

Travel War (Pakistan)

[task][Inadmissable: 7/2011]

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The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated September 6, 2010, to remind U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Pakistan.

On February 4, the Department of State lifted ordered departure status of non-emergency U.S. government personnel from the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore, Pakistan. Consular services at the U.S. Consulate in Lahore remain unavailable but the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi will continue to provide routine consular services for U.S. citizens in Pakistan.

The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a potential danger to U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan. Across the country, terrorist attacks frequently occur against civilian, government, and foreign targets. Attacks have included armed assaults on heavily guarded sites, including Pakistani military installations. The Government of Pakistan maintains heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities. Threat reporting indicates terrorist groups continue to seek opportunities to attack locations where U.S. citizens and Westerners are known to congregate or visit. Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.

Protests against the United States are not uncommon and have the potential to turn violent. U.S. citizens in Pakistan are strongly advised to avoid all protests and large gatherings.

RECENT ATTACKS

There have been many terrorist attacks in recent years targeting civilians and security personnel. On July 6, a bomb exploded in a restaurant in a business district of Lahore, killing at least five people and injuring nearly 50. On June 23, ten foreign nationals, including one U.S. citizen, were killed in an attack on a Nanga Parbat mountain base camp in the northern area of Gilgit-Baltistan. On June 15, a suicide bomber detonated at a women's university in Quetta, killing 14 students; attackers later struck the hospital where victims were taken, killing at least 11 more people. On March 3, a bomb attack in a predominately Shiite area of Karachi destroyed several buildings and killed over 50 people. On September 3, 2010, unidentified terrorists attacked a U.S. government vehicle convoy in Peshawar, injuring U.S. and Pakistani personnel.

The Governor of the Punjab province and the Federal Minister for Minority Affairs were assassinated in Islamabad in January and March 2011, respectively. Targeted killings continue unabated in Karachi as a result of ethno-political rivalries. Targeted attacks against government officials, humanitarian and non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, tribal elders, and law enforcement personnel continue throughout the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan Provinces. Suicide bomb attacks have occurred at Islamabad universities, schools, rallies, places of worship, and major marketplaces in Lahore and Peshawar.

Members of minority communities have been victims of targeted killings and accusations of blasphemy, a crime that carries the death penalty in Pakistan. Foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, on valid missionary visas have encountered increased scrutiny from local authorities since early 2011.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

U.S. government personnel travel between the Embassy and Consulates might be restricted based on security or other reasons. Movements by U.S. government personnel assigned to the Consulates General are severely restricted, and consulate staff cannot drive personally-owned vehicles. Embassy staff are permitted to drive personally-owned vehicles in the greater Islamabad area.

U.S. officials in Islamabad are instructed to limit the frequency of travel and minimize the duration of trips to public markets, restaurants, and other locations. Only a limited number of official visitors are placed in hotels, and for limited stays. Depending on ongoing security assessments, the U.S. Mission sometimes places areas such as hotels, markets, and restaurants off limits to official personnel. Official U.S. citizens are not authorized to use public transportation and are sometimes asked to restrict the use of their personal vehicles in response to security concerns.

Access to many areas of Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border, the Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, and the area adjacent to the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed territory of Kashmir, is restricted by local government authorities for non-Pakistanis. Travel to any restricted region requires official permission from the Government of Pakistan. Failure to obtain such permission in advance can result in arrest and detention by Pakistani authorities. Due to security concerns, the U.S. government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by U.S. officials. Travel to much of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Balochistan is also restricted.

GENERAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Since the announcement that Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan on May 2, 2011, U.S. citizens should be aware of the possible increase in the threat level throughout the country.

Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur regularly throughout Pakistan on very short notice. Demonstrations might take on an anti-U.S. or anti-Western character, and U.S. citizens are urged to avoid large gatherings. Anti-U.S. protests in September 2010 attracted large crowds outside U.S. diplomatic facilities in all major cities and caused casualties and significant property damage. The Mission reminds U.S. citizens that even peaceful demonstrations might become violent and advises U.S. citizens to avoid demonstrations. Given multiple demands for resources, local authorities may have limited capacity to respond to requests for assistance.

