Honduras. Motorists should avoid traveling at night and always drive with their doors locked to deter potential robberies at traffic lights and on congested downtown streets.

The location and timing of criminal activity is unpredictable. We recommend that all travelers exercise caution when traveling anywhere in Honduras. However, certain areas of the country demonstrate higher levels of criminal activity than others. Honduran “departments” (a geographic designation similar to U.S. states) with homicide rates higher than the national average of 85.5 per 100,000 in 2012 include:

Atlántida (including La Ceiba)
Colón
Comayagua
Copán
Cortés (including San Pedro Sula)
Francisco Morazán (including Tegucigalpa)
Ocotepeque
Olancho
Yoro

There are not reliable statistics for the department of Gracias a Dios, however travelers to this area should note that it is a remote location with limited government services and frequent presence of narcotics traffickers.

For more detailed information regarding personal security, please see the State Department's Country Specific Information for Honduras. For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Web site, where the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. U.S. citizens living or traveling in Honduras are strongly encouraged to sign up for the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to obtain updated information on travel and security within Honduras.

If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime in Honduras, you should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa. If your passport is stolen, the U.S. Embassy can help you replace it. For violent crimes such as assault and rape, the U.S. Embassy can help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members and friends, and help them send you money. Although the investigation and prosecution of crime are the responsibility of local authorities, U.S. consular officers can provide guidance on the local criminal justice process and find you an attorney if needed. The U.S. Embassy does not provide private security for citizens visiting Honduras.

The Embassy is located on Avenida La Paz in Tegucigalpa and can be reached by telephone at (504) 2236-9320/2238-5114 or by fax at (504) 2236-9037. For after-hours emergencies, please call (504) 2236-8497. The Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit can be reached directly by telephone at (504) 2238-5114 ext. 4400 and by fax at (504) 2238-4357 or by e-mail at usahonduras@state.gov. The American Citizen Services Unit's Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acstegucigalpa>, is another resource for updated security information. Travelers may register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. Travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States or outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should consult the U.S. Embassy in Honduras. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs Web site, which contains Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google play store, to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Consular Agency in San Pedro Sula, which accepts passport applications and performs notarial services, is located on the eleventh floor of the Banco Atlantida building (across from Central Park), telephone (504) 2558-1580. The agency is open Monday-Wednesday-Friday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. In case of emergency in the San Pedro Sula/north coast area, please contact the Embassy in Tegucigalpa at (504) 2236-9320/2238-5114, which will forward the call to the consular agent if necessary.

Chad Travel Warning

Tue, 11 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Chad and recommends citizens avoid all travel to eastern Chad and border regions. Because of security concerns, the U.S. Embassy in Chad reviews all proposed travel by official U.S. government personnel to areas outside the capital, N'Djamena, and its immediate surroundings before approving such arrangements. U.S. citizens affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts similarly should review security precautions and consider measures to mitigate exposure to violent crime and other threats. U.S. citizens residing in Chad should exercise caution throughout the country. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Chad dated November 21, 2012, to update U.S. citizens on the current security situation in Chad.

The U.S. Embassy in Chad operates as a fully accompanied post, meaning minor dependents of U.S. government employees are permitted to travel to or accompany family members to N'Djamena. The security situation in Chad has slowly but steadily improved since the conclusion of an effective peace agreement between Sudan and Chad in early 2010. You should note, however, that despite recent stability, the security environment has been historically volatile and could still deteriorate unexpectedly. The Embassy, therefore, strongly recommends that all U.S. citizens in Chad exercise caution and be prepared to implement their personal evacuation or safe haven plans on short notice should the situation warrant. U.S. citizens in Chad should closely monitor news media and register with the U.S. Embassy N'Djamena as well as monitor its website.

The frequency of violent crime in rural Chad is highly variable. Incidents of robbery, carjacking at gunpoint, and murder have been reported throughout the country. While there have been no kidnapping for ransom incidents in Chad since 2010, regional trends suggest this still could be a potential threat in the future. Violence is occasionally associated with car accidents and other events causing injury to Chadian nationals. Robbery victims have been beaten and killed, surgeons conducting unsuccessful medical interventions have been threatened with bodily harm, and law enforcement/military officials have been implicated in violent crime. In addition, although the last active rebel group was recently disarmed, armed groups might reemerge with little warning. The Government of Chad has few resources to guarantee the safety of visitors in rural Chad.

U.S. citizens affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts in rural Chad are strongly urged to adhere closely to the policies and procedures of their host organizations to mitigate risks from violent crime. The Government of Chad requires all individuals traveling to or residing in areas hosting refugee populations in Chad to obtain movement permits issued by the Ministry of Territorial Administration in N'Djamena, and to register in Abéché upon arrival in eastern Chad. U.S. citizens intending to enter Cameroon, Central African Republic, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, or Sudan from Chad should consult the Department's Travel Warnings for those countries and obtain any requisite visas or travel permits prior to traveling.

The U.S. Embassy communicates with U.S. citizens residing in Chad through its warden system; however in the case of an emergency, including an evacuation, the support that can be offered to those in remote and rural areas is limited. All U.S. citizens affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts in eastern

Chad should have an evacuation plan developed with the United Nations agency coordinating their work on the ground.

Medical services in Chad are extremely limited. All U.S. citizens entering Chad are strongly encouraged to verify their coverage extends to traveling within Chad – including medical evacuation – prior to arrival. SOS International and Europ Assistance are the only two clinics in Chad that offer an international standard of care and provide medical evacuation services. The preceding information is provided **for informational purposes only** and in no way constitutes an endorsement, expressed or implied, by the United States Department of State.

Embassy updates are available at the U.S. Embassy N'Djamena web site. The current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information as well as global updates are available at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs. 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. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the GooglePlay store, to have travel information at your fingertips.

U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to Chad are encouraged to inform the Department prior to traveling through enrollment in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By enrolling in STEP, the Department can keep travelers apprised of important safety and security announcements. Enrolling in STEP will also make for easier communication in the event of an emergency. Travelers should remember to keep all of their information in STEP up to date; it is particularly important to include a current phone number and e-mail address in order to receive the Embassy's emergency messages.

The U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena is located on Avenue Felix Eboué in N'Djamena and the mailing address is BP 413 N'Djamena Chad. The Embassy telephone numbers are 235 2251-62-11, 2251-70-09, 2251-77-59, 2251-90-52, 2251-92-18, and 2251-92-33. The Embassy fax number is 235 2251-56-54.

For after-hours emergencies, U.S. citizens in Chad should call 235 6662-2100 and ask to speak with the duty officer.

Libya Travel Warning

Fri, 07 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Libya and strongly advises against all but essential travel to Tripoli and all travel to Benghazi, Bani Walid, and southern Libya, including border areas and the regions of Sabha and Kufra. Because of ongoing instability and violence, the Department's ability to provide consular services to U.S. citizens in these regions of Libya is extremely limited. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning dated May 9, 2013.

On May 8, 2013, the Department of State ordered the departure of a limited number of U.S. government personnel from Libya following the seizure of Libyan government buildings in Tripoli by armed groups in a dispute over a law regarding officials of the former regime. Since that time, tensions have eased, and therefore; as of June 6, the U.S. Embassy in Libya is no longer on ordered departure status but remains an unaccompanied post due to security concerns.

The security situation in Libya remains unpredictable. Sporadic episodes of civil unrest have occurred throughout the country. U.S. citizens should avoid areas of demonstrations and exercise caution if in the vicinity of any large gatherings, protests, or demonstrations, as even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling to, or remaining in, Libya should use caution and limit nonessential travel within the country, make their own contingency emergency plans, and maintain security awareness at all times.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Libya enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

The Embassy's website includes consular information and the most recent messages for U.S. citizens in Libya. U.S. citizens in need of emergency assistance should call 091-379-4560 within Libya or 218-91-379-4560 if dialing from outside of Libya.

For information on "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis," please visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Emergencies and Crisis link. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

For further information, U.S. citizens should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Libya. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and Google play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Nigeria Travel Warning

Mon, 03 Jun 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nigeria and recommends that U.S. citizens avoid all travel to Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states because of the proclamation on May 14, 2013, by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of States of Emergency in those three states. The ability of the Mission to provide assistance to U.S. citizens in those states remains severely limited. The Department also continues to recommend against all but essential travel to the following states due to the risk of kidnappings, robberies, and other armed attacks: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The Department also warns against travel to the Gulf of Guinea because of the threat of piracy. Based on safety and security risk assessments, the Embassy maintains restrictions for travel by U.S. officials to all northern Nigerian states (in addition to those listed above); officials must receive advance clearance by the U.S. Mission for any travel deemed as mission-essential. U.S. citizens should be aware that extremists could expand their operations beyond northern Nigeria to the country's middle and southern states. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Nigeria dated December 21, 2012.

An extremist group based in northeast Nigeria known as Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for many attacks, mainly in northern Nigeria, which have killed or wounded thousands of people during the past three years. Multiple Suicide Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIED) targeted churches, government installations, educational institutions, and entertainment venues in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Taraba, and Yobe states.

Ansaru, an internationally-focused jihadist group considered an offshoot of Boko Haram, has operated in Nigeria since 2012. It has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and execution of seven foreign nationals in Bauchi in early 2013, the kidnapping of a French national in Katsina in December 2012, and a November 2012 prison break at the headquarters of the Nigerian Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Abuja.

In 2013, extremists have also targeted both Nigerians and foreign nationals involved in polio eradication efforts in northern Nigeria. Several agencies that have partnered with the United States government in the field of public health development in northern Nigeria have curtailed their activities in response to these threats. Furthermore, U.S. citizen missionaries in northern Nigeria have received specific written threats to their safety and well-being, typically in the form of anonymously-distributed "night letters" (covertly-distributed anonymous threat letters intended to frighten intended victims).

On October 1, 2012, more than 50 students died in attacks in Adamawa State. Assailants attacked several drinking establishments in Bauchi, Taraba, and Kaduna in September and October 2012. Extremists targeted churches in Bauchi, Kaduna, and Kogi in July and August 2012. They also attacked police stations and markets in Sokoto in July 2012. From July 6 to 8, sectarian violence claimed over 100 lives in the Jos metropolitan area and villages in Plateau State. In July, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded in the parking lot of an Abuja shopping center, and in June, an IED exploded outside a nightclub in Abuja. The June 17, 2012, attacks on three churches in the state of Kaduna led to violence

throughout the state. At least 10 people died and an additional 78 sustained injuries in the ensuing riots, as groups barricaded roads, burned mosques, and used machetes to maim and kill. In response to the violence, the Kaduna state government imposed a 24-hour curfew and deployed additional security forces to restore peace; however, violence between Christians and Muslims continued throughout the week. In April 2012, assailants attacked Theatre Hall at Bayero University, Kano, with IEDs and weapons. Also in April 2012, VBIEDs simultaneously exploded at the offices of "This Day" newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna.

In December 2011, the President of Nigeria declared states of emergency in 15 local government areas in the states of Borno, Niger, Plateau, and Yobe. On May 14, 2013, the President of Nigeria extended states of emergency throughout Borno and Yobe and added Adamawa state to the list in response to intensifying violence between extremists and government forces. According to the government of Nigeria, the declaration of a state of emergency gives the government sweeping powers to search and arrest without warrants. Several states in the north remain under curfews, which change frequently. All U.S. citizens should remain aware of current situations including curfews, travel restrictions, and states of emergency in the areas in which they live or plan to visit. The news media regularly disseminates this information, but the situation can change with very little notice. U.S. citizens in Nigeria should take the time to find out such information for their areas.

Boko Haram also claimed credit for the June 2011 bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters building and the August 2011 suicide bombing at the United Nations Headquarters Building, both in Abuja.

Kidnappings remain a security concern throughout the country. Since the beginning of 2013, several high-profile kidnappings have occurred. In March 2013, kidnappers abducted a foreign national in the upscale Victoria Island neighborhood of Lagos. As noted above, in February 2013, Ansaru extremists kidnapped and later executed seven foreign nationals in Bauchi state. Extremists also abducted a family of seven French nationals in northern Cameroon in February, moved them to northern Nigeria, and held them for over one month before releasing them. In 2012, criminals abducted six foreign nationals, including three U.S. citizens, in Kwara, Imo, Enugu, Delta, and Kano states. Kidnappings and violent attacks against foreign nationals and Nigerian police forces in Lagos State and the Niger Delta region continued to affect personal security for those traveling in these areas. Criminals or militants have abducted foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, from off-shore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds, and public roadways. Nine foreign nationals have died in connection with these abductions, including three killed by their captors during military-led raids. Local authorities and international corporations operating in Nigeria assert that the number of kidnapping incidents throughout Nigeria remain under-reported.

Violent crimes occur throughout the country. In March 2013, armed gunmen attacked a money changing operation in the parking lot of Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) in Lagos, risking the lives of those at the nearby arrival/departure area of one of the busiest international airports in Africa. U.S. citizen visitors and residents have experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, car-jackings, rapes, kidnappings, and extortion. Home invasions also remain a serious threat, with armed robbers accessing even guarded compounds by scaling perimeter walls, following residents or visitors,

or subduing guards to gain entry to homes or apartments. Armed robbers in Lagos have also accessed waterfront compounds by boat. U.S. citizens, as well as Nigerians and other foreign nationals, have fallen victim to armed robberies at banks and grocery stores and on airport roads during both daylight and evening hours. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all and provide little or no investigative support to victims. U.S. citizens, Nigerians, and other foreign nationals have experienced harassment and shakedowns at checkpoints and during encounters with Nigerian law enforcement officials. The Department advises against traveling outside of major cities after dark because of crime and road safety concerns. Attacks by pirates off the coast of Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea have increased substantially in recent years. Armed gangs have boarded both commercial and private vessels to rob travelers. The Nigerian Navy has limited capacity to respond to criminal acts at sea.

