

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Saudi Arabia Travel Warning

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The Department of State warns U.S. citizens about the security situation in Saudi Arabia and reminds U.S. citizens of recommended security precautions. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to consider carefully the risks of traveling to Saudi Arabia. There is 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 and also may target Saudi Government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom. This updates and replaces the Travel Warning issued June 26, 2009, to note the authorized return of U.S. government dependents to the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh.

The last major terrorist attack directed against the civilian population was an attack against French nationals in 2007. Significant improvements in the capacity and capability of Saudi security and intelligence forces have greatly improved the security environment. Although much improved, the improvements remain fragile and reversible.

The Department of State has authorized the return of all family members to U.S. Embassy Riyadh. The U.S. Consulate General Jeddah remains an unaccompanied post. While these changes reflect the continued improvement in the security climate in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the Eastern Province and Riyadh, it is important to note that 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 and also may target Saudi Government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom.

U.S. citizens who choose to visit Saudi Arabia are strongly urged to avoid staying in hotels or housing compounds that do not apply stringent security measures and also are advised to be aware of their surroundings when visiting commercial establishments frequented by Westerners. U.S. citizens also are 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.

From time to time, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Saudi Arabia may restrict travel of official Americans or suspend public services for security reasons. Whenever threat information is specific, credible, and non-counterable, this threat information will be made available to the American public. In those instances, the Embassy and Consulates will keep the local American citizen community apprised through the Warden system and make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Warden messages can be found on the U.S. Embassy Riyadh website.

All travelers are encouraged to register their trip online through the Department of State's Internet Based Registration Service. Updated information on travel and security in Saudi Arabia may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 from within the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.) For additional information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Saudi Arabia, and Worldwide Caution. U.S. citizens who require emergency services may telephone the Embassy in Riyadh at (966) (1) 488-3800, the Consulate in Jeddah at (966) (2) 667-0080, or the Consulate in Dhahran at (966) (3) 330-3200.

See http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html for State Department Travel Warnings

SUMMARY

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