



Understanding the Consular Travel Advisory System

Product of the Research & Information Support Center (RISC)

Overview

The U.S. Department of State has issued messaging for the purpose of helping U.S. citizen travelers abroad make the right decisions to keep themselves safe and secure. Some of these were for short-term issues, and others explained long-term, systemic issues affecting the security environment in a particular country or even across an entire region. Many in the private sector use these products to help formulate security plans for their personnel or facilities positioned abroad, or to govern their policies for international travel.

That system has now changed, and many of the products travelers have come to know (such as Travel Warnings and Emergency Messages) are being reformatted, rethought, and simplified. This report will help OSAC constituents better understand this new system and what it means to their travelers and interests abroad. Although many organizations who incorporate consular messaging into security tripwires may have to edit their in-house security policies, OSAC assesses that these changes will help the private sector and

January 10 launched improvements to public safety and security messaging that will make it easier for U.S. citizens to access clear, timely, and reliable information about every country in the world. CA has replaced its former countrywide products, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts with a single "Travel Advisory" for each country. Each Travel Advisory for every country around the world will be paired with a level of advice based on one of four tiers.

Every country will have a Travel Advisory, providing tiered levels of advice ranging from Level 1. Further country-specific details such as entry/exit requirements, local laws and customs, health conditions, transportation, and other relevant topics will accompany these levels and be available on the same country page. The four levels of advice are:

Level 1- Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.



Level 2- Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 3- Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.



In addition, U.S. embassies and consulates around the world will now issue Alerts, a single system to replace the former Emergency Messages and Security Messages. Alerts will be labeled according to their issue: Security Alert; Health Alert; Weather Alert; or Demonstration Alert.

Where Can I Find the New Advisories?

While the nomenclature and formatting is changing, the locations generally are not, with the exception that travelers can now access all safety and security information for any given country on a single page. All Travel Advisories (formerly Travel Warnings) will still be found on individual country pages along with the new Alerts (formerly Emergency and Security Messages). Alerts will also be found on individual embassy and consulate websites, which themselves have all been updated over the last year. Updated Travel Advisories or newly issued Alerts will also be available through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) for all enrollees.

And as always, any Travel Advisories or Alerts issued in Washington or around the world will be posted to the OSAC website and will be viewable without an OSAC password to the general public. OSAC will also maintain the entire archival database of messaging dating back nearly a decade; many constituents use this database as a way to research how the security environment in a given location may have changed over a certain period of time. Finally, those subscribed to the OSAC newsletter will receive word of any Travel Advisory updates or newly issued Alerts in the newsletter distributed immediately following their release.

What If I Have Other Questions?

Many questions are answered on the OSAC International Travel webpage, which includes a link to OSAC FAQs. These include how the overall level for a country is determined, how often Travel Advisory levels will be reviewed, and whether the Department of State considers political considerations or the