

iJET Updates List of 10 Most Terrorism-Prone Countries

ANNAPOLIS, MD (January 12, 2004) – iJET Travel Risk Management (iJET), the industry leader in delivering real-time travel risk management services to multinational corporations and the travel industry, is today announcing its latest assessment of the 10 countries most at risk to terrorism. iJET released a similar list in September 2003, and will continue to update the list periodically as global security conditions warrant.

The travel security analysts at iJET caution that predicting precisely where and when terrorism will occur is impossible, and the risk that terrorism poses to an individual traveler remains small. Yet some destinations are more likely than others to experience terrorism, usually due to a combination of factors.

This list contains three countries – Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – that were not included in iJET’s September assessment. iJET regional analysts removed Nigeria, Spain and Thailand from the danger list, due largely to increased anti-terrorism efforts by those countries’ governments.

iJET intentionally excluded from this list turmoil-torn countries with very low numbers of travelers (business and leisure), such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. Also, due to negligible variances in threat level between these 10 countries, iJET did not rank these 10 in order of risk; the list is alphabetical. iJET maintains security risk ratings for 182 countries. Terrorism is one of six sub-categories used to calculate those rankings.

- **Colombia:** The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has essentially declared war on President Alvaro Uribe, due largely to his pledge to stamp out terrorism. FARC strikes increasingly target urban areas, and though the group historically has carefully selected its targets (politicians, journalists and others who vocally opposed the group), FARC terrorists have shown an increasing willingness to kill uninvolved civilians. The FARC claimed responsibility for the Nov. 15 grenade attack on two nightclubs in Bogotá that killed one person and injured 72 in the Zona Rosa area. The perpetrators of that attack reportedly hoped to kill U.S. citizens. In Bogotá, the FARC has carried out five terrorist bombings so far in 2003. The National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group kidnapped eight foreign tourists in northern Colombia on Sept. 13; five of the tourists are still in captivity. Kidnappings-for-ransom have become major sources of financing for these groups and may increase as profits from drug trafficking decrease. The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and other paramilitary groups continue to threaten Colombia, despite the current demobilization process of the AUC. On Nov. 25, some 855 members of the AUC demobilized in the department of Antioquia. Many AUC leaders, however, have arrest warrants against them. It is unlikely that they will surrender without some sort of immunity.
- **Indonesia:** There is an increased likelihood of attacks by the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network in Indonesia through New Year’s and again leading up to the April parliamentary and July presidential elections. Western and Christian interests are the likely targets. A number of western governments have warned against non-essential travel to the country. The nation’s chief security minister Dec. 7 warned that terrorist cells in the country are likely regrouping and may be planning future attacks. Terrorism experts believe that the new leader of the terrorist group JI, Zulkarnaen, maintains strong links with Al-Qaeda. Experts believe that Al-Qaeda, limited by a war in Afghanistan, has now increased its cooperation with local terrorists elsewhere in the world, including Indonesia. The decision of Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri to sign an anti-terror pact with Pakistan Dec. 16 highlights Indonesia’s concern about international terrorists. A target list that Indonesian police discovered during an Oct. 30 raid reportedly contains mostly soft targets, such as U.S.-owned businesses, hotels, schools and banks, and other Western interests.
- **Israel:** Palestinian terrorists groups, backed by legions of willing suicide bombers, have developed a sophisticated capability to stage attacks. Terrorism groups, especially Hamas, have the technological know-how to build both suicide belts and improvised explosives devices as well as an intelligence network to

identify potential targets and deliver the suicide bombers to the location. The close proximity of Palestinian cities and villages to Israeli settlements and absence of border fence between Palestinian and Israeli communities gives potential bombers the ability to reach destinations within hours of receiving instructions. Although Israeli security forces are the most advanced in the world in tracking and arresting terrorists, the wave of attacks will intensify as long as the Al-Aqsa Intifada continues. During the first 15 days of December, Israeli internal security forces foiled at least eight terrorist attacks.

