Travel Warning U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE Bureau of Consular Affairs

Kenya
September 27, 2013

In light of the recent attack on a Nairobi shopping mall, the U.S. Department of State has reissued its Travel Warning of July 5, 2013, which 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. On September 21, 2013, suspected members of the Al Shabaab terrorist organization, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, attacked the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, killing scores of innocent people, both Kenyan and foreign, and wounding many others. The siege at the mall continued for several days and five U.S. citizens were confirmed injured in the attack. The U.S. government continues to receive information about potential terrorist threats aimed at U.S., Western, and Kenyan interests in Kenya, including in the Nairobi area and in the coastal city of Mombasa. 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 in addition to the attack described above. 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 an 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 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 U.S. embassy employee 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.