



Travel Warning: Somalia

Terrorism; Piracy; Kidnapping

Africa > Somalia > Mogadishu

12/26/2012

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Somalia. This replaces the Travel Warning dated June 15, 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 potentially 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. 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. The U.S.-designated and U.N.-sanctioned terrorist organization Al-Shabaab continues to pose a significant threat in Mogadishu, although the city is now under Somali government control, with the military support of African Union forces. The Somali government/African Union military have made significant progress in other parts of southern and central Somalia. On April 4, 2012, a bomb attack at the Somali National Theatre killed 8 people. On September 12, 2012, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud survived an assassination attempt after two suicide bombers attacked the Jazeera Hotel in Mogadishu where the President was staying. Several members of the security forces were killed in foiling the attack. On September 20, 2012, a suicide bomb attack at Village Restaurant in Mogadishu killed over 15 people. On November 1, 2012, suspects carrying Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) attempting to attack Mogadishu's airport were intercepted by authorities. On November 3, 2012, a second suicide bomb attack at Village Restaurant in Mogadishu killed three people. On November 7, 2012, a vehicular borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) detonated in a parking lot of a mosque near Parliament.



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 Android market, to have travel information at your fingertips.