



State Department Warns Americans Against Travel to Pakistan

On August 8 the U.S. State Department warned U.S. citizens “to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan,” stating, “The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a potential danger to U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan.”

The warning added: “On August 8, 2013, the Department of State ordered the departure of non-emergency U.S. government personnel from the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore, Pakistan. The Department of State ordered this drawdown due to specific threats concerning the U.S. Consulate in Lahore.”

[Lahore](#), located in northeast Pakistan on the Indian border, is the capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab and, with a population of over 10,000,000, is the second largest city in the country, after Karachi.

An AP report carried by [USA Today](#) quoted a spokeswoman at the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, Meghan Gregonis, who said, “We received information regarding a threat to the consulate. As a precautionary measure, we are undertaking a drawdown of all except emergency personnel.”

Gregonis said that the U.S. government is moving personnel evacuated from Lahore to Islamabad, Pakistan’s capital. While emergency personnel will stay in Lahore, embassy officials do not know when the consulate in Lahore will reopen.

As we reported earlier this week, the State Department announced on August 4 that U.S. embassies and consulates in 19 Muslim nations would remain closed at least until the end of the week, noting that the decision to keep the diplomatic posts closed signified an “abundance of caution” and was “not an indication of a new threat.” White House statements released on August 3 and 4 said, “The President instructed his National Security team to take all appropriate steps to protect the American people in light of a potential threat occurring in or emanating from the Arabian Peninsula.”

None of the consulates or embassies closed under the earlier order was in Pakistan.

Pakistan government offices were closed on Friday for [Eid al-Fitr](#) celebrations marking the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month observed by fasting. In a holiday message issued Thursday, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged Pakistanis to “unite on a national agenda against terrorism and extremism,” reported the Associated Press of Pakistan.

A report from [Bloomberg News](#) noted that relations between the United States and Pakistan have been strained since 2011, when a U.S. raid killed Osama bin Laden in a compound where he had been living in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Pakistanis have also objected to U.S. air strikes in Pakistan, including one in 2011 that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. In protest over the incident, Pakistan shut supply routes over its





Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 9, 2013

border with Afghanistan for more than six months.

Pakistanis consider the U.S. use of drone strikes against suspected terrorists within their borders as a violation of their sovereignty, which can hardly be disputed under international law. Bloomberg News noted that during a visit to Pakistan last week, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated during a television interview that he saw the possibility of ending the covert counterterrorism program “very, very soon.”

The [New York Times](#) reported that the order to withdraw personnel from the Lahore consulate and the travel warning came a day after bombers attacked a funeral in western Pakistan and a graveyard across the border in Afghanistan, leaving at least 44 people dead. According to the *Times*, the heaviest death toll during Thursday’s violence was in Quetta, in Pakistan’s western Baluchistan Province, where at least 30 people, including 21 police officers, died in a suicide attack at the funeral of a police officer, conducted only hours after he had been killed. These attacks were at the opposite end of the country from Lahore.

The *Times*, citing local news media outlets, quoted Shahidullah Shahid, a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, who said the Taliban was responsible for the Quetta attack and the militant group would continue to target police officials.

Given such chaos and overt terrorism in Pakistan and neighboring nations, and the obvious resentment fueled by our drone strikes there, it is worthwhile considering a few observations made by former Rep. Ron Paul in a March 16 essay entitled: [“Are We at War with Pakistan?”](#):

As the UK *Guardian* newspaper reported yesterday, the United States has been using its military to attack the sovereign territory of Pakistan without the consent of the government of Pakistan. Over continued objections of the government of Pakistan, including regularly delivered strong notes of protest, the US government continues to use its drones to attack Pakistani citizens on Pakistani soil....

According to the *Guardian* article, the UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights Ben Emmerson returned from a three day trip to Pakistan and concluded:

The position of the government of Pakistan is quite clear. It does not consent to the use of drones by the United States on its territory and it considers this to be a violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As a matter of international law the US drone campaign in Pakistan is therefore being conducted without the consent of the elected representatives of the people, or the legitimate government of the state. It involves the use of force on the territory of another state without its consent and is therefore a violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty.

Dr. Paul summarizes the situation:

The US claims its attacks on Pakistan are authorized by the initial Authorization for the Use of Force granted to the president to retaliate against those who attacked or assisted in the attack on the US on 9/11. The targets in Pakistan are neither of those. The operation is therefore an attack on a sovereign nation in total absence of any legal Congressional authority. In other words, the US is illegally at war with Pakistan. Is this reckless droning of sovereign nations making us all more vulnerable to retaliation? After all, wars are often two-way streets.



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