

Wednesday October 4, 2006

Travel Warning

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

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NIGERIA

August 24, 2006

This Travel Warning is being issued to note a deterioration in the security situation in the Niger Delta region, reflected in an increase in the number of kidnappings occurring in that area of the country. It supersedes the Travel Warning for Nigeria issued February 17, 2006.

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Nigeria. The lack of law and order in Nigeria poses considerable risks to travelers. Violent crime committed by ordinary criminals, as well as by persons in police and military uniforms, can occur throughout the country and tends to peak between November and January, during the holiday period.

The security situation in the Delta region has deteriorated significantly. Travel to the region remains very dangerous and should be avoided. On January 11, 2006, one American and three other expatriates aboard an oilfield service vessel were kidnapped off the coast of Bayelsa State. In February, three American citizens and six other expatriates were kidnapped in the Niger Delta area and held until late March 2006. Over the last several months, the region has been subjected to a series of attacks on oil company facilities that may be coordinated and have resulted in the death of over twenty security personnel. A militant group claiming responsibility for the recent kidnappings has made public threats against oil company employees and their families, demanding they leave the region. Since August 1, 2006, 12 expatriates have been kidnapped in or near the city of Port Harcourt. Most recently, on August 13, several expatriates were kidnapped from a popular public entertainment venue in that city. The previous kidnappings occurred on public roadways or at the facilities where the expatriates were employed.

Crime in Lagos and Abuja is an ongoing problem. Some expatriates have been robbed in the outlying Lagos suburb of Lekki, and in Abuja, the Maitama area has seen a series of home invasions. In a working class section of mainland Lagos, an October 2005 clash between police and residents left several dead. Even Victoria and Ikoyi Islands, which are generally safer than other parts of Lagos, have experienced attempted bank robberies, and have seen an increase in smash-and-grab car robberies, including some involving expatriates.

Religious tension between some Muslim and Christian communities results in occasional acts of isolated communal violence that could erupt quickly and without warning. The states of Kano and Kaduna are particularly volatile. Rival ethnic groups have clashed violently in the Niger Delta region around Warri city and in Southeast Plateau State. Senior al-Qaida leadership has expressed interest publicly in overthrowing the government of Nigeria. Links also were uncovered connecting Nigerians to al-Qaida in 2004.

Road travel is dangerous. Robberies by armed gangs have been reported on rural roads and within major cities. Travelers should avoid driving at night. Because of poor vehicle maintenance and driving conditions, public transportation throughout Nigeria can be dangerous and should be avoided. Taxis pose risks because of the possibility of fraudulent or criminal operators, old and unsafe vehicles, and poorly maintained roads. Road travel in Lagos is banned between 7:00 and 10:00 AM on the last Saturday of every month for municipal road cleanup; police vigilantly enforce

the ban.

Most Nigerian airlines have aging fleets, and maintenance and operational procedures may be inadequate to ensure passenger safety. Domestic passenger airliner crashes in October and December 2005 resulted in numerous deaths. Because international flights tend to meet higher safety standards than domestic Nigerian flights, travelers should attempt to get direct international flights to/from their Nigerian destination, rather than transiting another Nigerian city such as Lagos. For domestic travel between Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja, the U.S. Government encourages its employees to use Virgin Nigeria Airlines or Aero Contractors.

Some Nigeria-based criminals conduct advance fee fraud and other scams that target foreigners worldwide. These fraudulent activities pose great risk of financial loss. Recipients traveling to Nigeria to pursue such fraudulent offers have been subject to physical harm, and local police authorities are often unwilling to help in such cases. No one should provide personal financial or account information to unknown parties. Under no circumstances should U.S. citizen's travel to Nigeria without a valid visa -- an invitation to enter Nigeria without a visa is normally indicative of illegal activity. Furthermore, the ability of U.S. Embassy officers to extricate U.S. citizens from unlawful business deals and their consequences is limited. Persons contemplating business deals in Nigeria are strongly urged to check with the U.S. Department of Commerce or the U.S. Department of State before providing any information or making any financial commitments. See the Department of State's publications "Tips For Business Travelers To Nigeria" at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_2113.html, and "Nigerian Advanced Fee Fraud" at <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/naffpub.pdf>.

Americans who travel to Nigeria despite this Travel Warning should obtain the latest health information before departing the U.S. The websites of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov> and the World Health Organization at <http://www.who.int> have up-to-date information on outbreaks of contagious and tropical diseases. Americans considering travel to Nigeria should also read the Department's Fact Sheet on Avian Influenza at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html and consult with their personal physicians concerning avian influenza.

U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Nigeria are strongly advised to register through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. Periodically, travel by U.S. mission personnel is restricted based on changing security conditions, often due to crime, general strikes, or student/political demonstrations or disturbances. U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos for up-to-date information on any restrictions. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja can be contacted by phone at [234](9) 461-4000. American citizens may contact the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos at 011 [234] (1) 261-1215 during business hours. For after-hours emergencies call [234] (1) 261-1414, 261-0195, 261-0078, 261-0139, or 261-6477. You may also visit the U.S. Embassy's website at <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's most recent [Consular Information Sheet](#) for Nigeria and the [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#), which are located on the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, 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).