

Press Releases: On President Ghani's Offer to Extend the Ceasefire and Open Negotiations

Press Statement
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
June 16, 2018

The United States extends its best wishes to the people of Afghanistan in celebration of Eid al-Fitr. We welcome the ceasefire during the period of Eid. The Afghan people this year are spending the Eid holidays with their families with renewed hope of peace.

We support President Ghani's offer to extend the ceasefire and begin peace talks. As President Ghani emphasized in his statement to the Afghan people, peace talks by necessity would include a discussion of the role of international actors and forces. The United States is prepared to support, facilitate, and participate in these discussions.

All of Afghanistan's people benefit from the end of bloodshed, and we have seen the overwhelmingly positive reaction from Afghans across society. We have seen pictures of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan soldiers and police with Taliban fighters offering prayers for Eid side by side. If Afghans can pray together, their leaders can talk together and resolve their differences.

Agreeing to begin peace talks is an expression of determination to create a unified Afghanistan in which all its citizens can live in peace and dignity. The United States stands ready to work with the Afghan government, the Taliban, and all the people of Afghanistan to reach a peace agreement and political settlement that brings a permanent end to this war.

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Press Releases: Russia: Travel Advisory Remains Level 3 Reconsider Travel

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 15, 2018

The Department of State renewed its Travel Advisory for Russia on June 15, 2018. The Department continues to advise travelers to reconsider travel to Russia. This replaces the previous Travel Advisory was issued on January 10, 2018.

The full text of the new Travel Advisory is as follows:

Russia – Level 3: Reconsider Travel

Reconsider travel to Russia due to **terrorism and harassment**. Some areas have increased risk. Read the entire Travel Advisory.

Do not travel to:

- The north Caucasus, including Chechnya and Mount Elbrus, due to **civil unrest and terrorism**.
- Crimea due to **foreign occupation and abuses by occupying authorities**.

Terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Russia. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, and local government facilities. Bomb threats against public venues are common.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup games will be held in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Sochi, Volgograd, Yekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, and Saransk, Russia, from June 14 to July 15, 2018. Large-scale international events such as the World Cup present an attractive target for terrorists. Although security for the World Cup will be extensive, terrorists may seek to attack event locations such as stadiums and Fan Fest viewing areas, tourist sites, transportation hubs, and other public venues. Travelers should expect increased police presence and enhanced security measures in and

around the World Cup venues. Full information about the [World Cup games for U.S. citizen](#) visitors is available on our Travel.state.gov website.

U.S. citizens are often victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by law-enforcement and other officials. U.S. consular assistance to detained individuals is often unreasonably delayed by Russian officials. Russia also enforces special restrictions on dual U.S.-Russian nationals. Due to the Russian government-imposed reduction on U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia, the U.S. government has reduced ability to provide services to U.S. citizens.

Read the Safety and Security section on the [country information page](#).

If you decide to travel to Russia:

- Travelers should expect increased police presence and enhanced security measures in and around the World Cup venues and Fan Fest viewing areas.
- Avoid demonstrations.
- Monitor local media for breaking events and adjust your plans based on news information.
- Stay alert in locations frequented by Westerners.
- Have travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
- Visit our website for [Travel to High-Risk Areas](#).
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Review the [Crime and Safety Reports](#) for Russia.
- U.S. citizens who travel abroad should always have a contingency plan for emergency situations and a plan to contact family to let them know you are safe. Review the [Traveler's Checklist](#).

North Caucasus (including Chechnya and Mount Elbrus)

Civil unrest and terrorist attacks continue throughout the North Caucasus region including in Chechnya, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Stavropol, Karachayevo-Cherkessiya, and Kabardino-Balkariya. Local gangs have kidnapped U.S. citizens and other foreigners for ransom. There have been credible reports of arrest, torture, and extrajudicial killing of gay men in Chechnya allegedly conducted by Chechen regional authorities.

