

# **Press Releases: Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to Travel to Nigeria**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
June 16, 2018

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Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback will travel to Abuja, Kaduna, and Lagos, Nigeria from June 18-22.

Alongside Ambassador W. Stuart Symington, Ambassador Brownback will meet with government officials, religious leaders, and civil society groups. The Ambassadors will also tour the National Mosque and visit a refugee camp.

For more information, please contact [DRL-Press@state.gov](mailto:DRL-Press@state.gov). Follow the Office of International Religious Freedom on Twitter at @State\_IRF and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Twitter account: at @State\_DRL @StateDRL on Facebook and Twitter.

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# **Press Releases: Assistant Secretary Mitchell Travel to Bucharest, Zagreb,**

# Prague, and Brussels

Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

June 16, 2018

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Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Wess Mitchell will travel to Europe from June 17 to 22.

On June 18 he will be in Bucharest, Romania, to meet with senior officials and independent analysts to discuss regional security and economic cooperation. He will lead the U.S. delegation to the sixth U.S.-Romania Strategic Partnership Dialogue, and he will deliver remarks at the University of Bucharest.

Assistant Secretary Mitchell will then travel to Zagreb, Croatia, on June 19, where he will meet with senior Croatian officials to discuss developments in Croatia and the region, including Croatia's contributions to regional stability and energy security.

On June 20 and 21, he will be in Prague, Czech Republic to participate in the U.S.-Czech Republic Strategic Dialogue, meet with Czech officials, and deliver a speech co-hosted by the Prague European Summit and GLOBSEC.

Finally, June 21-22, Assistant Secretary Mitchell will visit Brussels, Belgium. There he will meet with Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander De Croo. He will also discuss areas of U.S.-European cooperation with EU officials, and he will give a speech at Carnegie Europe.

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# Press Releases: On the Occasion of National Day in Iceland

Press Statement  
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
June 16, 2018

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On behalf of the United States of America, I offer congratulations to the people of Iceland on your 74th anniversary of independence on June 17th.

The United States was the first to recognize Iceland as an independent republic in 1944. Our countries share a commitment to transatlantic security as NATO Allies, to human rights, and to economic development. In the Arctic, we work together to promote marine research and good communications to prevent conflicts over resources and territory.

Nothing speaks more clearly of our partnership than the July 2017 Icelandic Coast Guard rescue of three Americans lost at sea off your coast. Our close ties are only strengthened by such acts, and programs like the Fulbright Arctic Scholar Initiative that further develop leadership and the people-to-people links between our countries. We look forward to working together to further global peace and prosperity with Iceland, our key NATO Ally.

We wish you *Gleðilega hátíð* on this happy day!

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# 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

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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

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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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