

Thursday July 27, 2006

# Travel Warning

United States Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Washington, DC 20520

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## AFGHANISTAN

**June 22, 2006**

This Travel Warning provides updated information on the security situation in Afghanistan. The security threat to all American citizens in Afghanistan remains critical. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Afghanistan issued January 9, 2006.

The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan. There is an ongoing threat to kidnap and assassinate U.S. citizens and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers throughout the country. The ability of Afghan authorities to maintain order and ensure the security of citizens and visitors is limited. Remnants of the former Taliban regime and the terrorist al-Qaida network, and other groups hostile to the government, remain active. U.S.-led military operations continue. Narcotrafficking elements opposed to poppy eradication efforts are also responsible for attacks against Westerners. Travel in all areas of Afghanistan, including the capital, Kabul, is unsafe due to military operations, landmines, banditry, armed rivalry among political and tribal groups, and the possibility of terrorist attacks, including attacks using vehicular or other improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The security environment remains volatile and unpredictable.

Attacks on international organizations, international aid workers, and foreign interests have continued over the past six months. There has been a significant increase in attacks in the south and southwestern areas of the country as a result of, among other things, drug eradication efforts, and a seasonal surge in insurgent activity. There has also been an increase in the use of suicide bombers and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) throughout the country. As an example, a suicide bomber detonated a VBIED in Kandahar in January, killing a Canadian diplomat. In March, in Helmand Province, a remote-controlled IED killed four employees of a security company employed by a U.S. Government contractor. In April, a rocket impacted inside the Kabul TV station building in Wazir Akbar Khan, behind the U.S. Embassy, and injured one person. Also in May, a VBIED killed an American working for a U.S. Government contractor in Herat. On May 30, two Americans working for a USAID contractor were injured in an IED attack in Badakshan that killed two of their Afghan colleagues. Incidents sometimes occur on the Kabul-Jalalabad Road (commonly called Jalalabad Road). Because the Embassy also has received information over the past several months about potential attacks on this road, its use generally is highly restricted for Embassy employees and, if the security situation warrants, sometimes is curtailed completely.

Foreigners in Kabul and elsewhere throughout the country were targeted for violent attacks and kidnappings. On February 11, two Nepalese guards employed by the British Embassy were kidnapped. One was killed; the other was found beaten. On March 10, four Albanian workers were kidnapped in Kandahar. They were killed, and their bodies were later found.

Riots and incidents of civil disturbance also have occurred several times since the beginning of 2006. During February 6-8, both peaceful and violent demonstrations occurred throughout Afghanistan in response to cartoons about Islam in a Danish newspaper. Seven protestors were killed and scores of protestors and police were injured in the clashes. On March 26, large anti-

American protests occurred in Mazar-i-Sharif after the Government of Afghanistan released from police custody an Afghan who had converted to Christianity; the U.S. Government, along with several others, had condemned the initial arrest. On May 29, sparked by a U.S. military convoy accident that killed seven Afghans near Bagram Air Field, violent demonstrations and lootings occurred in various parts of Kabul.

Carjackings, robberies, and violent crime remain a problem. In February, two armed bank heists occurred in Kabul; two Afghan National Police were killed in the second robbery. In April, an American citizen reported to the Embassy that the Taliban had held him at gunpoint near Herat, and had stolen his car. American citizens involved in property disputes -- a common legal problem -- have reported that their adversaries in the disputes have threatened their lives.

Official Americans assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul are not allowed to have family members reside in Afghanistan. In addition, unofficial travel to Afghanistan by U.S. Government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State. From time to time, the U.S. Embassy places areas frequented by foreigners off limits to its personnel depending on current security conditions. 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. Private U.S. citizens are strongly urged to heed these restrictions as well and may obtain the latest information by calling the U.S. Embassy in Kabul or consulting the embassy website below. Terrorist actions may include, but are not limited to, suicide operations, bombings, assassinations, carjackings, rocket attacks, assaults or kidnappings. Possible threats include conventional weapons such as explosive devices or non-conventional weapons, including chemical or biological agents.

The United States Embassy's ability to provide emergency consular services to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan is limited, particularly for those persons outside the capital. Afghan authorities also can provide only limited assistance to U.S. citizens facing difficulties. U.S. citizens who choose to visit or remain in Afghanistan despite this Travel Warning are urged to pay close attention to their personal security, and avoid rallies and demonstrations. They are also encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Afghanistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. Registering makes it easier for the Embassy to contact Americans in case of 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 (Airport) Road), Kabul. The phone number is +93-70-108-001 or +93-70-108-002. The Embassy website is <http://afghanistan.usembassy.gov>.

Updated 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, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the [Consular Information Sheet](#) for Afghanistan and the current [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#), which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.



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