Beginning in September 2012, extremists attacked cellular telephone towers in northern Nigeria, damaging over 50 towers and degrading cellular telephone and internet communications nationwide. Additional attacks could further weaken the ability of citizens to communicate through cellular telephones and the internet. Landline telephone communications in Nigeria remain extremely limited. U.S. citizens should attempt to arrange for multiple means of communication during potential emergencies.

Nigeria's erratic electricity grid does not meet the country's power needs, with frequent power outages that sometimes occur even in highly-sensitive locations. In March 2013, the international airport in Lagos suffered multiple nighttime power outages that lasted several minutes each, leaving the runways in total darkness and forcing at least one inbound flight to abort a landing attempt while on final approach.

The security situation in the country remains fluid and unpredictable. The U.S. Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens in Nigeria to consider their own personal security and to keep personal safety in the forefront of their planning.

The Department strongly advises U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Nigeria to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). U.S. citizens without internet access may enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja is located at: Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Central District Area. The Embassy is open Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos is located at: 2 Walter Carrington Crescent, Victoria Island. The Consulate is open Monday-Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos for up-to-date information on any restrictions. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja can be reached by telephone, including after-hours emergencies, at 234(9) 461-4000. The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos can be reached by telephone, including after-hours emergencies, at 234(1) 460-3600 or 234 (1) 460-3400.

Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or a regular toll line at-1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries.

These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). You can also stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution . Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.

Iran Travel Warning

Fri, 24 May 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of travel to Iran. Dual national Iranian-American citizens may encounter difficulty in departing Iran. U.S. citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and carefully consider nonessential travel. This replaces the Travel Warning for Iran issued December 7, 2012 to update information on the current security situation in Iran.

Some elements in Iran remain hostile to the United States. As a result, U.S. citizens may be subject to harassment or arrest while traveling or residing in Iran. Since 2009, Iranian authorities have prevented the departure, in some cases for several months, of a number of Iranian-American citizens, including journalists and academics, who traveled to Iran for personal or professional reasons. Iranian authorities also have unjustly detained or imprisoned U.S. citizens on various charges, including espionage and posing a threat to national security. U.S. citizens of Iranian origin should consider the risk of being targeted by authorities before planning travel to Iran. Iranian authorities deny the U.S. Interests Section in Tehran access to imprisoned dual national Iranian-American citizens because Iranian authorities consider them to be solely Iranian citizens; access to U.S. citizens without dual nationality is often denied as well.

The Iranian government continues to repress some minority religious and ethnic groups, including Christians, Baha'i, Arabs, Kurds, Azeris, and others. Consequently, some areas within the country where these minorities reside, including the Baluchistan border area near Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Kurdish northwest of the country, and areas near the Iraqi border, remain unsafe. Iranian authorities have detained and harassed U.S. citizens of Iranian origin. Former Muslims who have converted to other religions, religious activists, and persons who encourage Muslims to convert are subject to arrest and prosecution.

The U.S. government does not have diplomatic or consular relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and therefore cannot provide protection or routine consular services to U.S. citizens in Iran. The Swiss government, acting through its Embassy in Tehran, serves as protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran. The range of consular services provided by the U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy is limited and may require significantly more processing time than at U.S. Embassies or Consulates. The Iranian government does not recognize dual citizenship and will not allow the Swiss to provide protective services for U.S. citizens who are also Iranian nationals.

Our ability to assist U.S. citizens in Iran in the event of an emergency is extremely limited. U.S. citizens in Iran should ensure that they have updated documentation at all times and make their own plans in the event of an emergency. For more information, see "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis" at the Department's website. U.S. citizens who travel or reside in Iran are strongly encouraged to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. U.S. citizens may also enroll in person at the U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy, located at No. 39, Shahid Mousavi (Golestan 5th), Pasdaran, Tehran. The telephone numbers for the U.S. Interests Section are (

98) (21)2279-3912, (98) (21) 2279-3697,(98) (21) 2254-2178, and (98) (21) 2256-5273, fax (98) (21) 2258-0432, email: tie.vertretung@eda.admin.ch, website: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/tehran>.

U.S. citizens should also review the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Iran and stay up to date by bookmarking the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. You may follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well; however, both Twitter and Facebook are filtered in Iran and will not be accessible without a virtual private network (VPN). If you don't have internet access, current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Mauritania Travel Warning

Tue, 21 May 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Mauritania, and urges those who travel to Mauritania to exercise extreme caution because of activities by terrorist groups in the region, including al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM continues to demonstrate its intent and ability to conduct attacks against foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens. This replaces the Travel Warning for Mauritania, issued November 30, 2012, to update information on security incidents and remind travelers of security concerns.

The U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott recommends against all non-essential travel to the border regions of Guidimagha, the Hodh El Charghi and Hodh El Gharbi regions of southeastern Mauritania, the eastern half of the Assaba region (east of Kiffa), the eastern half of the Tagant region (east of Tidjika), the eastern half of the Adrar region (east of Chinguetti), and the Zemmour region of northern Mauritania because of the security risk and the threat of kidnapping to Westerners by terrorist groups.

As noted in the Department of State's Worldwide Caution, AQIM has been designated as a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union.

As a result of Western involvement in counterterrorism efforts, AQIM has declared its intention to attack Western targets. AQIM attempts at retaliatory attacks against Western targets of opportunity cannot be discounted. AQIM-affiliated support systems for logistics and information remain present in Mauritania and maintain a capability to conduct attacks. This, coupled with the influx of tens of thousands of Malian refugees into Mauritania, presents additional safety and security concerns.

AQIM and terrorists believed to be affiliated with AQIM have been operating in Mauritania since at least 2005. Actions include kidnapping and murder of Western tourists, aid workers, and Mauritanian soldiers, as well as attacks on foreign diplomatic missions in Mauritania. This culminated in the June 2009 attempted kidnapping and murder of a private U.S. citizen in the capital city of Nouakchott.

Since 2009, AQIM continues to threaten Westerners. A French citizen was kidnapped in southwest Mali, near the border with Mauritania, in November 2012. AQIM has also focused its actions on Mauritanian military installations and personnel. The Mauritanian government continues to maintain a strong stance against AQIM. In August 2010, a suicide bomber attacked a Mauritanian military barracks in Nema. In February 2011, Mauritanian security forces successfully prevented a car bombing in the capital city, Nouakchott, by intercepting and destroying a vehicle containing large quantities of explosives. In July 2011, AQIM attacked a military base in Bassiknou, near Nema, in southeastern Mauritania. In December 2011, AQIM abducted a Mauritanian gendarme from his post near the eastern border with Mali.

As a result of safety and security concerns, some NGOs, private aid organizations, and Peace Corps withdrew staff and/or temporarily suspended operations in Mauritania. Peace Corps officially closed its program in July 2011. Faith-based organizations operating in Mauritania, or individuals perceived to be proselytizing, may be particularly targeted.

Travel by U.S. Embassy staff members outside of Nouakchott requires advance approval from the U.S. Embassy's security office. Travel by U.S. Embassy staff is subject to cancellation at any time. Travel to the eastern half of Mauritania occurs only with Mauritanian government escorts.

U.S. citizens should remain aware of their surroundings at all times and maintain good personal security practices, including always locking their homes and cars, varying routes and times of travel, and maintaining a low profile by not drawing attention to themselves. When going out, they should avoid being part of large, highly visible groups of Westerners, and refrain from sitting in areas that are easily visible from the street when in restaurants or cafes. U.S. citizens should be particularly alert when frequenting locales associated with Westerners, including grocery stores, hotels, cultural centers, social and recreation clubs, beach areas, and restaurants. Additionally, U.S. citizens should avoid demonstrations and highly publicized events/venues with no visible security presence.

U.S. citizens driving in Mauritania are reminded to heed warnings to stop at security checkpoints, and should be particularly vigilant when traveling by road outside of populated areas, even when traveling along main routes and highways. U.S. citizens should not venture outside urban areas unless in a convoy and accompanied by an experienced guide, and even then only if equipped with sturdy vehicles and ample provisions. Driving after dark outside of urban areas is strongly discouraged. There have been reports of banditry and smuggling in the more remote parts of Mauritania. Note also that landmines remain a danger along the border with the Western Sahara. Travelers should cross borders only at designated border posts.

The U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott strongly encourages U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Mauritania despite this Travel Warning to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the most up-to-date security information. Please keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important when enrolling or updating information to include multiple phone numbers and email addresses to facilitate communication in the event of an emergency.

U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information sheet for the Republic of Mauritania and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. If you don't have internet access, current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The U.S. Embassy is located between the Presidency building and the Spanish Embassy on Rue Abdallaye. The postal address is B.P. 222, Nouakchott, telephone (222) 4-525-2660/2663, 4-525-1141/1145, or 4-525-3038, and fax (222) 4-525-1592. For after-hours emergencies, please call (222) 4-525-3288 or visit the U.S. Embassy Nouakchott web site. In the event of an emergency that interrupts mobile phone (SMS) or Internet communication in Mauritania, U.S. citizens may call the Embassy's dedicated Consular emergency recording at (222) 4-525-3701 to receive the most up-to-date instructions.

Cote D'Ivoire Travel Warning

Thu, 16 May 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of traveling to Cote d'Ivoire. U.S. citizens who reside in or travel to Cote d'Ivoire should monitor conditions carefully, maintain situational awareness, and pay very close attention to their personal security. Although the security situation significantly improved in 2013, security conditions can change quickly and without warning. This Travel Warning updates U.S. citizens on the current security situation in Cote d'Ivoire, replacing the Travel Warning of November 16, 2012.

In April 2013, municipal and regional elections were held and were generally peaceful; however, there were limited and localized incidents of violence in the days following the election, as results were announced. Local security forces responded to these events, which were quickly resolved.

If you are planning travel to Cote d'Ivoire, particularly to destinations outside of Abidjan, you should review the most recent U.S. Embassy, or your host organization's, security assessment for your travel destination. The U.S. Embassy does not restrict its personnel's travel within Abidjan, Grand Bassam, Assine, Yamoussoukro and Bouake; however, travelers are advised to remain alert and exercise the same level of caution that they would in any major city. Mission staff must inform the Regional Security Office (RSO) of official travel to Abidjan's Abobo and Yopougon neighborhoods and the Banco Forest. RSO notification is required when traveling to the outer regions of Abidjan, Grand Bassam, Assine, Yamoussoukro and Bouake, in order to assess current security situations.

Crimes, such as muggings, robbery, burglary, and carjacking, pose risks for foreign visitors in Abidjan and around the country. You should take precautions when stopped in heavy traffic or at road blocks due to the threat of assault and/or robbery, and avoid travel outside Abidjan after dark to minimize risk. Additionally, the generally poor road conditions are also a factor in driving after sunset. Local law enforcement authorities have limited capacity to respond to emergencies.

The U.S. Embassy instructs its staff to avoid large gatherings, crowds, demonstrations, and political events. Peaceful demonstrations and/or political events can turn confrontational and possibly become unsafe. You are therefore urged to avoid demonstrations and to exercise caution within the vicinity of demonstrations or political events.

U.S. citizens traveling and residing in Cote d'Ivoire are urged to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the most up-to-date security information. By enrolling, you make it easier for the Embassy to contact you in case of emergency.

For further information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Cote d'Ivoire and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes or Google Play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

The Embassy is located at 01 B.P. 1712 Abidjan 01, Cote d'Ivoire. If you have questions or concerns about safety or related issues, you are encouraged to contact the consular section at the Embassy by sending an email message to AbjAmcit@state.gov. You can reach the Embassy Consular's section by telephone at 225-22-49-45-94 during business hours and at 225-22-49-44-50 for after-hours emergencies.

Central African Republic Travel Warning

Fri, 10 May 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to the Central African Republic (CAR) and recommends that those who remain in CAR depart immediately by taking advantage of existing commercial flights. U.S. citizens who have decided to stay in CAR despite this warning should review their personal security situation and seriously consider departing. This replaces the Travel Warning of December 28, 2012, to reflect the lack of security, increased risks in CAR, and the Government of France's role as the U.S. government's Protecting Power in CAR while U.S. Embassy operations and services are temporarily suspended.

U.S. Embassy Bangui suspended operations in December 2012, and therefore cannot provide protection or routine consular services to U.S. citizens in CAR. The Government of the Republic of France, acting through its Embassy in Bangui, serves as Protecting Power for U.S. interests in CAR. The range of consular services the French Republic provides to U.S. citizens is extremely limited, and those services may require significantly more processing time than at U.S. embassies or consulates outside of CAR. U.S. citizens in CAR who seek consular services should contact the Embassy of the Republic of France in Bangui by calling 236 21 61 30 00.

U.S. citizens in CAR who are in need of emergency assistance and are unable to reach the Embassy of the Republic of France, or must make contact outside business hours, should contact the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon; Telephone: 237 2220-1500 ext. 4341/4023 (Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. local time)

Emergencies: 237 2220-1500, ext. 4531 or 237 2222-25-89
E-mail: YaoundeACS@state.gov.

If you seek information about U.S. citizen services in CAR from the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in Washington, please e-mail: CARemergencyUSC@state.gov.

If you are going to live in or travel to the Central African Republic despite this Travel Warning, please take the time 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 us 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 in order to receive emergency messages.

