OSAC Global Kidnapping Assessment

Kidnapping

Africa > Ethiopia; Africa > Kenya; Africa > Mali; Africa > Mauritania; Africa > Mozambique; Africa > Niger; Africa > Nigeria; Africa > Somalia; East Asia & Pacific > Philippines; Near East > Algeria; Near East > Egypt; Near East > Libya; Near East > Syria; Near East > Yemen; South Central Asia > Afghanistan; South Central Asia > Pakistan; Western Hemisphere > Brazil; Western Hemisphere > Colombia; Western Hemisphere > El Salvador; Western Hemisphere > Guatemala; Western Hemisphere > Haiti; Western Hemisphere > Honduras; Western Hemisphere > Mexico; Western Hemisphere > Venezuela

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(Please download the attached report in the top right corner for a PDF including maps.)

Due to the perceived wealth and influence of U.S. private-sector employees, kidnapping continues to pose a significant threat to OSAC constituents operating overseas. In addition to kidnap for ransom (KFR) by criminal organizations, successful efforts to interdict international extremist funding have led to an increase in terrorist and insurgent groups using KFR to finance their operations. Kidnapping has also been used by a number of these groups in an attempt to achieve political ends, including the release of prisoners and concessions from national governments.

In some areas, traditional KFR has been supplemented by “express kidnapping” schemes that involve brief abductions with smaller payouts (often through ATM withdrawals) in order to avoid protracted negotiations. Furthermore, OSAC constituents have reported “virtual kidnappings,” in which actors use personal information to convince family members or employers that an individual has been abducted and that his/her release is contingent upon the payment of a ransom (when in fact the individual may not actually be in custody).

The threat of kidnapping occurs throughout the world. In many cases, political instability, weak institutions, and inadequate or insufficient law enforcement capacity are common factors that create a security environment conducive to kidnapping. Within any one country, the danger is seldom uniform, and certain sub-national regions appear more prone to kidnapping than others.

While it is impossible to prevent the threat of kidnapping entirely, certain practices have proven successful in mitigating the risk; these include monitoring advisories; remaining

vigilant; minimizing displays of wealth; avoiding predictability; practicing travel and road safety; and protecting personal information. In the event that a kidnapping occurs, organizations should immediately contact the nearest embassy or consulate.

Background

Estimates on the number of kidnappings worldwide range drastically. A significant percentage of kidnappings go unreported due to the reluctance of victims and their families to seek intervention by authorities; this may be due to the threats made regarding such intervention, the perception that law enforcement would be ineffective at resolving the situation (and could possibly make it worse), or the belief that police are actually complicit in the kidnappings.

It is also difficult to put a precise number on kidnappings, because they are often classified as related crimes. For example, a short-term express kidnapping wherein a victim loses a smaller sum may simply be classified as a robbery. In the case of a failed kidnapping that results in death, the crime may be listed as a homicide. As a result, many of the figures provided below are estimates.

Similarly, the amount of financial compensation received by kidnappers globally is very difficult to quantify. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1904 (2009) unequivocally rejects the payment of ransom by Member States, directly or indirectly, to terrorists designated under the UN al–Qa'ida sanctions regime. In addition to violating this resolution and other legal obligations, publicizing the payment of ransom may only serve to incentivize terrorist, insurgent, or criminal groups by identifying organizations that are willing to pay for the release of their employees.

Mitigation

U.S. private sector employees frequently operate in hostile environments throughout the world. The need to have direct access to facilities, communities, and resources means that prohibiting a physical presence in those environments altogether is often not a viable option. Furthermore, while armed escorts and heavy security measures may improve security, these precautions may limit access or undermine efforts where the objective is to build confidence and goodwill among local populations. While the threat of kidnapping is nuanced in each context, the following techniques have generally proven successful in mitigating the risk.

Monitor Advisories

U.S. embassies and consulates routinely post Consular messages indicating an increased risk of kidnapping, and suggesting restrictions on travel to vulnerable areas. OSAC constituents traveling or residing abroad are strongly encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the latest security updates and facilitate contact by the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to in the event of an emergency.