- **Kenya:** Numerous foreign government warnings and the ongoing anti-terror actions by the Kenyan government indicate an obvious credible threat of terrorist attacks against Western interests and citizens in Kenya. The arrest of more than 20 people suspected of terrorism activities in Kenya in specific and east Africa in general in November further highlights the threat. As a country hosting numerous and various foreign businesses and interests, Kenya is a desirable target for Al-Qaeda and sympathetic groups. Kenyan authorities have implemented some terrorism counter-measures but inadequate border security and Kenya's close proximity to countries with little or no security, such as Somalia and Sudan, exacerbate Kenya's predicament. The large number of Muslims in this region, especially along the Indian Ocean coastline, allows militant Muslims from outside Kenya to blend in while planning potential future attacks. The fact that known key terrorist suspects including Fazul Abdallah Mohammed, considered a top operative in the terror network in East Africa, are still at large only strengthen the threat.
- **Pakistan:** Pakistani terrorist groups, enjoying an ample supply of willing recruits, have staged numerous risky attacks against domestic and foreign interests in Pakistan, including the Dec. 14 assassination attempt against President Pervez Musharraf. Security forces are on heightened alert as investigations into the assassination attempt continue and suspicion of a high-level conspiracy against Musharraf grows. The close proximity of Afghanistan and porous borders make Pakistan a popular hideout for Taliban and Al-Qaeda fugitives. Volatile conflicts between the majority Sunni and minority Shiite Muslims remain a concern in much of the country as witnessed by numerous bombings, rocket attacks and strikes, and the assassination of extremist Sunni leader Maulana Azam Tariq. Recent rapprochement between India and Pakistan has raised hopes of greater stability in the region. Although security has been increased in the wake of two attempted assassinations of President Musharraf and some signs point to great regional stability, the deeper conflicts and fissures within the society and region continue to make Pakistan a breeding ground for terrorist activity.
- **Philippines:** The Philippine military and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) Nov. 28 warned of possible terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda or the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist networks in the Philippines on Dec. 25-26. As in Indonesia, Al-Qaeda likely has increased cooperation with local terrorists in the Philippines. The recent exposure of JI training camps in the southern Philippines is evidence of this. The threat of terrorism comes not only from JI but also from local terrorist groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf (ASG). The MILF leadership appears to be divided about whether or not to proceed with peace negotiations set for early next year. A recent skirmish between MILF rebels and the Philippine military coupled with the alleged linkage of JI terrorist camps to local MILF commanders, suggests that a segment of the group may resort to terrorism in the near future. Kidnapping-for-ransom by Muslim extremist groups is on the rise in the Philippines as well. ASG's apparent involvement in the kidnapping of six hostages from Malaysia's Borneo Paradise Resort on Oct. 5, highlights increased terrorist threats to travelers in the southern Philippines.
- **Russia:** The threat of terrorist bombings continues to plague southwest Russia and major urban centers in European Russia; this includes a real threat to tourist areas, especially Moscow. On Dec. 9 a suicide bomber attack killed six and injured 14 outside the entrance to the National Hotel in close proximity to the Kremlin and the Russian Parliament. A Dec. 5 bomb on a commuter train in Yessentuki killed more than 40 people and injured more than 120. Russian officials acknowledge that there are at least 3,000 rebel fighters engaged in a guerrilla campaign in southern Russia that continues to encroach into business and tourist areas. Authorities also claim that terrorist attacks are planned by a Saudi citizen, Abu-al-Valid, a self-proclaimed "military commander" of Chechnya. And security forces fear that the run-up to March 14 presidential elections could trigger even more terrorism. All the most recent terrorist attacks involved female bombers, allegedly members of the battalion of the Chechen shaheeds "Riyadus – Salihin."

- **Saudi Arabia:** The Saudi government has been engaged in a massive manhunt an aggressive anti-terrorism campaign since the May 12 terrorist attacks in Riyadh and has scored significant gains in a short period of time. However, the kingdom's vast size, ready access to weapons smuggled from both Yemen and Iraq and ready supply of Islamic militants along the disgruntled youth indicate that terrorism remains a major threat. The ability of terrorist groups to stage the Nov. 8 attack at a Western housing compound in Riyadh and prepare another massive car bomb shortly thereafter - which police caught shortly before it was delivered to its final destination - demonstrate the continued ability of terrorist groups to stage large scale attacks in the kingdom. Despite their successes, Saudi security forces have frequently allowed suspected militants to escape during shootouts. With the arrival of millions of Muslims in the coming weeks to perform the Hajj, the risk of attacks in Mecca, Medina and Riyadh is especially high.
- **Turkey:** The risk of terrorist attacks in Turkey is high and is likely to remain so over the next three months. In light of the Nov. 15 attacks on two synagogues and Nov. 20 attacks on British targets, it is unclear if the Turkish security apparatus can defend against further attacks in the short-term. The sophisticated nature of the November attacks, the targets chosen and quality of explosives point towards some degree of involvement of Al-Qaeda or an affiliated terrorist cell. In addition, a key Turkish suspect involved in the bombings testified Dec. 14 that he was trained at Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and that Osama bin Laden ordered the attacks. Although Turkish intelligence, police and military forces are likely to crack down hard on the remaining domestic extremist groups operating in Turkey, travelers should exercise a heightened degree of awareness in Istanbul and other cities in Turkey. Factors that put Turkey at high risk for terrorist attacks include the infrastructure of domestic extremist organizations in the country and the fact that many domestic extremist groups in Turkey share common interests with Al-Qaeda.
- **Yemen:** Vast areas of Yemen remain out of the reach of government forces and the Al-Qaeda terrorist group is known to have relocated large numbers of its fighters and training bases to Yemen's tribal regions. Numerous Islamic militants live in Yemen. The country also provides easy access to arms and munitions. A wide array of gun, missiles and explosives are available in gun markets. While Yemen has in recent months arrested several leading terrorists, including Mohammad Hamdi Al-Ahdal, Al-Qaeda's second in command in Yemen, the Yemeni government has also released hundreds of Islamic militants who verbally renounced violence and pledged not to carry out additional attacks. These releases provided known terrorists the freedom to plan more attacks. In recent months Yemeni security forces have foiled several major attacks, including the planned bombings of the German, U.K. and U.S. embassies. But the ability of the terrorists to hide in remote, lawless regions and plan attacks, gain easy access to arms, and hide among the general population makes preventing attacks nearly impossible.

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About iJET:

iJET Travel Risk Management (www.ijet.com) specializes in providing real-time intelligence and proactive travel risk management services to multinational corporations and their employees. iJET's award-winning technology, modeled after government intelligence systems, continues to receive high honors for its ground-breaking innovations and efficiency. iJET's diverse and experienced intelligence analysts speak 17 languages and work 24x7 in iJET's Operations and Response Center to alert clients of changing conditions worldwide that affect their assets and employees. iJET was recognized by InfoWorld as one of the "Top 100 IT Visionaries of 2003" for its groundbreaking Worldcue® Travel Risk Management platform, and unparalleled ability to deliver objective, timely and actionable intelligence to corporate security/risk officers, travel managers, travelers and expatriates.

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