For information on general crime and security issues, you should also consult the Department of State Country Specific Information for the Central African Republic; as well as The Worldwide Caution; located on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook. You can download our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes and the Google Play store, to have travel information at your fingertips. 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.

Eritrea Travel Warning

Fri, 10 May 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Eritrea and strongly recommends U.S. citizens defer all travel to the country. This replaces the Travel Warning for Eritrea of November 29, 2012, to update information on additional travel restrictions, and to remind U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Eritrea.

The Eritrean government continues to restrict the travel of all foreign nationals. These restrictions require all visitors and residents, including U.S. diplomats, to apply 10 days in advance for permission to travel outside Asmara's city limits. Permission is rarely granted. As a result, the U.S. Embassy is extremely limited in its ability to provide emergency consular assistance outside of Asmara.

Travelers should also be aware that travel permits are valid for the approved final destination only, and do not allow for additional stops along the way to or in the proximity of the approved destination. In addition, travel to religious institutions, for example, monasteries, requires separate travel permission even when such facilities are located in or near approved destination cities. Foreign travelers not adhering strictly to the terms of travel permits have reported being detained by law enforcement authorities, and their drivers have been jailed.

A number of U.S.-Eritrean dual citizens have been arrested and some are currently being held without apparent cause. Once arrested, detainees may be held for extended periods without being told the reason for their incarceration. Conditions are harsh – those incarcerated may be held in very small quarters without access to restrooms, bedding, food, or clean water. The Eritrean government does not inform the U.S. Embassy when U.S. citizens, including those who are not dual nationals, have been arrested or detained. Should the U.S. Embassy learn of the arrest of a U.S. citizen, the Eritrean government rarely allows consular access, regardless of the reason the U.S. citizen is being held.

Starting in 2012, the Government of Eritrea began arming its citizens with automatic rifles, forming citizen militias. These armed civilian militias patrol at night and are ordered to check individuals for documentation. You should carry appropriate documentation with you at all times. Those not carrying documentation of their identity and military status may be subject to round-ups, sometimes by armed persons. U.S. citizens should use extreme caution when encountering armed persons.

In observance of the Independence Day holiday of May 24, travelers will notice an increase in the presence of military and police personnel throughout Asmara during the months of April and May. It is during these two months that military and police personnel most frequently check documentation.

The Eritrean government-controlled media frequently broadcasts anti-U.S. rhetoric, and has done so repeatedly since December 2009, when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) first imposed sanctions on Eritrea. Anti-U.S. messages scripted by the current regime, which often appear as cover stories in the sole English-language state-run newspaper in Eritrea, have grown even stronger since UNSC sanctions were strengthened in December 2011.

Although there have been no specific incidents of violence targeting U.S. citizens, U.S. citizens are urged to exercise caution, stay current with media coverage of local events, and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

U.S. citizens are strongly advised to avoid travel near the Eritrean-Ethiopian border and the Southern Red Sea region. U.S. citizens should be aware of the presence of large numbers of Eritrean and Ethiopian troops along the Eritrean-Ethiopian border and of political and military tensions between the two countries. In March 2012, Ethiopian troops attacked three locations approximately 10 miles inside Eritrean territory. In January 2012, a group of tourists was attacked in Ethiopia not far from the Eritrean-Ethiopian border. Five tourists were killed and four others kidnapped. In May 2010, 13 people were injured when a bomb exploded on a bus just over the border in Ethiopia. In April 2010, a bomb near the border in Ethiopia killed five people and injured 20. In January and February 2010, skirmishes between Eritrean and Ethiopian troops resulted in military fatalities. Although Eritrean forces have withdrawn from disputed territory at the border with Djibouti, tensions in this area remain high.

U.S. citizens on ships and sailing vessels are strongly advised not to sail off the Eritrean coast or to attempt to dock in Eritrean ports, refuel in Eritrea, or travel through Eritrean waters. U.S. citizens are also urged to avoid remote Eritrean islands, some of which may be used for Eritrean military training and could therefore be unsafe. The Eritrean government does not issue visas to persons arriving by marine vessel.

Piracy on the Red Sea continues to occur. Recreational vessels are strongly encouraged to avoid the region entirely, and commercial vessels without explicit agreements with Eritrean authorities are urged to avoid Eritrean territorial waters. There have been incidents involving the seizure of ships attempting to refuel at the Port of Massawa by the Eritrean government as late as the spring of 2012. These seizures have resulted in lengthy detentions of international crew members, including U.S. nationals. Though the incidents were ultimately resolved and both ships and crew released, the concern for future seizures is ongoing. U.S. citizens are cautioned that commercial/tourist ships are not allowed to dock at Eritrean ports, even to refuel.

If transit around the Horn of Africa is necessary, vessels should travel in convoys, maintain good communications contact at all times, and follow the guidance provided by the Maritime Security Center – Horn of Africa (MSC-HOA). U.S. citizens should consult the Maritime Administration's Horn of Africa Piracy page for information on maritime advisories, self-protection measures, and naval forces in the region.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a serious problem throughout the country. There are reports of accidents and incidents in which vehicles or people occasionally detonate mines. Many detonations occurred on relatively well-traveled roads in and near the Gash Barka region of western Eritrea; subsequent investigations indicated that several mines were recently laid. In September 2011, press reported that a vehicle in Senafe, 60 miles south of Asmara, ran over a landmine; five people were killed and another 34 injured in the incident. Vast areas of the country still have not been certified free of mines and unexploded ordnance following the 30-year war for independence and the subsequent

1998-2000 conflict with Ethiopia. You should avoid walking alone and hiking in riverbeds or areas that local government officials have not certified as safe.

U.S. citizens choosing to travel to Eritrea despite this Travel Warning must obtain an Eritrean visa before their arrival. Persons arriving in Eritrea without a visa are generally refused admission and returned on the next flight back to their point of origin. However, the Embassy is aware of persons being jailed for several months after arriving without a visa. The Embassy urges U.S.-Eritrean dual citizens to obtain an Eritrean visa in their U.S. passport before travelling to Eritrea and to enter the country as U.S. citizens. U.S.-Eritrean dual citizens who enter Eritrea with an Eritrean ID card may find it difficult to obtain the required visa to legally exit the country. The Embassy is aware of numerous cases in which U.S.-Eritrean dual citizens have not been permitted to leave the country. The Embassy cautions travelers not to stay beyond the period of time granted at the time of admission by Eritrean Immigration.

Crime in Asmara has increased as a result of deteriorating economic conditions accompanied by persistent food, water, and fuel shortages, and rapid price inflation. The combination of forced, open-ended, low-paying, national service for many Eritreans and severe unemployment leads some Eritreans to commit crime to support their families. Eritrean authorities have limited capacity to deter or investigate crime or prosecute perpetrators.

Modern telecommunications options are limited in Eritrea and cannot be counted upon in an emergency. International cell phone service plans do not work on Eritrean networks. Local cellular phone service is tightly controlled by the Eritrean government and difficult to obtain. When available, international cell phone calls are extremely expensive and only available using pre-paid minutes. Internet cafés are rare and hours are limited. Internet service is limited and slow, and generally does not support Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services such as Skype.

The U.S. Embassy in Asmara strongly encourages U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Eritrea despite this Travel Warning to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) so you can receive the most up-to-date security information. Please keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important when enrolling or updating information to include multiple phone numbers and email addresses to facilitate communication in the event of an emergency.

The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Asmara, though closed for most visa services, is open for all U.S. citizen services between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, or by appointment. The U.S. Embassy in Asmara is located at 179 Alaa Street, P.O. Box 211, Asmara; telephone 291-1-12-00-04, available 24 hours in case of emergency; fax 291-1-124-255 and 291-1-127-584.

Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). You can also stay up-to-date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of

Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google play store, to have travel information at your fingertips..

Congo, Democratic Republic of the

Wed, 24 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) (DRC). The Department strongly recommends you avoid all travel to the city of Goma and the province of North Kivu, and all but essential travel to the province of South Kivu and the Ituri region in the province of Oriental. Because of ongoing instability and violence, the Department's ability to provide consular services to U.S. citizens in these regions of the DRC is extremely limited. This replaces the Travel Warning dated November 21, 2012, to update information on security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Armed groups, bandits, and elements of the Congolese military remain security concerns in eastern and northeastern DRC. These armed groups, primarily located in the North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale provinces, as well as the northern part of Katanga province, and the eastern part of Maniema province, are known to pillage, steal vehicles, kidnap, rape, kill, and carry out military or paramilitary operations in which civilians are indiscriminately targeted. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is present near the border with Uganda, Central African Republic, and the Republic of South Sudan. The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) continues to assist the Congolese government with the protection of civilians and efforts to combat armed groups.

North and South Kivu have been the scene of violent clashes that have resulted in significant displacements of civilians since September 2010. In April 2012, members of a rebel group that previously had been integrated into the Congolese military mutinied and heavy fighting has been reported in Massisi and Ruthshuru territories as well as in Virunga National Park. In November 2012, members of this group captured several towns north of Goma and Goma itself, the provincial capital of North Kivu province. Although the rebels withdrew from Goma in December 2012, the security and political situation in Goma and North Kivu remains tense and fragile. In March 2013, there was fighting in North Kivu (although not in the city of Goma proper) between various factions of the rebel group that had previously captured Goma. As a result, hundreds of people have been killed or injured, and tens of thousands more have been internally displaced. Moreover, violence amongst foreign and Congolese rebel groups present in the northern part of North Kivu and former Rwandan militants in the southern part of the province and throughout South Kivu pose a serious and significant risk to travelers in the region. This fighting underscores the persistent insecurity arising from activities of rebel and other armed groups operating in the Kivus, which contribute to the overall high risks and dangers associated with travel to eastern Congo. The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa currently does not allow travel by official personnel to North Kivu. Travel to South Kivu and the Ituri region of Oriental province by Embassy personnel is permitted only under exceptional circumstances.

Travelers are frequently detained and questioned by poorly disciplined security forces at numerous official and unofficial roadblocks and border crossings throughout the country. Requests for bribes in such instances are extremely common, and security forces have occasionally injured or killed people who refused to pay. In the past year, several U.S. citizens were illegally detained by government forces,

or were robbed of their valuables while being searched. Very poor infrastructure (road and air) makes the provision of consular services difficult outside of Kinshasa.

The Embassy has received many reports of robberies and banditry in Goma after dark. In most such cases, the robbers have stopped cars and stolen money and other valuables. The poor condition of the roads, along with widespread new road construction around the city, contribute to the banditry problem, as traffic is either bottlenecked on the main road, or forced to travel on secondary roads with even worse conditions. The Department strongly urges travelers who must go to Goma not to travel after dark.

Kinshasa has a critical crime threat level, and U.S. citizens continue to be the victims of serious crimes, including armed robbery by groups posing as law enforcement officials in both urban and rural areas, especially after nightfall. Avoid walking alone and displaying cash and other personal property of value. Avoid taking photos in public, especially of government buildings and the airport (which are viewed as places of national security), police stations, the presidential palace, border crossings, and along the river, since doing so may lead to arrest.

Lock vehicle doors and keep windows closed when driving. You should not stop at the scene of an accident or at intersections where people have gathered, as mobs can develop quickly. In areas where the roads are in poor condition and the speed limit is minimal, be wary of gangs of street children who may approach your car, open your door, and steal your belongings. Roadblocks are often found throughout the country, especially near government buildings and installations in Kinshasa, and should be avoided when possible. If stopped at a roadblock, keep doors locked and crack the window in order to communicate.

Official Congolese motorcades pose hazards to motorists and pedestrians. Drivers should pull over to the far side of the road when sirens or security forces announce their presence. You should not take photographs of motorcades. Proceed only when security forces permit you to do so.

There is no reliable public transportation system in the DRC. Overcrowded vans and taxis, which often do not meet western safety standards, serve as public transportation in Kinshasa. Few independent taxis are available, operating largely out of the big hotels, and most do not meet safety standards. You should avoid all travel by public transportation, and hire private transport from a reliable source.

The DRC has few viable roads or railways, but does have several major waterways. Boat transport is widely used; however, the vessels are often overloaded and/or badly maintained, and accidents are commonplace and often fatal.

Public health concerns pose a hazard to U.S. citizen travelers due to outbreaks of deadly viruses and other diseases, which can occur without warning and often without swift reporting by local health authorities. Information on personal protection for international travelers, including children, can be found on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website. Travelers are required to carry evidence of yellow fever vaccination in order to enter the DRC. Health officials at entry points, such as the airport in Kinshasa, will check for proof of vaccination. If you do not have evidence of a yellow fever vaccination,

you may be denied entry or required to pay a fine. Malaria is common throughout the DRC and prophylaxis is recommended. Please consult with your healthcare provider for more information and advice on prophylaxis.

Due to the recent outbreak of Wild Polio Virus and measles in the DRC, you should update your polio and measles vaccinations, if necessary, and refer to the CDC for additional guidance. Due to the high levels of air borne irritants (i.e., dust, burning trash, debris, etc.) individuals with respiratory illnesses should carry all their necessary medications and equipment with adapters.

There is a high risk of traveler's diarrhea and cholera throughout the country. This can be greatly reduced by using good judgment when choosing what food to eat and water to drink. When in restaurants, you should ask for bottled water and avoid ice.