Do not attempt to climb Mount Elbrus, as travelers must pass close to volatile and insecure areas of the North Caucasus region.

The U.S. government is unable to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens traveling in the North Caucasus region, including Mount Elbrus, as U.S. government employees are prohibited from traveling to the region.

Visit our website for [Travel to High-Risk Areas](#).

Crimea

There is extensive Russian Federation military presence in Crimea. The Russian Federation is likely to take further military actions in Crimea as part of its occupation of this part of Ukraine. The international community,

including the United States and Ukraine, does not recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. There are continuing abuses against foreigners and the local population by the occupation authorities in Crimea, particularly against those who are seen as challenging their authority on the peninsula.

The U.S. government is unable to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens traveling in Crimea as U.S. government employees are prohibited from traveling to Crimea.

Visit our website for [Travel to High-Risk Areas](#).

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Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan's Meeting With Chinese Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress Wang Chen

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 15, 2018

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:□

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan met on June 14 with Chinese Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress Wang Chen at the State Department. They discussed a wide range of issues related to the U.S.-China relationship, including North Korea, trade, and counternarcotics cooperation.

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[Press Releases: WiSci Girls STEAM Camp in Namibia Begins June 17](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 15, 2018

The fourth [WiSci \(Women in Science\) Girls STEAM Camp](#) will take place in Namibia, June 17-29, 2018. WiSci is a public-private partnership designed to impart skills to and create opportunities for high school girls in science, technology, engineering, arts and design, and mathematics (STEAM). The 2018 camp in Namibia brings together 100 students from Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), and the United States.

The camp will focus on enhancing participants' STEAM skills, crafting their leadership potential, and building camaraderie and networks that will propel them to new opportunities. Campers will have the opportunity to learn coding skills, how to develop mobile applications, and more. WiSci Namibia is led by partners the U.S. Department of State, Girl Up, the Intel Corporation, and Google. Additional programmatic support is provided by NASA and World Learning.

The WiSci Girls STEAM camp is part of the U.S. government's efforts to empower the next generation of female leaders, especially in the STEAM fields. Previous WiSci Camps took place in Rwanda, Peru, and Malawi. Another WiSci Camp will take place August 12-25, 2018, in Tbilisi, bringing together 100 high school girls from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the United States.

For more information on the WiSci Girls STEAM Camp, visit girlup.org/wisci, follow [#WiSci2018](#) and [#WiSciNamibia](#) on social media, or contact Anita Ostrovsky, Ostrovskya@state.gov.

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Press Releases: Preserving the Southwest De-escalation Zone in Syria

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 14, 2018

The United States remains concerned by reports of impending Syrian government operations in southwest Syria within the boundaries of the de-escalation zone negotiated between the United States, Jordan, and the Russian Federation last year and reaffirmed between Presidents Trump and Putin in Da Nang, Vietnam in November. The United States remains committed to maintaining the stability of the southwest de-escalation zone and to the ceasefire underpinning it.

We reiterate that any Syrian government military actions against the southwest de-escalation zone risk broadening the conflict. We affirm again that the United States will take firm and appropriate measures in response to Syrian government violations in this area.

The ceasefire arrangement and southwest de-escalation zone were initiatives by Presidents Trump and Putin to de-escalate the Syrian conflict, save lives, and create conditions for the displaced to safely and voluntarily return to their homes. A military offensive by the Syrian regime into this ceasefire zone would defy these initiatives, which have been a success to date. It is vitally important that the three nations supporting the southwest de-escalation zone do everything they can to enforce and implement the understandings reached last year. Existing diplomatic channels have successfully monitored and de-escalated the situation in the southwest, avoiding any resumption of fighting for nearly a year. The ceasefire must continue to be enforced and respected.

Russia is duly responsible as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to use its diplomatic and military influence over the Syrian government to stop attacks and compel the government to cease further military offensives. We request that Russia fulfill its commitments in accordance with UNSCR 2254 and the southwest ceasefire arrangement.

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