Remain Vigilant

Situational awareness can help mitigate the risk of kidnapping. Constituents are encouraged to be alert at all times and vigilant of any activity ahead of and behind them, especially on the walk to and from their vehicles and ATMs. If you detect that you are being watched or followed, do not panic. Drive to the nearest safe location, such as a police station, hotel, or other safe area. It is good practice to be aware of these “safe haven” locations in advance.

Minimize Displays of Wealth

Kidnappers often strategically target their victims based on their perceived financial value. Many Westerners are assumed to be wealthy, regardless of their actual economic standing; however, avoiding wearing expensive jewelry or driving luxury vehicles may reduce the likelihood of being targeted.

Avoid Predictability

Successful kidnapping schemes thrive on the ability to target victims when they are most vulnerable. Varying times and routes, especially during non-working hours, may reduce the ability of would-be abductors to anticipate movement and mitigate susceptibility to kidnapping.

Practice Vehicle and Road Safety

A significant portion of kidnappings involves transportation. Avoid driving alone at night. When you park your vehicle, ensure the doors are locked properly. Some thieves use electronic devices to deactivate the locking system at the time the lock button is pressed. If you are hit from behind and have to stop, remain inside the vehicle with the doors locked until you have called for assistance. Check the mirrors to observe the situation. If you see something suspicious, like a pair or group of men descending all at the same time, depart the scene. For this reason it is suggested that you always keep the fuel tank at least half filled. You should only use registered taxis, and never get into a taxi that is already occupied by another

passenger. If your taxi stops to pick up another passenger, let the driver know that you are uncomfortable with additional passengers.

Do Not Reveal Personal Information

To reduce the susceptibility to a virtual kidnapping scheme, OSAC constituents are encouraged to answer the phone simply with "hello," and make the other person ask for you by name; know the details of your family's travel and location (where they are supposed to be, who they are supposed to be with, etc.), and contact information (land-line and cell phone numbers); never provide personal information to someone who calls or approaches you; and do not post personal information on social networking sites.

Western Hemisphere

Mexico

Between January 1 and August 31, 2013, there were 1,067 cases of kidnappings reported to the authorities in the country, according to the Attorney General's Office (PGR). This is an increase of 27% over the 837 kidnappings reported during the same period in 2012. That number is likely to be significantly higher (perhaps as high as 3,000), as a majority of cases go unreported.
Express kidnappings are a common type of abduction in Mexico, and are based on the 24-hour withdrawal limit placed on ATM cards industry-wide. A common *modus operandi* for express kidnappings involves passengers hailing available or "libre" taxis off the street, who are then robbed by two or three armed individuals who enter the taxi a few minutes into the trip upon a signal from the driver. The passenger is held for hours and released after a small ransom is paid after he/she is shuttled to a series of ATMs and forced to withdraw funds.

Another common scam throughout Mexico is virtual kidnapping by telephone, in which the callers typically speak in a distraught voice in a ploy to elicit information about a potential victim and then use this knowledge to demand ransom for his/her release. Prison inmates using smuggled cellular phones often place these calls. Information that can be used against victims may also be obtained from social networking websites.

In February 2013, the U.S. Consulate in Matamoros issued a Security Message reminding U.S. citizens of the threat of kidnapping and other criminal activity, particularly in the northern areas of the state of Tamaulipas, along the US-Mexico border. The threat of kidnapping varies throughout Mexico; OSAC constituents are encouraged to review the Mexico Travel Warning

for a more specific assessment of regional security.

Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras

Transnational criminal organizations conduct narcotics trafficking and other unlawful activities throughout the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) and use violence to control drug trafficking routes and carry out other criminal activity. Kidnapping is often used by these groups generate operational funding.

During the first six months of 2013, there were a total of 24 reported kidnappings in Guatemala, compared to a total of 44 during the same period in 2012. Gang members, affiliated with narcotraffickers, are often well armed with sophisticated weaponry and have been known to use massive amounts of force to extort, kidnap, and kill. Such events have occurred in Guatemala City and rural Guatemala.