Due to the immense size of the country, the density of the Congo River rainforest, the terrible state of the roads, and the poor security situation, the only way to get around the country quickly is by plane. Domestic air travel on Congolese or other local airlines in the DRC is not recommended. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has assessed the government of the DRC as not being compliant with international standards for aviation safety oversight. There have been several recent incidents causing deaths and injuries, including one on August 25, 2010, that killed all but one passenger. In April 2011, a United Nations operated flight crashed while landing in Kinshasa, killing 32 passengers and crew. In July 2011, a Boeing 737 crashed in Kisangani, killing more than 70 passengers. In March 2013, a domestic airline flight crashed in Goma, killing five crewmembers and passengers. Crashes of private aircraft are even more common. The U.S. Embassy has prohibited official travel by U.S. government employees and certain contractors on most airlines flying domestic routes in the DRC due to safety and maintenance concerns. International flights on foreign-owned-and-operated carriers are not affected by this prohibition.

You should avoid all public demonstrations and areas where crowds have gathered because even peaceful events can become violent, and even deadly. You should exercise caution at all times, and closely monitor local and international news from reliable sources. Radio Okapi broadcasts in French on 103.5 FM at 0700, 0800, 1200, and 1800 hours, and provides updates throughout the day. English-language news can be found on BBC at 92.6 FM. In emergencies, the Belgian Embassy operates a French-language radio broadcast system at FM 98.8. Changes in security conditions may occasionally restrict the travel of U.S. Mission personnel.

The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa strongly encourages U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the DRC despite this Travel Warning to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) so you can receive the most up-to-date security information. You should remember to keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important to include your current phone number and email address where you can be reached in case of an emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; the Consular Section entrance is located on Avenue Dumi, opposite Saint Anne's Church. The Embassy's telephone number, including for after-

hours emergencies, is 243-81-556-0151; callers within the DRC should dial 081-556-0151. All telephone lines in the DRC, cellular as well as landlines, are unreliable. [Click here](#) to visit the Embassy website.

For further information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Democratic Republic of the Congo and the current Worldwide Caution, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, a regular toll line at-1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains thecurrent Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google Play store to have travel information at your fingertips.

Burundi Travel Warning

Mon, 22 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Burundi. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Burundi dated November 8, 2012, to reiterate existing security concerns and to note that security restrictions on travel for Embassy personnel remain in place.

Because Burundi participates in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, the terrorist organization al-Shabaab, based in Somalia, has threatened to conduct terror attacks in Burundi. It may also target U.S. interests in Burundi.

The Burundian civil war that lasted from 1993 to 2006 often involved non-governmental and non-combatant targets. In 2009, the government and the last rebel group signed their final cease-fire agreement in which the rebel group agreed to demobilize and register as a political party. Burundi held general elections in 2010 which were generally considered credible. However, political tensions ran high and there were incidents of violence during the campaign period. Low-level political violence persists; the areas of Bujumbura Rural, Bujumbura Mairie (particularly Kanyosha, Kinama and Kamenge, Makamba, Rumonge, and the area neighboring the Kibira forest) are of particular concern.

There are no known armed militia groups operating in Burundi; however, weapons are easy to obtain and some ex-combatants have turned to crime or political violence. Crime, often committed by groups of armed bandits or street children, poses the highest risk for foreign visitors to both Bujumbura and Burundi in general. Exchanges of gunfire and grenade attacks are common even in densely populated urban areas. Stay indoors, in a ground floor interior room, if gunfire or explosions occur nearby. Common crimes include muggings, burglaries, and robberies. Visitors should keep vehicle doors locked and windows up, and be careful when stopped in heavy traffic, due to the threat of robbery and theft. The U.S. Embassy has received reports of armed criminals ambushing vehicles, particularly on the roads leading out of Bujumbura. The U.S. Embassy prohibits U.S. government personnel from walking on the streets after dark and from using local public transportation at any time. Due to a lack of resources, local authorities in any part of Burundi are often unable to provide timely assistance during an emergency.

U.S. citizens should be aware that even gatherings and demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn violent. U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to Burundi are reminded to maintain a high level of security awareness at all times and avoid political rallies, demonstrations, and crowds of any kind. Even seemingly peaceful sporting events can become politicized and turn violent. U.S. citizens should routinely monitor local media sources and the Internet for reports of demonstrations and unrest.

The U.S. Embassy continues to caution U.S. citizens that travel outside the capital, Bujumbura, presents significant risks, especially after nightfall. The U.S. Embassy restricts the travel of its personnel in Burundi. Within 30 km/18 miles of the city, Embassy employees may travel in single vehicles, but are advised to check in and out with the Embassy. The Embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO) must pre-approve all Embassy personnel travel outside this approximately 30-km radius of Bujumbura, and employees must travel via an approved itinerary in two-vehicle convoys equipped with satellite phones,

GPS, and emergency equipment. All employee movement outside the city after dark is forbidden; the Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens not travel on national highways from dusk to dawn. U.S. citizens are also encouraged to avoid traveling within the city of Bujumbura after midnight.

Corruption is endemic in Burundi and contributes to an environment where the rule of law is not respected. Government officials may ask for bribes for providing routine services. Travelers are frequently stopped, questioned, and asked for bribes by security forces at numerous official and unofficial road blocks throughout the country. Likewise, criminals who have paid off local officials may operate without fear of prosecution.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Burundi despite this Travel Warning are urged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura for information on the latest Embassy security guidance, and to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) so they can receive the most up-to-date security information. Please keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important when enrolling or updating information to include multiple phone numbers and email addresses to facilitate communication in the event of an emergency.

U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura at Avenue des Etats-Unis. The hours for non-emergency American Citizens Services are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays. The Embassy Consular section can be reached by telephone, including for after-hours emergencies, at 257-22-20-7000, or by fax at 257-22-22-2926. Security information for U.S. citizens in Burundi is posted on Embassy Bujumbura's website.

For further information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Burundi and the current Worldwide Caution, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Google Play store to have travel information at your fingertips.

Sudan Travel Warning

Tue, 16 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Sudan, urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the Darfur region of Sudan, the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, and advises you to consider carefully the risks of travel in other areas of Sudan. On September 15, 2012, the Department of State ordered the departure of all dependents of U.S. direct hire personnel and all non-emergency U.S. government personnel from Sudan, following the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum. On March 13, 2013, after six months without security incidents or demonstrations targeted at U.S. citizens or the United States government in Sudan, the State Department lifted its ordered departure status. All U.S. government personnel and all adult family members employed by the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum are authorized to return to Khartoum. This replaces the Travel Warning issued on March 13, 2013, and includes updated information about the risk of terrorist activity and travel restrictions for U.S. government personnel.

While the Government of Sudan has taken some steps to limit the activities of terrorist groups, elements of these groups remain in Sudan and have threatened to attack Western interests. Terrorist actions may include suicide operations, bombings, or kidnappings. You should be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, including tourist sites and locations where westerners are known to congregate, as well as commercial operations associated with U.S. or Western interests. The terrorist threat level throughout Sudan, and particularly in the Darfur region, remains critical, and the U.S. Embassy has implemented enhanced security measures to protect U.S. government personnel assigned to Sudan. These measures include requiring U.S. government personnel to travel in armored government vehicles for official business, and to obtain advance permission for travel outside of Khartoum. In addition, family members of U.S. personnel under age 21 are not allowed to reside in Sudan.

If you are traveling or residing anywhere in Sudan, you should exercise caution at all times and closely monitor local and international news from reliable sources. Violent flare-ups break out between various armed militia groups and Sudanese military forces with little notice, particularly in the Darfur region, along the border between Chad and Sudan, and in areas on the border with South Sudan. Near the border with Ethiopia and Eritrea, landmines and unmarked minefields are a critical threat. There are occasional clashes with local tribes, particularly those known for weapons and human trafficking, along with the threats of Ethiopian gangs crossing the border to rob people along the highway. Hostilities between Sudanese forces and armed opposition groups in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, including the disputed area of Abyei, present real and immediate dangers to travelers. In addition, U.S. citizens found in these areas without permission from the Government of Sudan face the possibility of detention by government security forces. You should avoid all public demonstrations and political rallies, as even demonstrations that seem peaceful can turn confrontational and become violent with little or no notice. Demonstrations occur periodically, mostly in Khartoum. You should keep a low profile, vary your times and routes of travel, exercise care while driving, and ensure that your passport and Sudanese visa are always valid and up to date.

The threat of violent crime, including kidnappings, armed robberies, home invasions, and carjackings, is particularly high in the Darfur region of Sudan, as the Government of Sudan has limited capacity to deter crime in that region. In addition, Janjaweed militia and heavily armed Darfuri rebel groups are known to have carried out criminal attacks against foreigners. In May 2010, a U.S. citizen working for a humanitarian relief organization was kidnapped in Darfur and held for more than three months before being released. More recently, a number of other foreign nationals have been abducted and held for ransom by criminal groups in Darfur. Due to the fluid security situation, U.S. government personnel are not authorized to travel to Darfur except to certain areas deemed acceptable at the time of travel and with appropriate security precautions.

The United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) has advised that elevated regional tensions have increased the risk of maritime attacks being conducted by extremists to vessels operating in the Gulf of Oman, North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Bab el Mandeb regions.

MARAD recommends vessels at anchor, operating in restricted maneuvering environments, or at slow speeds should be especially vigilant, and report suspicious activity. U.S. flag vessels that observe suspicious activity in the area are advised to report such suspicious activity or any hostile or potentially hostile action to COMUSNAVCENT battlegroup captain at phone number 973-1785-3879. All suspicious activities and events are also to be reported to the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center at the following toll free telephone: 1-800-424-8802, direct telephone 202-267-2675, or TDD 202-267-4477. The complete advisory is available on the MARAD website at www.MARAD.DOT.gov.

We recommend that all U.S. citizens visiting or residing in Sudan maintain safehaven plans, as well as plans to evacuate the country on short notice should the situation warrant. If the security situation worsens or if specific threats affecting the safety of U.S. citizens are discovered, we will make this information available through the U.S. Embassy website and by messages communicated through our warden system. Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens in Sudan can be found online at: http://sudan.usembassy.gov/warden_messages.html.

The ability of the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum to provide services to U.S. citizens in emergency situations outside of the Khartoum area is limited, and dependent on security conditions. The ability to provide assistance is particularly limited in southern Sudan and in Darfur.

You can stay in touch and get updates by checking the U.S. Embassy website. U.S. citizens can also obtain global updates from the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs website, where you can find the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market to have travel information at your fingertips.

If you are going to live in or travel to Sudan despite this Travel Warning, please take the time to tell us about your trip by enrolling 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 us 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 in Sudan without internet access may enroll directly at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum by completing and submitting a registration form.

The U.S. Embassy is located at U.S. Embassy Road, Kilo 10, Soba, Khartoum. U.S. citizens may obtain the latest security information by contacting the Embassy consular section at ACSKhartoum@state.gov, or by visiting the U.S. Embassy website. In the event of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen, contact the Embassy by calling 0187-022-000 (from inside Sudan) or 249 187-022-000 (from outside Sudan) and ask to be connected to the Embassy duty officer.

Colombia Travel Warning

Thu, 11 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens about the security situation in Colombia.

Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens safely visit Colombia each year for tourism, business, university studies, and volunteer work. Security in Colombia has improved significantly in recent years, including in tourist and business travel destinations such as Bogota and Cartagena, but violence linked to narco-trafficking continues to affect some rural areas and parts of large cities. This replaces the Travel Warning for Colombia issued October 3, 2012, to update information on the security situation and terrorist activity.

There have been no reports of U.S. citizens being targeted specifically because of their nationality. While the Embassy possesses no information concerning specific and credible threats against U.S. citizens in Colombia, we strongly encourage you to exercise caution and remain vigilant as terrorist and criminal activities remain a threat throughout the country. Two people were killed and approximately 60 injured by a car bomb during an assassination attempt on the life of a former Interior Minister on May 15, 2012. Explosions occur throughout Colombia on a regular basis, including some in Bogota itself. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can still be extremely dangerous due to the presence of terrorists and narco-traffickers, including armed criminal gangs (referred to as "BACRIMs" in Spanish), that are active throughout much of the country. Violence associated with the BACRIM has spilled over into many of Colombia's major cities. These groups are heavily involved in the drug trade.

Although the incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak in 2000, it remains a threat, and is of particular concern in rural areas. Terrorist groups and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians, including foreigners, for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. The U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped U.S. citizens, but it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to or strike deals with kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist kidnapping victims is limited.

U.S. government officials in Colombia regularly travel to the major cities of Colombia without incident. However, U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia normally are only permitted to travel to major cities by air. They may not use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia must file a request to travel to any area in Colombia outside of two general areas. The first area is outlined by the cities of Bogota, Anolaima, Cogua, and Sesquile. The second area is on the Highway 90 corridor that connects Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta. All U.S. citizens in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions and exercise extra caution outside of the aforementioned areas.

For more detailed information on staying safe in Colombia, please see the State Department's Country Specific Information for Colombia. For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Bureau of Consular Affairs' internet web site, where the current

Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through the iTunes store and the Google Play store, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 001-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). U.S. citizens living or traveling in Colombia are encouraged to enroll with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to obtain updated information on travel and security within Colombia. For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens in Colombia, please contact the U.S. Embassy or the closest U.S. Consulate as listed below.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Calle 24 Bis No. 48-50 Bogota, D.C., Colombia. Mailing address: Carrera 45 No. 24B-27 Bogota, D.C., Colombia. In case of a serious emergency that jeopardizes the health or safety of a U.S. citizen in Colombia, please call the Embassy at (571) 275-2000; Embassy fax: (571) 275-4501; Consular Section phone: (571) 275-4900. The Embassy's American Citizens Services office provides routine information at <http://bogota.usembassy.gov>. For questions not answered there, inquiries may be sent by email to ACSBogota@state.gov.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Barranquilla, which accepts passport applications and performs notarial services, is located at Calle 77B, No. 57-141, Piso 5, Centro Empresarial Las Américas, Barranquilla, Atlántico, Colombia; telephone (575) 369-0419; fax (57-5) 353-5216. In case of an emergency in the Barranquilla/north coast area, please contact the Embassy in Bogota at (571) 275-2000 which will forward the call to our Consular Agent.

