

Wednesday October 4, 2006

# Travel Warning

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

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## CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE

**August 24, 2006**

This Travel Warning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) provides an update on the security situation. It supersedes the Travel Warning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued January 20, 2006.

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in light of recent unrest following the first round of the presidential elections. On August 21-22, there was sustained gunfire in the Gombe neighborhood of Kinshasa where many expatriates reside. Americans hearing gunfire near their home or workplace were advised to stay in an internal room and/or away from windows. This unrest resulted in cancelled flights as well as temporary closure of boat service to Brazzaville. Previously, there were civilian and police casualties during demonstrations in several areas of Kinshasa in January 2005, in Mbuji Mayi in May 2005, and some instances of civil disturbances related to the extension of the transitional government since June 2005. There is a potential for violence surrounding the presidential runoff elections scheduled for October 29, 2006, and until an elected government is installed.

Travel in some eastern provinces, especially in rural areas, remains unsafe due to continued sporadic attacks by uncontrolled militias. Despite advances in the peace process following the 2003 formation of a transitional government, periodic fighting continues in the provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri, and northern Katanga, and other areas of eastern Congo.

Though U.N. observer forces are deployed throughout the country, unofficial armed groups and active duty troops in parts of the country are known to pillage, carjack and steal vehicles, kill extrajudicially, rape, kidnap, and carry out military/paramilitary operations. The large number of rebel and government soldiers to be decommissioned as a result of the peace process is also a security concern. Travelers have been detained and questioned by ill-disciplined security forces at numerous military roadblocks throughout the country. Government-imposed curfews, not currently in effect, could be reinstated upon short notice if the security situation deteriorates. Visitors should restrict their travel, particularly at night, to areas of Kinshasa where they are familiar. In the event of political disturbances, they should avoid the parts of the city where the disturbances occur, especially at night. There are checkpoints in Kinshasa and elsewhere around the country that often result in traffic delays and the payment of bribes in order to be allowed to proceed.

Travelers to the DRC routinely experience difficulties at the airport and other ports of entry, such as temporary detention and demands by immigration and security personnel for unofficial "special fees." Visas are not available at ports of entry. All resident foreigners, including Americans, are required to register at the office of the Direction General de Migration (DGM) in the commune of their place of residence.

Americans should avoid all public demonstrations and areas where crowds are gathered, exercise extreme caution, closely watch and listen for local and international news from reliable sources. Radio Okapi broadcasts in French on 103.5 FM at 0700, 0800, 1200 and 1800, and provides "flash" updates throughout the day. English-language news can be found on BBC at 92.7 FM. Changes in

security conditions may occasionally restrict the travel of U.S. Mission personnel.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the DRC despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to register with the Embassy in Kinshasa or through the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; entrance to the Consular Section is on Avenue Dumi, opposite Ste. Anne residence. The Embassy's 24-hour number is 243-81-225-5872; callers within the DRC should dial 081 225-5872. All Embassy telephone numbers are cellular phones as landlines are unreliable. The Embassy website is <http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov/>.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's most recent Consular Information Sheet for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, both located on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on safety and security is available toll free at 1-888-407-4747, or at regular toll rates at 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



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