There have also been express kidnappings in recent years, primarily in Guatemala City, in which kidnappers demand a relatively small ransom that they believe can be obtained quickly. U.S. citizens, although not specifically targeted, have been kidnap victims. Some kidnapping gangs are known to kill their victims whether or not the ransom is paid.

Economically motivated kidnappings for ransom were previously a serious concern in El Salvador, but press reports indicate that incidents have decreased significantly since 2005. The Policia Nacional Civil (PNC) have had notable success in dismantling kidnapping gangs through strong policing and investigations. Police statistics reported three kidnappings in both 2011 and 2012. While the stated kidnapping rate is very low, kidnappings that result in the death of the victim are logged as homicides, which may distort figures.
Kidnappings and disappearances are an ongoing concern throughout Honduras, but may be more prevalent in densely populated urban centers like Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Kidnapping affects both the local and expatriate communities, with victims sometimes paying large ransoms for the prospect of release. Since January 1, 2012, four cases of U.S. citizens being kidnapped were reported to the U.S. Embassy, but as in much of the world, kidnappings are often underreported.

Haiti

The U.S. Embassy's Consular Section reports that nine Americans were kidnapped in 2012. U.S. citizens traveling to and residing in Haiti are reminded that greater Port-au-Prince remains a leading venue for criminal kidnappings of Americans. While the government of Haiti

has made progress in recent months to arrest and disrupt perpetrators, kidnapping for ransom can affect anyone in Haiti, particularly those maintaining long-term residence in the country. A majority of kidnappings in Haiti are criminal rather than political, and kidnappers appear to make no distinctions between nationality, race, gender, or age of those targeted. Victims typically are not targeted specifically for any single trait, but rather for their perceived wealth, family connections, and/or lax security protocols. A surge in kidnappings can be anticipated in the lead-up to the holiday season (December) and the start of school (October) as it is perceived that people are holding money during these times for school fees or holiday gifts. While most cases were resolved through the payment of ransom, many kidnappings include physical or sexual assaults. Depending on the motive, perpetrators, and/or knowledge of the kidnappers by the victim, some incidents do result in the death of the victim.

Kidnappings in Haiti are widely under-reported for several reasons, including instructions from kidnappers not to involve authorities, desire to resolve the kidnapping as quickly as possible, and fear of reprisal. Additionally, kidnappings during residential break-ins continue to be reported as co-criminal acts.

Colombia

According to red24, a crisis management assistance company, 298 kidnappings were recorded in Colombia in 2011, with slightly a lower tally in 2012. Although the incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak in 2000, it remains a threat, and is of particular concern in rural areas. Terrorist groups and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians, including foreigners, for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors.

In August, OSAC reported on ELN and FARC kidnappings in Colombia, highlighting the rebel groups' motivations and capabilities. The analysis reflected that while the threat of kidnapping serves as a tool to terrorize civilians and government officials alike, the act also serves as an integral revenue stream and a means to leverage relations with the Colombian government.

Venezuela

According to Venezuelan government statistics, 583 kidnappings were officially reported to officials in 2012. Police sources suggest as many as 80% of kidnappings go unreported, meaning that the actual figure is significantly higher.

Kidnappings of varying types are a growing trend in Venezuela, very likely due to deteriorating economic conditions afflicting lower-classes, the growing presence of criminal gangs and organized crime, and an underfunded law enforcement apparatus. The U.S. Embassy in Caracas has received several credible reports of victims of express kidnappings occurring at the door of Maiquetia airport or in taxicabs from the airport, often involving armed perpetrators.

Virtual kidnappings targeting minors are common in Venezuela, as are “inside kidnappings,” in which domestic employees are paid large sums of money to supply keys and information in order to enter homes and kidnap children for ransom. In April 2012, OSAC reported on a series of high-profile abductions that demonstrated kidnappers are not afraid to enter middle- and upper-class neighborhoods to commit these crimes.

Brazil

The majority of kidnappings in São Paulo continue to be “express kidnappings” (also known as “sequestro relampago” or “lightning kidnapping”). The criminals will abduct someone--usually a Brazilian citizen, although foreigners, including Americans, are also vulnerable--for a short time in order to receive a quick payoff from the family, business, or the victim's ATM or credit card. In some cases, they will take the victim shopping if their ATM cash limit has already been met. Many incidents of robbery and express kidnappings occur outside of banks and at ATM machines.
Virtual kidnappings scams have also occurred in São Paulo. In some cases, criminals have played recordings in the background of children or others crying for help.