Pakistan Travel Warning

Tue, 09 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated September 19, 2012, to remind U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Pakistan.

The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a potential 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. The Government of Pakistan maintains heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities. Threat reporting indicates terrorist groups continue to seek opportunities to attack locations where U.S. citizens and Westerners are known to congregate or visit. Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.

Protests against the United States are not uncommon and have the potential to turn violent. U.S. citizens in Pakistan are strongly advised to avoid all protests and large gatherings.

RECENT ATTACKS

There have been many terrorist attacks in recent years targeting civilians and security personnel. On March 3, 2013, a bomb attack in a predominately Shiite area of Karachi destroyed several buildings and killed over 50 people. In January and February 2013, two bomb attacks in Quetta targeted members of the Hazara community; each killed over 80 people. On September 3, 2012, unidentified terrorists attacked a U.S. government vehicle convoy in Peshawar, injuring U.S. and Pakistani personnel. On April 24, 2012, an explosion at the Lahore Railway Station killed three people and injured at least 30.

The Governor of the Punjab province and the Federal Minister for Minority Affairs were assassinated in Islamabad in January and March 2011, respectively. Targeted killings continue unabated in Karachi as a result of ethno-political rivalries. Targeted attacks against government officials, humanitarian and non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, tribal elders, and law enforcement personnel continue throughout the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan Provinces. Suicide bomb attacks have occurred at Islamabad universities, schools, rallies, places of worship, and major marketplaces in Lahore and Peshawar.

Members of minority communities have been victims of targeted killings and accusations of blasphemy, a crime that carries the death penalty in Pakistan. Foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, on valid missionary visas have encountered increased scrutiny from local authorities since early 2011.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

U.S. government personnel travel between the Embassy and Consulates might be restricted based on security or other reasons. Movements by U.S. government personnel assigned to the Consulates

General are severely restricted, and consulate staff cannot drive personally-owned vehicles. Embassy staff are permitted to drive personally-owned vehicles in the greater Islamabad area.

U.S. officials in Islamabad are instructed to limit the frequency of travel and minimize the duration of trips to public markets, restaurants, and other locations. Only a limited number of official visitors are placed in hotels, and for limited stays. Depending on ongoing security assessments, the U.S. Mission sometimes places areas such as hotels, markets, and restaurants off limits to official personnel. Official U.S. citizens are not authorized to use public transportation and are sometimes asked to restrict the use of their personal vehicles in response to security concerns.

Access to many areas of Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border, the Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, and the area adjacent to the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed territory of Kashmir, is restricted by local government authorities for non-Pakistanis. Travel to any restricted region requires official permission from the Government of Pakistan. Failure to obtain such permission in advance can result in arrest and detention by Pakistani authorities. Due to security concerns, the U.S. government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by U.S. officials. Travel to much of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Balochistan is also restricted.

GENERAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Since the announcement that Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan on May 2, 2011, U.S. citizens should be aware of the possible increase in the threat level throughout the country.

Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur regularly throughout Pakistan on very short notice. Demonstrations might take on an anti-U.S. or anti-Western character, and U.S. citizens are urged to avoid large gatherings. Anti-U.S. protests in September 2012 attracted large crowds outside U.S. diplomatic facilities in all major cities and caused casualties and significant property damage. The Mission reminds U.S. citizens that even peaceful demonstrations might become violent and advises U.S. citizens to avoid demonstrations. Given multiple demands for resources, local authorities may have limited capacity to respond to requests for assistance.

The Mission reiterates its advice to all U.S. citizens to maintain good situational awareness, avoid large crowds, and keep a low profile, particularly when visiting locations frequented by Westerners. U.S. citizens in Pakistan are strongly urged to avoid hotels that do not apply stringent security measures, and to vary times and routes for all travel.

U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan have also been kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons such as family disputes over property. In August 2012, a U.S. citizen in Karachi was kidnapped from a car outside of a friend's residence. In June 2011, a U.S. citizen in Lahore was kidnapped while en route to his business. Both U.S. citizens were released after their families paid a ransom. In August 2011, a U.S. citizen in Lahore was kidnapped from his residence. Al-Qaida later claimed responsibility and issued a list of demands in exchange for his release. The kidnapping of Pakistani citizens and other foreign nationals, usually for ransom, continues to increase nationwide. U.S. citizens who feel they are in danger or their security is at risk are strongly urged to depart Pakistan as soon as possible.

U.S. citizens seeking services from the U.S. Consulates General in Karachi and Peshawar might also encounter harassment from host government officials. Citing security concerns, host-government intelligence officials frequently stop U.S. citizens outside the Consulates and obtain their personal information before allowing them to proceed. U.S. citizens might later be visited at their homes or offices and questioned about the nature of their business in Pakistan and the purpose of their visit to the Consulate.

ENTRY/EXIT DIFFICULTIES

U.S. citizens should ensure that their travel documents and visas are valid at all times. U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan have been arrested, deported, harassed, and detained for overstaying their Pakistani visas or for traveling to Pakistan without the appropriate visa classification. U.S. citizens who attempt to renew or extend their visas while in Pakistan have been left without legal status for an extended period of time and subjected to harassment or interrogation by local authorities. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates General can provide very limited assistance to U.S. citizens who have overstayed their Pakistani visas. Since 2011, the number of U.S. citizens arrested, detained, and prosecuted for visa overstay has increased across the country.

U.S. citizens are advised to make electronic and paper copies of their U.S. passport, Pakistani visa, and entry stamp into Pakistan in order to facilitate their departure from Pakistan if their U.S. passport is lost or stolen, and keep the copies in a readily accessible location.

Security threats might, on short notice, temporarily restrict the ability of the U.S. Missions, particularly in Peshawar, to provide routine consular services. All U.S. citizens are encouraged to apply for renewal of travel documents at least three months prior to expiration.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Pakistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to enroll with the Embassy in Islamabad or the Consulates General in Karachi, Lahore, or Peshawar. This enrollment can be completed online through the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) available on the Department of State website. U.S. citizens without internet access should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate General for information on registering in person. Enrollment enables citizens to obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan via the emergency alert system.

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5, and can be reached by telephone at (92-51) 208-0000; Consular Section telephone (92-51) 208-2700; and fax (92-51) 282-2632.

The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi is located at Plot 3-5 New TPX Area, Mai Kolachi Road. U.S. citizens requiring emergency assistance should call the Consular Section in Karachi at (92-21) 3527-5000. The fax number is (92-21) 3561-2420.

The U.S. Consulate General in Lahore is located on 50 Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees (Old Empress Road), near Shimla Hill Rotary, and can be reached by telephone at (92-42) 3603-4000 and fax: (92-42)

3603- 4212.

The U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, and can be reached by telephone at (92-91) 526-8800 and fax: (92-91) 528-4171.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

For further information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Pakistan. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website , which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes or Google Play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Lebanon Travel Warning

Mon, 01 Apr 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Lebanon because of current safety and security concerns. U.S. citizens living and working in Lebanon should understand that they accept risks in remaining and should carefully consider those risks. This supersedes the Travel Warning issued on September 17, 2012, to emphasize information on security, kidnappings, and an upsurge in violence in Lebanon and the region.

The potential in Lebanon for a spontaneous upsurge in violence remains. Lebanese government authorities are not able to guarantee protection for citizens or visitors to the country should violence erupt suddenly. Access to borders, airports, roads, and seaports can be interrupted with little or no warning. Public demonstrations occur frequently with little warning and have the potential to become violent. Family, neighborhood, or sectarian disputes often escalate quickly and can lead to gunfire or other violence with little or no warning. The ability of U.S. government personnel to reach travelers or provide emergency services may be severely limited.

The Fulbright and the English Language Fellow programs that provided grants to U.S. scholars to live and work in Lebanon during the academic year remain suspended in country because of the security situation and the increased possibility of attacks against U.S. citizens in Lebanon.

A number of extremist groups operate in Lebanon, including some, such as Hizballah, that the U.S. government has designated as terrorist organizations. U.S. citizens have been the target of numerous terrorist attacks in Lebanon in the past, and the threat of anti-Western terrorist activity continues to exist in Lebanon. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Lebanon despite this Travel Warning should keep a low profile, assess their personal security, and vary times and routes for all required travel. U.S. citizens also should pay close attention to their personal security at locations where Westerners generally are known to congregate, and should avoid demonstrations and large gatherings.

Hizballah maintains a strong presence in parts of the southern suburbs of Beirut, portions of the Bekaa Valley, and areas in South Lebanon. The situation remains tense, and sporadic violence involving Hizballah or other extremist or criminal organizations remains a possibility in many areas of the country. The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens that clashes between Lebanese authorities and criminal elements have also recently occurred in other areas of the Bekaa and border regions.

The ongoing conflict in Syria has also resulted in numerous security incidents in the border regions between Lebanon and Syria and coincides with an increasing number of security incidents around the country. Over the past year there have been regular reports of shelling, originating from Syria, of Lebanese border areas and villages, some of which has resulted in deaths and injuries, as well as reports of armed groups originating from Syria who have kidnapped or attacked Lebanese citizens living in the border area. On February 1, 2013, gunmen on the outskirts of the village of Aarsal killed two soldiers in a retaliatory shoot-out when the army was in pursuit of a wanted suspect. Two Lebanese nationals were killed and several were injured due to shelling in northern Lebanon February 23-24. The potential for

border violence remains and the U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to avoid the Lebanese-Syrian border region.

U.S. citizens in Lebanon should monitor ongoing political and security developments in Syria, as this may impact the security situation in Lebanon. On August 9, 2012 the Lebanese Internal Security Force (ISF) arrested former Lebanese Minister Michel Samaha on charges of having plotted, at the direction of Syrian regime officials, to destabilize Lebanon by setting explosions and planning to assassinate certain Lebanese officials living in Tripoli or the northern region of Akkar. On October 19, 2012, Wissam al-Hassan, Chief of the Information Branch of the ISF was assassinated in a car bombing in the Ashrafieh neighborhood of Beirut. Two other people died, and many others were injured in the blast. There have been increasing numbers of armed clashes with heightened sectarian tensions in the Tripoli neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, in areas of the Bekaa, and in Sidon.

Hizballah and other para-military groups have at times detained U.S. citizens or other foreigners for political motivations as well as for interrogation – sometimes for hours or longer. Kidnapping, whether for ransom or political motives, remains a problem in Lebanon. Suspects in kidnappings sometimes have been found to have ties to terrorist or criminal organizations.

On August 16, 2012, the Maqdad clan in Lebanon kidnapped numerous Syrians and two Turkish nationals and claimed its actions were aimed at pressing for the release of one of their family members being held prisoner in Syria, allegedly by a group supporting the Syrian opposition.

Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped U.S. citizens, it is U.S. policy not to pay ransom.

Demonstrators sometimes block the primary road between downtown Beirut and Rafiq Hariri International Airport without warning. Access to the airport also may be cut off, sometimes for extended periods, if the security situation deteriorates.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) is a body the United Nations and Lebanon created to investigate past political assassinations. On June 30, 2011, the STL delivered to Lebanon's Prosecutor General an indictment containing arrest warrants for four Hizballah members who are still at large.

Beginning March 1, 2012 the United Nations renewed the STL's mandate for a second three-year term. U.S. citizens in Lebanon should monitor ongoing political developments, particularly in relation to the STL, as Lebanese political leaders have warned publicly that the Tribunal's findings could spark civil unrest.

Rocket attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel have occurred in the past and remain a potential threat. These attacks frequently provoke a military response from Israel. The rocket attacks and responses occur with no warning. Skirmishes and tense exchanges between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Forces, as well as protesters and civilians, along Lebanon's southern border with Israel also may occur with no warning. On May 15, 2011, several demonstrators were killed and several, including a U.S. citizen, were severely wounded near the southern Lebanese border town of Maroun ar-Ras after clashes with Israel resulted in open gunfire. Landmines and unexploded ordnance pose

significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of the country where fighting was intense during the civil war. More than 40 civilians have been killed and over 300 injured by unexploded ordnance remaining from the July-August 2006 Israel-Hizballah war. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

Palestinian groups hostile to both the Lebanese government and the United States operate largely autonomously inside refugee and military camps in different areas of the country. Intra-communal violence within the camps has resulted in violent incidents such as shootings and explosions. U.S. citizens should avoid travel to Palestinian camps. Asbat al-Ansar, a terrorist group with alleged links to Al-Qaida, has targeted Lebanese, U.S., and other foreign government interests. Although the group has been outlawed by the Lebanese government, it continues to maintain a presence in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp.

Armed clashes, exchanges of gunfire, and incidents involving thrown grenades have all occurred, as recently as February 27, 2013, in the areas surrounding Tyre and Sidon. Similar incidents could occur again without warning.

U.S. citizens traveling or resident in Lebanon despite this Travel Warning should be aware that the U.S. Embassy's ability to reach all areas of Lebanon is limited. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees will be able to render assistance to U.S. citizens in all areas of the country.

In the event that the security climate in Lebanon and the region worsens, U.S. citizens will be responsible for arranging their own travel out of Lebanon. U.S. citizens should be aware that the embassy does not offer "protection" services to individuals who feel unsafe. U.S. citizens with special medical or other needs should be aware of the risks of remaining given their condition, and should be prepared to seek treatment in Lebanon if they cannot arrange for travel out of the country.