The Mission reiterates its advice to all U.S. citizens to maintain good situational awareness, avoid large crowds, and keep a low profile, particularly when visiting locations frequented by Westerners. U.S. citizens in Pakistan are strongly urged to avoid hotels that do not apply stringent security measures, and to vary times and routes for all travel.

U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan have also been kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons such as family disputes over property. In August 2009, a U.S. citizen in Karachi was kidnapped from a car outside of a friend's residence. In August 2010, a U.S. citizen in Lahore was kidnapped from his residence. Al-Qaida later claimed responsibility and issued a list of demands in exchange for his release. In June 2010, a U.S. citizen in Lahore was kidnapped while en route to his business. Both U.S. citizens were released after their families paid a ransom. The kidnapping of Pakistani citizens and other foreign nationals, usually for ransom, continues to increase nationwide. U.S. citizens who feel they are in danger or whose security is at risk are strongly urged to depart Pakistan as soon as possible.

U.S. citizens seeking services from the U.S. Consulates General in Karachi and Peshawar might also encounter harassment from host government officials. Citing security concerns, host-government intelligence officials frequently stop U.S. citizens outside the Consulates and obtain their personal information before allowing them to proceed. U.S. citizens might later be visited at their homes or offices and questioned about the nature of their business in Pakistan and the purpose of their visit to the Consulate.

ENTRY/EXIT DIFFICULTIES

U.S. citizens should ensure that their travel documents and visas are valid at all times. U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan have been arrested, deported, harassed, and detained for overstaying their Pakistani visas or for traveling to Pakistan without the appropriate visa classification. U.S. citizens who attempt to renew or extend their visas while in Pakistan have been left without legal status for an extended period of time and subjected to harassment or interrogation by local authorities. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates General can provide very limited assistance to U.S. citizens who have overstayed their Pakistani visas. Since 2011, the number of U.S. citizens arrested, detained, and prosecuted for visa overstays has increased across the country.

U.S. citizens are advised to make electronic and paper copies of their U.S. passport, Pakistani visa, and entry stamp into Pakistan in order to facilitate their departure from Pakistan if their U.S. passport is lost or stolen, and keep the copies in a readily accessible location.

Security threats might, on short notice, temporarily restrict the ability of the U.S. Missions, particularly in Peshawar, to provide routine consular services. All U.S. citizens are encouraged to apply for renewal of travel documents at

least three months prior to expiration.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Pakistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to enroll with the Embassy in Islamabad or the Consulates General in Karachi, Lahore, or Peshawar. This enrollment can be completed online through the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program ([STEP](#)) available on the Department of State website. U.S. citizens without internet access should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate General for information on registering in person. Enrollment enables citizens to obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan via the emergency alert system.

The [U.S. Embassy in Islamabad](#) is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5, and can be reached by telephone at (92-51) 208-0000; Consular Section telephone (92-51) 208-2700; and fax (92-51) 282-2632.

You may make an American Citizens Services appointment with the [Consular Section in Islamabad](#).

U.S. citizens requiring emergency services should contact the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad at telephone (92-51) 208-0000. Note that our ability to provide emergency services outside Islamabad could be limited by travel restrictions and security conditions.

The [U.S. Consulate General in Karachi](#) is located at Plot 3-5 New TPX Area, Mai Kolachi Road. U.S. citizens requiring emergency assistance should call the Consular Section in Karachi at (92-21) 3527-5000. The fax number is (92-21) 3561-2420.

You may make an American Citizens Services appointment with the [Consular Section in Karachi](#).

The [U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar](#) is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, and can be reached by telephone at (92-91) 526-8800 and fax: (92-91) 528-4171.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

For further information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for [Pakistan](#). Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website which contains the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and the [Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook](#) as well.