Kidnapping for ransom and express kidnapping were significant threats in Rio de Janeiro several years ago, but occur less frequently today; victims were targeted based on perceived wealth, or sometimes at random.

Middle East

Yemen

The Department of State continues to urge U.S. citizens not to travel to Yemen, where the security threat level is extremely high. Terrorist organizations, including al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), continue to be active throughout the country and the U.S. Government remains highly concerned about possible attacks on U.S. citizens (whether visiting or residing in Yemen), and U.S. facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and

Western interests.

In the last year, international and local media have reported several kidnappings of Westerners, including aid workers and diplomats. Kidnappings are often used as a political tool to demand government benefits and services or prisoner releases/exchanges by tribal groups. In tribal-related kidnappings, the victim is usually released unharmed following negotiations; however, in recent years, tribal groups have begun selling their victims to AQAP, which may be less likely to release victims unharmed. In addition, piracy in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean is a security threat to maritime activities in the region.

In May 2013, five members of the International Committee of the Red Cross, including three foreign nationals, were kidnapped in Abyan and released within a week. In December 2012, an Austrian national and 2 Finnish nationals studying Arabic were kidnapped in central Sana'a and then released on 9 May 2013. In July 2012, an Italian national employed by the Italian Embassy was kidnapped in Sana'a, and then released on 2 August 2012. In April 2012, a French aid worker from the International Committee of the Red Cross was kidnapped in Hodeida Governorate and then released. In March 2012, a Saudi Arabian diplomat was kidnapped in Aden; he is still being detained. In March 2012, a Swiss teacher was kidnapped in Hodeida, west of Sana'a, and released in February 2013.

Syria

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to Syria, where the security situation remains volatile and unpredictable as an armed conflict between government and anti-government armed groups continues throughout the country. According to Reporters without Borders, 15 foreign journalists have been abducted or arrested in Syria this year; a number of aid workers have also been kidnapped; seven aid workers were abducted at a checkpoint in Saraqeb manned by the Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant (ISIL) in October 2013. The kidnapping of foreign nationals brings international media attention to the conflict and helps to finance the cause, and kidnappings are likely to continue as the conflict wears on. Land border checkpoints held by opposition forces should not be considered safe, as they are targeted by regime attacks and some armed groups, including al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), have sought to fund themselves through kidnap for ransom.

North Africa

Egypt

Kidnapping remains a concern in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, where extremist groups have increased attacks on government interests and Bedouins remain frustrated by the lack of economic opportunities and development. There have been limited reports of foreign nationals being kidnapped in recent months, but this may be due to the recent evacuations of many foreign businesses, political instability, and declining tourism rates, rather than a sign of decreased risk. In fact, extremist groups have increased attacks in the Sinai since the Egyptian military removed the Muslim Brotherhood from power in July 2013.

Algeria

Kidnappings, orchestrated by both criminals and terrorists, are a common occurrence in Algeria. Kidnappings for ransom occur intermittently in the Kabylie region, and victims are often released unharmed if the ransom is paid or if the community mobilizes for the release of the hostages. Kidnapping by terrorist organizations, namely al–Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), remains a much more immediate threat, especially for foreigners or prominent Algerians, in the trans-Sahara region south of Algeria.

Libya

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Libya and strongly advises against all but essential travel to Tripoli and all travel to Benghazi, Bani Walid, and southern Libya, including border areas and the regions of Sabha and Kufra. The Embassy also reminds U.S. citizens of the need for caution and awareness of personal security following the October 5 detainment of a Libyan national by U.S. military authorities. The embassy is aware of public statements threatening the kidnapping of U.S. citizens in Libya, but has no specific information about these threats.