U.S. government-facilitated evacuations, such as the evacuation that took place from Lebanon in 2006, occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Evacuation assistance is provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. Government for travel costs. The lack of a valid U.S. passport may hinder U.S. citizens' ability to depart the country and may slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. U.S. citizens in Lebanon should therefore ensure that they have proper and current documentation at all times. U.S. Legal Permanent Residents should consult with the Department of Homeland Security before they depart the United States to ensure they have proper documentation to re-enter. Further information on the Department's role during emergencies is provided within the Bureau of Consular Affairs website.

The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. Government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. The internal security policies of the U.S. Embassy may be adjusted at any time and without advance notice. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Because of security concerns, unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. Government employees and their family members is discouraged and strictly limited and requires the Department of State's prior approval.

U.S. citizens living or traveling in Lebanon should enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at the Bureau of Consular Affairs website to receive the latest travel updates and information and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Lebanon. U.S. citizens without Internet access may enroll directly with the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for U.S. citizens are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., U.S. citizens must make appointments in advance. U.S. citizens who require emergency services outside these hours, however, may contact the embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209.

Information on consular services and enrollment in STEP can also be found at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut's website or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday local time. Inquiries may also be sent to BeirutACS@state.gov

Up-to-date information on travel and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

For further information, U.S. citizens should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon. You can also stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which also contains current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook, and download our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes or Google Play, to have travel information at your fingertips.

South Sudan Travel Warning

Fri, 29 Mar 2013 12:00:00 EST

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to the Republic of South Sudan and strongly recommends U.S. citizens defer all travel to the country. This replaces the Travel Warning dated September 10, 2012, and updates information on services to U.S. citizens in the Republic of South Sudan.

The Department of State strongly recommends that you avoid all travel to the states in the border region between Sudan and South Sudan (Upper Nile, Unity, and Western Bar el Ghazai states in South Sudan; Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Sudan; and the Abyei Special Administrative District). Although fighting between Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has declined since spring 2012, the potential for troop build-ups along the border and renewed fighting continues to be a legitimate threat.

You should exercise extreme caution in all areas of South Sudan. In addition to the fighting in the border region, there are at least seven rebel militia forces that frequently engage in violent clashes with SPLA forces in various areas of South Sudan; these clashes can flare up with little warning and may exacerbate ethnic tensions throughout the country, leading to further violence.

The Government of South Sudan has limited capacity to deter crime or provide security to travelers outside of the capital city of Juba.

The risk of violent crime is high in Juba. In addition to the risk of criminality, U.S. citizens have been the subject of arrest and detention without cause and physical abuse by South Sudanese security services. The U.S. Embassy in Juba has imposed a curfew from 1:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. to better ensure the safety of its personnel. In addition to the curfew, the Embassy has implemented other measures to protect U.S. government personnel living and working in South Sudan. These include requiring personnel to travel in armored government vehicles at all times at night, and to obtain advance permission for any travel outside of Juba. Due to security concerns, spouses and family members of U.S. government personnel are not permitted to reside in South Sudan.

If you are currently working on humanitarian relief or development efforts in Juba, or anywhere in South Sudan, you should take measures to reduce your exposure to violent crime, and should closely follow the security policies and procedures of your organization.

There are likely to be disruptions or long delays in services provided by the Government of South Sudan, including health care and sanitation.

The U.S. Embassy in Juba currently provides limited services to U.S. citizens living or traveling in South Sudan, including passport renewal, the provision of emergency passports, and notary services. The embassy does not adjudicate Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. Other routine consular services are available through the U.S. embassies in neighboring countries, such as in Khartoum, Sudan, and Nairobi, Kenya.

U.S. citizens can obtain global updates from the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs website, where you can find the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

If you are going to live in or travel to South Sudan despite this Travel Warning, please take the time to tell us about your trip by enrolling 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 us 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 in South Sudan without internet access may enroll directly at the U.S. Embassy in Juba by filling out and submitting a registration form.

U.S. citizens in South Sudan can obtain the latest security information by contacting the consular section at the U.S. Embassy in Juba, South Sudan (e-mail address: ACSJuba@state.gov), or by visiting the U.S. Embassy website. In the event of an emergency, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Juba by calling 249-900-90-5107 (Zain) or 256-477-459-820 (GEMTEL) and ask to speak to the Embassy Duty Officer.

Guinea Travel Warning

Thu, 14 Mar 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Guinea because the political situation there remains unpredictable. This replaces the Travel Warning of September 07, 2012, to update information on the political situation and accompanying security issues.

Although Guinea has been relatively calm since the democratically elected President took office in December 2010, legislative elections, which should have taken place shortly after the presidential elections, have been delayed. On several occasions, large crowds of demonstrators representing members of various political parties have gathered along thoroughfares and at major intersections to protest. Protests turned violent on February 27, 2013, resulting in nine killed and hundreds injured.

U.S. citizens are urged to exercise caution, to be particularly alert to their surroundings, and to avoid crowds, demonstrations, or any other form of public gathering. Visitors to Guinea should be familiar with their hotel evacuation plans, policies, or procedures.

U.S. citizens in Guinea should carry their travel documents (i.e., passport, birth certificate, picture ID, etc.) with them at all times. Additionally, U.S. citizens in Guinea are reminded to stay in contact with friends and family in the United States to keep them apprised of their current welfare and whereabouts.

U.S. citizens traveling to or remaining in Guinea despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the most up-to-date security information. By enrolling, you make it easier for the U.S. Embassy to contact you in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information for Guinea and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Embassy is located on the Transversale No. 2, Centre Administratif de Koloma, opposite the New Radio Station in Ratoma, Conakry, Guinea. You can call the Embassy switchboard at 224-65-10-4000, or reach the consular section directly by calling 224-67-10-4444. For after-hours emergencies, please call 224-67-10-4311.

North Korea Travel Warning

Thu, 14 Mar 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens about travel to North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK). Travel by U.S. citizens to North Korea is not routine, and U.S. citizens crossing into North Korea, even accidentally, have been subject to arbitrary arrest and long-term detention. Since January 2009, four U.S. citizens have been arrested for entering North Korea illegally, and two U.S. citizens who entered on valid DPRK visas were arrested inside North Korea on other charges. This replaces the Travel Warning issued for North Korea on September 11, 2012, and it reminds U.S. citizens about the serious risks involved in traveling to the DPRK.

The Government of North Korea has not only imposed heavy fines on, but has also detained, arrested, and imprisoned persons who violated DPRK laws, such as entering the country illegally. Travelers to North Korea must enter the DPRK with a valid passport and valid DPRK visa. Foreign visitors to North Korea may be arrested, detained, or expelled for activities that would not be considered criminal outside North Korea, including involvement in unsanctioned religious and/or political activities (whether those activities took place inside or outside North Korea), unauthorized travel, or unauthorized interaction with the local population. North Korean security personnel may regard as espionage unauthorized or unescorted travel inside North Korea and unauthorized attempts to speak directly to North Korean citizens. North Korean authorities may fine or arrest travelers for exchanging currency with an unauthorized vendor, for taking unauthorized photographs, or for shopping at stores not designated for foreigners. It is a criminal act in North Korea to show disrespect to the country's former leaders, Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung, or to the current leader, Kim Jong Un.

If North Korean authorities permit you to keep your cell phone upon entry to the country, please keep in mind that you have no right to privacy in North Korea and should assume your communications are monitored. It is a criminal act to bring printed or electronic media criticizing the DPRK government into the country. If you bring electronic media, including USB drives, CD-ROMs, DVDs, or laptops, into North Korea, you must assume that North Korean authorities will review the information on those devices. Please be sure that the information contained on those devices does not violate North Korea's laws or regulations. North Korea's penalties for knowingly or unknowingly violating North Korea's laws are much harsher than U.S. penalties for similar offenses. Sentences for crimes can include years of detention in hard labor camps or death.

Since the United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with North Korea, the U.S. government has no means to provide normal consular services to U.S. citizens in North Korea. The Embassy of Sweden, the U.S. Protecting Power in the DPRK capital of Pyongyang, provides limited consular services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea who are ill, injured, arrested, or who have died while there. The U.S.-DPRK Interim Consular Agreement provides that North Korea will notify the Embassy of Sweden within four days of an arrest or detention of a U.S. citizen and will allow consular visits by the Swedish Embassy within two days after a request is made. However, the DPRK government routinely delays or denies consular access.

U.S. citizens who plan to travel to North Korea are strongly encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China, about their trip by enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) . If you enroll in this program, the State Department can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. Enrollment also makes it easier for friends and family to get in touch with you in an emergency via the U.S. Embassy

U.S. citizens residing in China can contact the U.S. Embassy in Beijing directly:

U. S. Embassy Beijing: The Embassy is located next to the Ladies' Street (Nuren Jie) and Laitai Flower Market, opposite the Kempinski Hotel and Lufthansa shopping Center on Tianze Road near the Liangmaqiao subway stop.

U.S. Embassy Beijing
American Citizens Services Unit
No. 55 An Jia Lou Road
Chaoyang District
Beijing, China 100600
Telephone: (86-10) 8531-4000
Facsimile: (86-10) 8531-3300
Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov
Emergency after-hours telephone: (86-10) 8531-4000

U.S. citizens traveling to North Korea are also strongly encouraged to contact the Embassy of Sweden by telephone or email prior to travel. Please provide the Embassy of Sweden with your name, date of birth, dates of your trip, and emergency contact information:

Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protecting Power in North Korea)
Munsu-Dong District
Pyongyang, DPRK
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 485 (reception)
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 904, (850-2) 3817 907 (Deputy)
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 908, (850-2) 3817 905 (Ambassador)
Facsimile: (850-2) 3817 663
Email: ambassaden.pyongyang@gov.se

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for North Korea and the current Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's travel website at travel.state.gov. U.S. citizens can obtain current information on safety and security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada, 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau

of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market to have travel information at your fingertips.

Tunisia Travel Warning

Wed, 13 Mar 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Tunisia. This replaces the Travel Warning dated October 19, 2012, to update information on the current security situation in Tunisia and the continuing potential for violent demonstrations and unrest, to reiterate information on security incidents, and to provide recommendations on security awareness.

As of March 13, the U.S. Embassy in Tunis is no longer on ordered departure status but continues to operate with limited staffing due to security concerns. Because of the unpredictability of the security situation throughout the country, the ability of U.S. government personnel to reach travelers or provide emergency services may be severely limited. The security situation in Tunisia remains unpredictable. Sporadic episodes of civil unrest have occurred throughout the country. U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds and demonstrations as even demonstrations that are intended to be peaceful can become violent and unpredictable. On September 14, 2012, violent mobs caused extensive property damage during an attack on the U.S. Embassy and the American Cooperative School of Tunis.

Since December 2012, Tunisian security forces have conducted raids on locations throughout Tunisia, including greater Tunis, and confiscated large illegal arms caches, including automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades. Several suspects were arrested and at least one was killed in these operations.

On February 6, 2013, a prominent opposition party leader was assassinated.

U.S. citizens should be alert and aware of their surroundings and maintain security awareness at all times, and should regularly monitor the local news media for current news and information. U.S. citizens remaining in Tunisia should make their own contingency emergency plans, enroll their presence in Tunisia through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), and provide their current contact information and next-of-kin or emergency contact information.

The Embassy is located in the Les Berges du Lac suburb of Tunis. The Embassy telephone number is 216 71 107 000 and the Embassy fax number is 216 71 963 263. The Consular section can also be contacted by email at ConsularTunis@state.gov.

For information on "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis" please visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Emergencies and Crises link. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 08:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays)

Updated information on travel and security in Tunisia may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or via regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 from elsewhere. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, found at travel.state.gov, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide

Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App available through iTunes and the Android market to have travel information at your fingertips.

Syria Travel Warning

Fri, 01 Mar 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to Syria and strongly recommends that U.S. citizens remaining in Syria depart immediately. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning dated August 28, 2012, to remind U.S. citizens that the security situation remains volatile and unpredictable as an armed conflict between government and anti-government armed groups continues throughout the country, with an increased risk of kidnappings, bombings, murder, and terrorism. This revision of the travel warning also serves to update contact information.

No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence, and the potential exists throughout the country for hostile acts, including kidnappings. Indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombardment, including of densely populated urban areas across the country, have significantly increased the risk of death or serious injury. The destruction of infrastructure, housing, medical facilities, schools, power and water utilities has also exacerbated hardships inside the country.

There is also a threat from terrorism, including groups like al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) affiliated al-Nusra Front. Since November 2011, al-Nusra Front has claimed nearly 600 attacks – ranging from more than 40 suicide attacks to small arms and improvised explosive device operations – in major city centers including Damascus, Aleppo, Hamah, Dara, Homs, Idlib, and Dayr al-Zawr. **Public places such as government buildings, shopping areas, and open spaces have been targeted.**

Communications in Syria are difficult as phone and internet connections have become increasingly unreliable. The Department of State has received reports that U.S. citizens are experiencing difficulty and facing dangers traveling within the country and when trying to leave Syria via land borders, given the diminishing availability of commercial air travel out of Syria as fierce clashes between pro-government and opposition forces continue in the vicinity of Damascus and Aleppo airports.

The U.S. Embassy in Damascus suspended its operations in February 2012 and therefore cannot provide protection or routine consular services to U.S. citizens in Syria. The Government of the Czech Republic, acting through its Embassy in Damascus, serves as Protecting Power for U.S. interests in Syria. The range of consular services the Czech Republic provides to U.S. citizens is extremely limited, and those services, including for U.S. passports and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, may require significantly more processing time than at U.S. embassies or consulates outside of Syria. U.S. citizens in Syria who seek consular services should contact the U.S. Interests Section of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Damascus at USIS_damascus@embassy.mzv.cz.

