



Travel Warning: Saudi Arabia

Terrorism; Political Violence

Near East > Saudi Arabia > Dhahran; Near East > Saudi Arabia > Jeddah; Near East > Saudi Arabia > Riyadh

4/11/2016

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of traveling to Saudi Arabia. There continue to be reports of threats against U.S. citizens and other Westerners, as well as locations frequented by them. There have been multiple attacks on mosques which were directed or inspired by ISIL in the past year. Furthermore, there are ongoing security concerns related to the crises in neighboring countries such as Yemen and Iraq. This replaces the Travel Warning issued September 21, 2015.

Security threats continue and terrorist groups, some affiliated with ISIL or Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), have targeted both Saudi and Western interests. Possible targets include housing compounds, hotels, restaurants, shopping areas, international schools, and other facilities where Westerners congregate, as well as Saudi government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom. Media reports indicate that Saudi authorities thwarted plans to attack the Al-Janadriah festival in Riyadh, which took place in February 2016.

Multiple attacks on mosques, as well as places where members of the Shia-Muslim minority gather, have occurred in Saudi Arabia over the past year, resulting in significant loss of life. On May 22, 2015, a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Al-Qadeeh in Al Qatif Governorate. On May 29, 2015, a blast occurred at another mosque in the Al Anoud district of Dammam. On August 6, 2015, a mosque in the city of Abha was bombed. Most of the victims in that attack were members of the Saudi security forces. On October 16, 2015, a mass shooting took place

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at a gathering in Saihat. Additional mosque attacks took place in Najran on October 26, 2015 and in Al-Ahsa in the Eastern Province on January 29, 2016. Aside from the mosque bombings, ISIL claimed responsibility for an explosion targeting a Saudi citizen that damaged vehicles in the Al-Azizia district of Riyadh on February 8, 2016.

U.S. government personnel and their families are restricted from traveling within 50 miles of the Yemeni border, and to the cities of Jizan and Najran, without permission. U.S. government personnel are similarly prohibited from traveling to the city of Qatif in the Eastern Province and its surrounding suburbs, including Awamiyah, and to the town of Hofuf and its surrounding suburbs in the Al Hasa Governorate due to violent episodes that have occurred there in the past.

The U.S. Embassy continues to be concerned about the possibility of violence and military activity near the border with Yemen. The rugged territory along the border dividing Yemen and Saudi Arabia is porous, and boundaries in some areas are not clearly defined. During the conflict in Yemen, violence has spilled across the border at unpredictable times and locations.

Visitors who choose to travel to these areas despite U.S. government concerns should be aware that, in addition to the above noted border attacks, terrorist and criminal elements may be operating there, including AQAP. U.S. citizens are strongly urged to read the Department of State Travel Warning for Yemen before traveling to areas near the Yemeni frontier.

U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia are strongly encouraged to select hotels or housing compounds with careful attention to security measures and location. U.S. citizens should be aware of their surroundings at all times and are advised to keep a low profile; vary times and routes of travel;

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exercise caution while driving, and entering or exiting vehicles; and ensure that travel documents and visas are current and valid.

For further information:

See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Saudi Arabia Country Specific Information.

Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

Contact the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia located at Abdullah Ibn Huthafah Al-Sahmi Street, Diplomatic Quarter, at +966 11 488 3800, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +966 11 488 3800.

Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

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