West Africa

Mauritania, Mali, Niger
To increase its financial resources, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has kidnapped Westerners in the Sahel to obtain ransoms. Increased incidence of kidnappings has prompted foreign governments and international organizations to warn their citizens, employees, and constituents against living, traveling, or working in the region. AQIM affiliates, including

MUJAO and Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Al-Murabitoun have been more visible than AQIM since 2011 and have been known to kidnap Westerners.
AQIM and affiliated terrorists have been operating in Mauritania since at least 2005. Actions include kidnapping and murder of Western tourists, aid workers, and Mauritanian soldiers, as well as attacks on foreign diplomatic missions in Mauritania. This culminated in the June 2009 attempted kidnapping and murder of a private U.S. citizen in the capital, Nouakchott.

The Department of State recommends against all non-essential travel to the border regions of Guidimagha, the Hodh El Charghi and Hodh El Gharbi regions of southeastern Mauritania, the eastern half of the Assaba region (east of Kiffa), the eastern half of the Tagant region (east of Tidjika), the eastern half of the Adrar region (east of Chinguetti), and the Zemmour region of northern Mauritania because of the security risk and the threat of kidnapping to Westerners by terrorist groups.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Mali because of ongoing conflict in the northern part of that country, fluid political conditions, and continuing threats of attacks and kidnappings targeting Westerners. Mali continues to face challenges including food shortages, internally displaced persons, and the presence in northern Mali of extremist and militant factions.

U.S. citizens should also note that the U.S. Embassy in Bamako has prohibited all personal travel by U.S. government employees and their dependents to all areas in Mali outside the central area of the Koulikoro Region, which includes the district of Bamako and cities of Koulikoro, Ouelessebougou, Siby, and Kangaba.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Niger. U.S. citizens in Niger, and those considering travel to Niger, should evaluate their personal security situation in light of continuing threats to safety and security. Although there have been no kidnappings of Westerners in Niger since January 2011, AQIM continues its threats to kidnap Westerners in Niger, including U.S. citizens, and to attack the interests of countries that have supported intervention against terrorist groups in northern Mali.

The areas bordering Mali and Libya, and the northern region of Niger continue to be of specific concern. The border is porous, and there are frequent reports of suspected terrorist and armed bandit groups crossing into Niger. The Government of Niger has increased its security forces in the border areas, but the situation remains unstable and travel to the border areas near Mali and Libya is not advised. In September 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey issued a Security Message warning of kidnapping threats against Westerners in the Ingall

area of Northern Niger.

Nigeria

The Department of State warns of the risks of travel to Nigeria and recommends that U.S. citizens avoid all travel to Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states. According to Control Risk, kidnapping in Nigeria may account for up to nearly three-quarters of all African kidnappings, with abductions occurring on a near daily basis. Criminals or militants have abducted foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, from offshore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds, and public roadways.

Although a majority of kidnappings take place in the oil-rich southern Delta states, a string of violent kidnappings in popular expatriate areas of Lagos, including Victoria Island and Lekki, prompted the U.S. Consulate in Lagos to release a Security Message in March warning U.S. citizens of the increased risk in kidnapping. In April, OSAC produced a report on the kidnapping of expatriates in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Muslim-majority north has also experienced an increase in kidnapping by terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and its offshoot Ansaru. In February, a French family of seven was kidnapped at the Waza national park in northern Cameroon, six miles from the Nigerian border, and held for four weeks until negotiations led to their release.

East Africa

Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Somalia due to the unstable and dangerous security environment. Kidnappings of and threats to U.S. citizens and other foreigners can occur in any region. In recent cases, security personnel hired as a precautionary measure to protect aid workers from kidnapping may have actually been complicit in their abduction.

Additionally, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid sailing close to the coast of Somalia as attacks have occurred as far as 1,000 nautical miles off the coast in international waters. Merchant vessels, fishing boats, and recreational craft all risk seizure by pirates and having their crews held for ransom in the waters off the Horn of Africa, especially in the international waters near Somalia.

The threat of kidnapping extends into neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya, especially in border regions. In July, the Embassy in Addis Ababa warned U.S. citizens of a kidnapping threat to Westerners in Ethiopia's eastern Somali Region, where travel is restricted for U.S. government employees.