U.S. citizens in Syria who are in need of emergency assistance in Syria, and are unable to reach the U.S. Interests Section of the Embassy of the Czech Republic or must make contact outside business hours, should contact the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan:

Telephone: 962 (6) 590-6950 (Daily 2-3:30 local time)

Emergencies: 962 (6) 590-6500

E-mail: Amman-ACS@state.gov

If you seek information about U.S. citizens' services in Syria from the Office of Overseas Citizens' Services in Washington, please e-mail: SyriaEmergencyUSC@state.gov.

The Department of State urges those U.S. citizens who decide to remain in Syria despite this Travel Warning to provide their current contact information and next-of-kin information through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at www.travel.state.gov.

For information on "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis," please visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Emergencies and Crisis link at www.travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

For further information, U.S. citizens should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Syria. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Iraq Travel Warning

Mon, 25 Feb 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all but essential travel to Iraq given the security situation. Travel within Iraq remains dangerous. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated August 9, 2012, to update information on security incidents and to remind U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Iraq, including kidnapping and terrorist violence. The ability of the Embassy to respond to situations where U.S. citizens face difficulty, including arrests, is extremely limited.

Although violence and threats against U.S. citizens persist, reported incidents nationwide have decreased in the past year. U.S. citizens in Iraq remain at risk for kidnapping and terrorist violence, however. Methods of attack have included roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including explosively formed penetrators (EFPs); magnetic IEDs placed on vehicles; human and vehicle-borne IEDs; mines placed on or concealed near roads; mortars and rockets; and shootings using various direct fire weapons. Numerous insurgent groups, including al-Qaida in Iraq, remain active throughout Iraq. Although Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations against these groups continue, terrorist activity persists in many areas of the country. Regardless of the cause, terrorism or criminal, violence throughout Iraq remains at critical levels. In addition, some political protests and demonstrations have turned violent in the past six months. U.S. citizens in Iraq are strongly urged to avoid protests and large gatherings.

The U.S. government considers the potential threat to U.S. government personnel in Iraq to be serious enough to require them to live and work under strict security guidelines. All U.S. government employees under the authority of the U.S. Chief of Mission must follow strict safety and security procedures when traveling outside the Embassy. State Department guidance to U.S. businesses in Iraq advises the use of protective security details. Detailed security information is available at the U.S. Embassy website.

The U.S. Embassy is located in the International Zone (IZ) in Baghdad. The IZ is a restricted access area. Iraqi authorities are responsible for control of the IZ. Travelers to the IZ should be aware that Iraqi authorities may require special identification to enter the IZ or may issue IZ-specific access badges. Individuals residing and traveling within the IZ should continue to exercise good personal safety precautions.

Increasingly, many U.S. and third-country business people travel throughout much of Iraq; however, they do so under restricted movement conditions and almost always with security advisors and protective security teams.

Some regions within Iraq have experienced fewer violent incidents than others in recent years, in particular the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). The security situation in the IKR, which includes the governorates of Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Dohuk, has been more stable relative to the rest of Iraq in recent years. Although there have been significantly fewer terrorist attacks and lower levels of insurgent violence in the IKR than in other parts of Iraq, the security situation throughout the IKR remains

dangerous, and threats have increased in recent months. U.S. government personnel in northern Iraq are required to be accompanied by a protective security escort when traveling outside secure facilities.

The Government of Iraq strictly enforces requirements regarding visas and stamps for entry and exit, vehicle registration, authorizations for weapons, and movements through checkpoints. The Embassy highly recommends that all U.S. citizens in Iraq carefully review the status of their travel documents and any necessary licenses and government authorizations to ensure that they are current and valid. U.S. citizens are urged to immediately correct any deficiencies in their travel documents. U.S. citizens are strongly advised against traveling throughout the country with deficient or invalid documents. For more information about entry/exit requirements for U.S. citizens, please see our Country Specific Information page for Iraq.

U.S. citizens should avoid areas near the Turkish or Iranian borders. The Turkish military continues to carry out operations against elements of the Kongra-Gel terrorist group (KGK, formerly Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK) located along Iraq's northern border. Additionally, extensive unmarked minefields remain along the same border. The Governments of Turkey and Iran continue to conduct military operations against insurgent groups in the mountain regions. These operations have included troop movements and both aerial and artillery bombardments. Borders in these areas are not always clearly defined. Iranian authorities previously detained, for an extended period, U.S. citizens who were hiking in the vicinity of the Iranian border in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). The resources available to the U.S. Embassy to assist U.S. citizens who venture close to or cross the border with Iran are extremely limited.

The ability of the U.S. Embassy to provide consular services to U.S. citizens throughout Iraq, including Baghdad, is particularly limited given the security environment. The U.S. Consulates in Basrah, Erbil, and Kirkuk cannot provide routine services such as passport applications, extra visa pages, and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. U.S. citizens in need of these services while in Iraq must travel to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The Embassy's website includes consular information and the most recent messages to U.S. citizens in Iraq. U.S. citizens in Iraq who need emergency assistance should call 0770-443-1286.

For information on "What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis," please visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Emergencies and Crisis link. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

U.S. citizens who choose to visit or reside in Iraq despite this Travel Warning are urged to take responsibility for their own personal security and belongings (including their U.S. passports) and to avoid crowds, especially rallies or demonstrations. U.S. citizens who choose to travel in Iraq should be aware that Iraqi authorities have arrested or detained U.S. citizens whose purpose of travel is not readily apparent. Persons also have been detained for taking photographs of buildings, monuments, or other sites, especially in the IZ in Baghdad.

All U.S. citizens in Iraq, including those working on contract for the U.S. government, are urged to inform the U.S. Embassy of their presence in Iraq by enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) in order to obtain updated travel information. By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to provide updated security information or to contact them in emergencies. The Embassy also offers SMS text alerts delivered to your mobile phone when new security and emergency messages are released.

U.S. citizens may obtain the latest security information or other information about Iraq by contacting the U.S. Embassy, located in the International Zone, via email, or by accessing U.S. Embassy Baghdad's website. The after-hours emergency numbers are 011-964-770-443-1286 (from the United States) or 0770-443-1286 (within Iraq). As cell phone service is unreliable in Iraq, emergency calls may also be placed through the Department of State at 1-888-407-4747.

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market for travel information at your fingertips. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.

Algeria Travel Warning

Tue, 19 Feb 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Algeria. This replaces the Travel Warning for Algeria dated January 19, 2013, to update information on the current security situation in Algeria, the continuing threat posed by terrorism, and to reiterate information on security incidents and recommendations on security awareness.

Based on an assessment of the current security situation in Algeria, the Department of State lifted the authorized departure status for U.S. Embassy personnel and their dependents on February 18, 2013.

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens who travel to Algeria to evaluate carefully the risks posed to their personal safety. There is a high threat of terrorism and kidnappings in Algeria. This kidnapping threat was noted in the Department of State's Worldwide Caution dated February 19, 2013. Although the major cities are heavily policed, attacks could still potentially take place. The majority of terrorist attacks, including bombings, false roadblocks, kidnappings, and ambushes occur in areas of the country east and south of Algiers.

Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active and operates throughout Algeria. In February 2011, AQIM claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of an Italian citizen and her Algerian driver; and also the suicide bomb attack at the Algerian Military Academy in Cherchell, 48 miles west of Algiers in August 2011. The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is also active in Algeria. In October 2011, they kidnapped two Spanish nationals and an Italian national from a refugee camp 1,088 miles southwest of Algiers in Tindouf. In March 2012, MUJAO claimed responsibility for the car bomb attack at an Algerian military base 1,196 miles south of Algiers in Tamanrasset and a similar car bomb attack at another base 478 miles south/southeast of Algiers in Ouargla. In January 2013, an AQIM-linked organization: "Those Who Sign in Blood", led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, attacked a gas production facility near In Amenas, Algeria. The group held dozens of western and Algerian hostages for four days that resulted in the deaths of dozens of hostages, including three U.S. citizens. Mokhtar Belmokhtar remains a threat and is at large in the region.

The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens avoid overland travel in Algeria. U.S. citizens who reside in or travel to Algeria should take personal security measures to include stocking adequate reserves of medicine, food, and water for use during an emergency. Additionally, sporadic episodes of civil unrest have been known to occur, such as the riots in Algiers and many other cities from January 2011 to the present. U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds and demonstrations because even demonstrations that are meant to be peaceful can become violent and unpredictable. U.S. citizens should be alert and aware of their surroundings and maintain security awareness at all times. U.S. citizens should regularly monitor the local news media for current news and information.

Visitors to Algeria are advised to stay only in hotels where adequate security is provided. All visitors to Algeria should remain alert, avoid predictable travel patterns and maintain a low profile. U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies of all kinds. Most political gatherings are peaceful but can turn violent without notice.

The U.S. government considers the potential threat to U.S. Embassy personnel assigned to Algiers sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under significant security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, the movement of U.S. Embassy officials and the provision of consular services in certain areas of the country. The Government of Algeria requires U.S. Embassy personnel to seek permission to travel to the Casbah within Algiers or outside the province of Algiers and to have a security escort. Travel to the military zone established around the Hassi Messaoud oil center requires Government of Algeria authorization. Daily movement of Embassy personnel in parts of Algiers is limited, and prudent security practices are required at all times. Travel by Embassy personnel within certain areas of the city requires coordination with the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Office.

U.S. citizens living or traveling in Algeria are encouraged to enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the latest travel updates and to obtain updated information on security within Algeria. By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens living abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, and Country Specific Information can be found. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi in the El Biar district of Algiers, and can be reached by telephone at (213) 770 08 20 00. The fax is {213} 21 98 22 99. The consular section email is ACSAlgiers@state.gov.

Afghanistan Travel Warning

Tue, 29 Jan 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan. The security threat to all U.S. citizens in Afghanistan remains critical. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Afghanistan issued on June 27, 2012, and reminds U.S. citizens of ongoing security risks, including kidnapping and insurgent attacks.

No region in 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. Remnants of the former Taliban regime and the al-Qaida terrorist network, as well as other groups hostile to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military operations, remain active. Afghan authorities have a limited ability to maintain order and ensure the security of Afghan citizens and foreign visitors. Travel in all areas of Afghanistan is unsafe due to 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 (IEDs). The security situation remains volatile and unpredictable throughout the country.

There is an ongoing and significant risk of kidnapping and assassination of U.S. citizens and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) employees throughout the country. In May 2012, a British and a Kenyan aid worker, along with two Afghan counterparts, were kidnapped in Badakhshan Province while riding on horseback to deliver medical supplies to a remote village; they were freed 11 days later in a NATO rescue operation. In December 2012, a U.S. citizen working with an NGO was kidnapped in Kabul Province, and subsequently rescued by U.S. forces.

Riots and incidents of civil disturbance can and do occur, often without warning. U.S. citizens should avoid rallies and demonstrations; even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Following the unintentional mishandling of Korans by U.S. service members at Bagram Air Field base on February 21, 2012, violent demonstrations occurred in several locations throughout Afghanistan, resulting in the deaths of two U.S. service members during a protest outside of a military base in Nangarhar Province. Two additional U.S. service members were killed inside Kabul's Ministry of Interior during a shooting that was likely attributable to the mishandling of Korans. The release in mid-September 2012 of an anti-Islamic amateur film produced in the United States prompted demonstrations around Afghanistan, including in Kabul. Most of the protests were peaceful; however, on September 17, 2012, one rally in Kabul grew violent, leading to the destruction of two police vehicles.

Kabul and its suburbs are also considered at high risk for militant attacks, including rocket attacks, vehicle-borne IEDs, direct-fire attacks and suicide bombings. A number of such attacks were reported in Kabul City from January to October 2012, and many additional attacks were thwarted by Afghan and coalition forces. In the last eighteen months, incidents involving Westerners have included a suicide attack against the Intercontinental Hotel in June 2011 in which U.S. citizens were critically injured, and an August 2011 attack against the British Council. Insurgents also carried out a complex sustained attack

against multiple targets in Kabul on September 13, 2011, which included the U.S. Embassy and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) headquarters, and again on April 15, 2012, targeting the U.S. and neighbouring embassies as well as ISAF headquarters and the Afghan Parliament.

Insurgents have also targeted the offices, convoys, and individual implementing partners of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Kabul-Jalalabad Road (commonly called Jalalabad Road) and the Kabul to Bagram road are highly restricted for Embassy employees. On May 2, 2012, insurgents with vehicle-borne explosives and suicide vests targeted Green Village, a compound on Jalalabad Road in Kabul that houses primarily international security contractors; several guards and local school children were killed at the gates of the compound as a result of explosions. On June 22, 2012, insurgents attacked Spozhmai Hotel west of Kabul City. This attack created a hostage situation which resulted in the deaths of a number of Afghan civilians.

Buildings or compounds that lack robust security measures in comparison to neighboring facilities may be viewed as targets of opportunity by insurgents.

Ambushes, robberies, and violent crime can add to the insecurity in many areas of the country. U.S. citizens involved in property or business disputes -- a common legal problem in Afghanistan -- have reported that their adversaries in the disputes have threatened their lives. U.S. citizens who find themselves in such situations should not assume that either local law enforcement or the U.S. Embassy will be able to assist them in resolving these disputes.