Kidnapping has also occurred along Ethiopia's northern border with Eritrea, including an incident involving two Westerners who were abducted near the Erta Ale volcano in January 2012. U.S. government personnel are restricted from travel north of the Shire (Inda Silassie)-Axum-Adigrat road in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Personnel are further restricted from travel north of the road from Dessie through Semera to the Galafi border crossing with Djibouti, including the Danakil Depression and the Erta Ale volcano.

The U.S. Government continues to receive information about potential terrorist threats –to include kidnappings-- aimed at U.S., Western, and Kenyan interests in Kenya, including in the Nairobi area, the North Eastern Province, and in the coastal city of Mombasa. In the past, Western tourists have been targeted at resorts on Kenya's northern coast, as have aid workers operating in and around refugee camps along the Kenya-Somalia border.

Mozambique

Although kidnapping for ransom in Mozambique has traditionally targeted affluent persons of South Asia descent, the U.S. Embassy in Maputo released a Security Message in September indicating the kidnap of a Western businessman. In this particular instance, assailants bumped a victim's vehicle with their car and then disabled the driver and his younger brother using a stun or electrical gun in order to facilitate the kidnapping.

South Asia

Afghanistan

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan at this time due ongoing risks of kidnapping and insurgent attacks. According to red24, approximately 1,000 kidnappings take place in Afghanistan each year, conducted by criminal groups, insurgents, and local militias. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul reports that throughout 2012, kidnapping threats to Westerners and incidents of actual kidnapping increased and continue to rise. Virtually every foreigner is considered wealthy, relative to local standards, and is a potential kidnapping victim.

The threat of kidnapping is particularly acute against Westerners who work for NGOs. Locally employed staff is also at risk, with insurgents often sending “night letters” threatening to kidnap family and friends. The motivation for these attacks is primarily financial, but visitors should be aware of the potential that criminal kidnappers might sell their captives to political groups, with whom there is a definite threat of execution. Individuals who proselytize and reporters are high-value targets for kidnappers with a political agenda.

Pakistan

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan at this time due to ongoing security concerns, including kidnapping. According to red24, at least 15,000 kidnappings occur in Pakistan each year, though an overwhelming majority of these are related to forced labor, prostitution, and forced marriages, or to settle personal, tribal or criminal feuds. The kidnapping of Pakistani citizens and other foreign nationals for ransom continues to increase nationwide and primary targets include security forces, aid workers, businesspeople, and dependents of the aforementioned.

According to Control Risks, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces had the highest incidence of kidnapping in 2012. According to local law enforcement reports and the Citizens Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), a civic organization that provides the Karachi police crime statistics and technical support, there were 1,790 kidnappings for ransom in Karachi in 2012. This number is likely very low considering that ransoms are often negotiated and by families without police notification or involvement.

In July, OSAC reported on the upward trend in violence in Karachi, which suggested that political, ethnic, and sectarian divides, coupled with rampant criminality have led to levels of crime unseen in decades. This included a sharp increase in extortion and kidnap for ransom attempts.

Southeast Asia

Philippines

Philippine authorities reported a total of 11 kidnaps for ransom in 2012, down from 24 in 2011. Kidnappings remain most prevalent in Western Mindanao, particularly in the Mindanao Muslim Autonomous Region (ARMM), on the Zamboanga Peninsula, and in Cotabato-Central Mindanao Region, specifically in the provinces of South and North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, and in the Chartered Cities of Zamboanga, General Santos City, Cotabato,

Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. Although less frequent, OSAC constituents have also report kidnapping attempts in Metro Manila.

Officials report that kidnapping incidents in Mindanao are mostly perpetrated by Muslim extremists who are members or allies of terrorist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Lawless MILF Group (LMG), who use kidnap for ransom to fund their operations.

In September, the Embassy in Manila issued an Emergency Message warning that a credible threat of a terrorist kidnapping for-ransom (KFR) plot against foreigners had been identified in the Zamboanga area on the island of Mindanao. As a result, the Embassy advised all American citizens residing in or
planning to travel to the Zamboanga area to re-evaluate their personal safety situation and consider postponing travel to this area at the time.

For Further Information

Please direct any questions regarding this report to the Regional Analysis Unit (RAU) analysts:

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