From time to time, depending on current security conditions, the U.S. Embassy places areas frequented by foreigners off limits to its personnel. Potential target areas include key national or international government establishments, international organizations and other locations with expatriate personnel, and public areas popular with the expatriate community such as restaurants and hotels. Private U.S. citizens are strongly urged to heed these restrictions as well. We encourage U.S. citizens to obtain the latest information by frequently consulting the Embassy's travel advisory website.

The U.S. Embassy's ability to provide emergency consular services to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan is limited, particularly for those persons outside the capital. U.S. citizens who choose to visit or remain in Afghanistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to enroll with the U.S. Embassy in Kabul through the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to obtain updated information on travel and security within Afghanistan. U.S. citizens without Internet access may enroll directly with the U.S. Embassy. Enrollment makes it easier for the Embassy to contact U.S. citizens in case of an emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Great Masood Road between Radio Afghanistan and the Ministry of Public Health (the road is also known as Bebe Mahro or Airport Road) in Kabul. The Embassy phone numbers are 93-(0)700-108-001 and 93-(0)700-108-002. For after-hours, life-or-limb emergencies involving U.S. citizens, the Consular Section can be reached at 93-(0)700-201-908; please direct routine consular correspondence to KabulACS@state.gov.

Current information on travel and security in Afghanistan may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00

a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Afghanistan and the current Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website. You can also stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which also contains current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.

El Salvador Travel Warning

Wed, 23 Jan 2013 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens about the security situation in El Salvador.

Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens safely visit El Salvador each year for study, tourism, business, and volunteer work. However, crime and violence are serious problems throughout the country. In 2011, El Salvador had the second highest murder rate in the world: 71 per 100,000 people (by comparison, the murder rate in Massachusetts, with a similar geographical area and population, was 2.6 per 100,000). In 2012, a truce between El Salvador's two principal street gangs contributed to a decline in the homicide rate. However, the sustainability of the decline is unclear, and the truce had little impact on robbery, assaults, and other violent crimes. Most of these crimes go unsolved. In March 2012, as a result of an administrative review of the security situation, Peace Corps El Salvador substantially reduced the number of its volunteers in country.

U.S. citizens do not appear to be targeted based on their nationality. However, 22 U.S. citizens have been murdered in El Salvador since January 2010. During the same time period, 230 U.S. citizens reported having their passports stolen. Armed robberies of climbers and hikers in El Salvador's national parks are common, and the Embassy strongly recommends engaging the services of a local guide certified by the national or local tourist authority when hiking in back country areas, even within the national parks. In 2000, the National Civilian Police (PNC) established a special tourist police force (POLITUR) to provide security and assistance to tourists, as well as protection for the cultural heritage of El Salvador. It has officers located in 19 tourist destinations.

A majority of serious crimes are never solved; only five of the 22 murders committed against U.S. citizens since January 2010 have resulted in convictions. The Government of El Salvador lacks sufficient resources to properly investigate and prosecute cases and to deter violent crime. The PNC is still developing into a modern and effective police force that can protect the public. While several of the PNC's investigative units have shown great promise, routine street level patrol techniques, anti-gang, and crime suppression efforts are limited.

Transnational criminal organizations conduct narcotics, arms trafficking, and other unlawful activities throughout the country and use violence to control drug trafficking routes and carry out other criminal activity. Other criminals, acting both individually and in gangs, commit crimes such as murder-for-hire, carjacking, extortion, armed robbery, rapes, and other aggravated assaults. El Salvador, a country of roughly six million people, has hundreds of known street gangs totaling more than 20,000 members. Gangs and other criminal elements roam freely day and night, targeting affluent areas for burglaries, and gang members are quick to engage in violence if resisted.

Extortion is a particularly serious and common crime in El Salvador. Many extortion attempts are no more than random cold calls that originate from imprisoned gang members using cellular telephones, and the subsequent threats against the victim are made through social engineering and/or through

information obtained about the victim's family. U.S. citizens who are visiting El Salvador for extended periods may be at higher risk for extortion demands. Hitting its peak a few years ago, extortion has dropped in the last two years; however, recent reports show that there is an increase in the level of violence associated with extortion cases, including media reports of extortion victims and witnesses being killed. Extortion attempts can be transnational in nature and can include kidnapping of victims. For example, in 2011, a 2 year old U.S. citizen was kidnapped from the home of his grandparents in El Salvador by 8 to 10 armed men. Ransom demands made to family members in both El Salvador and the United States were traced back to a local prison used exclusively to incarcerate gang members.

U.S. citizens should be vigilant of their surroundings at all times, especially when entering or exiting their homes or hotels, cars, garages, schools, and workplaces. Whenever possible, travel in groups of two or more persons. Avoid wearing jewelry, and do not carry large sums of money or display cash, ATM/credit cards, or other valuables. Avoid walking at night in most areas of El Salvador, and do not walk alone near beaches, historic ruins, or trails. Incidents of crime along roads, including carjacking, are common in El Salvador. Motorists should avoid traveling at night and always drive with their doors locked to deter potential robberies at traffic lights and on congested downtown streets. Travel on public transportation, especially buses, both within and outside the capital, is risky and not recommended. The Embassy advises official visitors and personnel to avoid using mini-buses and regular buses and to use only radio-dispatched taxis or those stationed in front of major hotels.

The location and timing of criminal activity is unpredictable. We recommend that all travelers exercise caution when traveling anywhere in El Salvador. However, certain areas of the country demonstrate higher levels of criminal activity than others. Salvadoran "departments" (a geographic designation similar to U.S. states) with homicide rates higher than the national average include:

La Paz
La Union
Santa Ana
San Miguel
San Salvador
San Vicente
Sonsonate

In addition, the following municipalities are experiencing chronic high levels of reported criminal activity:

Acajutla/Metalio
Apopa
Ilopango
La Libertad
La Union/Tamarindo Beaches
Lourdes-Colon
Mejicanos
San Francisco Gotera

San Miguel
Santa Rosa de Lima
Soyopango

For more detailed information regarding personal security, please see the State Department's Country Specific Information for El Salvador. For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Web site, where the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. U.S. citizens living or traveling in El Salvador are strongly encouraged to sign up for the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to obtain updated information on travel and security within El Salvador.

The Embassy is located on Final Boulevard Santa Elena Sur, Urbanización Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlán, La Libertad, and can be reached by telephone at 011-503-2501-2999 or by fax at 011-503-2278-5522. For after-hours emergencies, please call 011-503-2501-2253. The Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit can be reached directly by fax at 011-503-2501-6020 or by e-mail at ACSSanSal@state.gov. Travelers may register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador. Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs Web site, which contains Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.

Haiti Travel Warning

Fri, 28 Dec 2012 12:00:00 EST

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens traveling to or living in Haiti about the current security situation. This replaces the Travel Warning dated June 18, 2012, updating information regarding the level of crime, the presence of cholera, lack of adequate infrastructure - particularly in medical facilities - seasonal severe inclement weather, and limited police protection. The United Nations' Stabilization Force for Haiti (MINUSTAH) remains in Haiti.

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to exercise caution when visiting Haiti. Thousands of U.S. citizens safely visit Haiti each year, but the poor state of Haiti's emergency response network should be carefully considered when planning travel. Travelers to Haiti are encouraged to use organizations that have solid infrastructure, evacuation, and medical support options in place. (Please see the Country Specific Information page for Haiti.)

U.S. citizens have been victims of violent crime, including murder and kidnapping, predominantly in the Port-au-Prince area. No one is safe from kidnapping, regardless of occupation, nationality, race, gender, or age. In recent months, travelers arriving in Port-au-Prince on flights from the United States were attacked and robbed shortly after departing the airport. At least two U.S. citizens were shot and killed in robbery and kidnapping incidents in 2012. Haitian authorities have limited capacity to deter or investigate such violent acts, or prosecute perpetrators.

The ability of local authorities to respond to emergencies is limited and in some areas nonexistent. Should you find yourself in an emergency, local health, police, judicial, and physical infrastructure limitations mean there are few local resources available to help resolve the problem. For this reason, the Embassy limits its staff's travel in areas outside of Port-au-Prince. This in turn constrains our ability to provide emergency services to U.S. Citizens outside of Port-au-Prince.

U.S. Embassy personnel are under an Embassy-imposed curfew of 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. and must remain at home or at another safe facility during curfew hours. Additionally, there are restrictions on travel by Embassy staff in other areas or times. This, too, may constrain the Embassy's ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens outside Port-au-Prince. For additional details on restrictions on staff travel within Haiti, please see our Country Specific Information for Haiti.

The Haitian National Police (HNP), with assistance from MINUSTAH, are responsible for keeping the peace and rendering assistance. However, given the possibility and unpredictability of protests, including the potential (as with any protest) to become violent, its ability to assist U.S. citizens during disturbances is very limited. Please see our website for additional information on how the Department of State assists U.S. citizens during a crisis.

Haiti's infrastructure remains in poor condition and unable to fully support even normal activity, much less crisis situations. U.S. government-facilitated evacuations, such as the evacuation that took place after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Medical facilities, including ambulance services, are particularly weak. Some U.S. citizens injured in accidents

and others with serious health concerns have been unable to find necessary medical care in Haiti and have had to arrange and pay for medical evacuation to the United States. Given these conditions and the cost of private evacuations, we strongly encourage visitors to Haiti to obtain evacuation insurance, including for medical issues that may arise.

While incidents of cholera have declined significantly, cholera persists in many areas of Haiti. Prior to travel, U.S. citizens should obtain information about cholera and other health-related issues by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

We urge U.S. citizens who choose to travel to Haiti to review our Country Specific Information page. U.S. private sector organizations with operations in Haiti can obtain additional information on the security situation in the country through the U.S. Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC). OSAC's mission is to promote security cooperation between U.S. private sector interests worldwide and the U.S. Department of State. OSAC also maintains an active Country Council in Haiti to promote the exchange of security-related information. The Council is comprised of security professionals and is co-chaired by the Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince and a private sector representative. U.S. private sector entities can obtain additional information on OSAC by visiting the OSAC website at www.osac.gov.

U.S. citizens are also urged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) in order to receive the most up-to-date security information. While the Embassy's ability to provide emergency consular services is extremely limited, by enrolling in STEP travelers can receive security messages via email. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States; callers outside the United States and Canada can receive the information by calling a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, except U.S. federal holidays. The Embassy of the United States of America is located in Port-au-Prince at Boulevard du 15 Octobre, Tabarre 41, Tabarre, Haiti, telephone: (509) (2) 229-8000, facsimile: (509) (2) 229-8027, email: acspap@state.gov American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Consular Section is closed on U.S. and local holidays. After hours, on weekends and on holidays, please call (509) (2) 229-8000. The Marine guard will connect you with the Embassy Duty Officer.

U.S. citizens can also stay informed about conditions in Haiti by following the Embassy and ACS on Twitter and Facebook. Travelers can have the latest travel information at their fingertips by downloading our free Smart Traveler app, available through iTunes and the Android market.

Saudi Arabia

Mon, 19 Nov 2012 12:00:00 EST

Department of State urges U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of traveling to Saudi Arabia. As the August 26, 2012, arrest of two terrorist cells by Saudi security authorities indicates, there remains an ongoing security threat due to the continued presence of terrorist groups, some affiliated with al-Qaida, who may target Western interests, housing compounds, hotels, shopping areas, and other facilities where Westerners congregate. These terrorist groups may employ a wide variety of tactics, including small-scale attacks, and may target Saudi government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom. This replaces the Travel Warning issued May 18, 2012, to update information on the current security situation in Saudi Arabia and the continuing threat posed by terrorism, and to reiterate recommendations on security awareness.

While the Saudi government has greatly improved the security environment throughout the Kingdom since the major terrorist attack against foreign nationals in 2007, it is important to note that an ongoing security threat remains. U.S. citizens who visit Saudi Arabia are strongly encouraged to carefully select hotels or housing compounds with security measures in place that meet their particular needs. This is a personal and individual decision for the traveler and/or sponsor. In addition, given that terrorists may seek predictable targets, U.S. citizens should always be aware of their surroundings when traveling or visiting commercial establishments frequented by Westerners. U.S. citizens are also advised to keep a low profile, vary times and routes of travel, exercise caution while driving, entering or exiting vehicles, and ensure that travel documents and visas are current and valid.

If the security threat changes or specific threats affecting U.S. citizens are discovered, this information will be made available through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) and U.S. Mission websites. Emergency Messages, Security Messages, and Messages for U.S. Citizens can be found on the U.S. Embassy Riyadh website.

The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By enrolling, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens without internet access may enroll directly with the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh or the Consulates in Dhahran or Jeddah.

U.S. Embassy Riyadh
International mailing address:

P.O. Box 94309, Riyadh 11693
Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to:

U.S. Embassy, Unit 61307, APO AE 09803-1307
Telephone: (966) (1) 488-3800
Fax: (966) (1) 483-0773

Emergency after-hours telephone: (966) (1) 488-3800

U.S. Consulate General Dhahran
International mailing address:

P.O. Box 38955, Doha-Dhahran 31942
Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to:

Unit 66803, APO AE 09858-6803
Telephone: (966) (3) 330-3200
Fax: (966) (3) 330-0464

Emergency after-hours telephone: (966) (3) **330-3200, x3004**

U.S. Consulate General Jeddah
International mailing address: P.O. Box 149, Jeddah.
Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to:

Unit 62112, APO AE 09811-2112
Telephone: (966) (2) 667-0080
Fax: (966) (2) 669-3078 or 669-3098

Emergency after-hours telephone: (966) (2) 667-0080

Up-to-date information on travel and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers from other countries, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App available through iTunes and the Android market to have travel information at your fingertips. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.