A Parent’s Guide to Study Abroad

University of Rochester
Center for Education Abroad
Dewey Hall 2-161
Rochester, NY 14627-0376
TEL 585.275.7532
abroad@admin.rochester.edu
www.rochester.edu/abroad
Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am writing to you because your son or daughter has expressed interest in studying abroad next semester. We have assisted thousands of University of Rochester students in internationalizing their undergraduate experience. Most of them say that it was a time of tremendous intellectual and personal growth; you may know this if you yourself studied abroad in college, or have another child who has already done so. The University of Rochester is committed to international education and to preparing students to take their place in the global political and economic community.

Your son or daughter will go through a number of steps in order to spend a semester or year earning credits towards their degree in another country. They will apply to two or more study abroad programs, meet with faculty and study abroad advisors, and consult with peer advisors who have already studied abroad. They are already enrolled in a non-credit, online course entitled “Study Abroad Orientation.” This includes online resources as well as a mandatory in-person group meeting. The course covers topics such as health and safety, financial aid, budgeting, packing, transfer credit, and much more. Through good preparation, we help make their transition to living overseas as smooth as possible. As part of the orientation, students receive 5 pre-departure orientation handbooks covering various topics. You may read these at http://www.rochester.edu/College/abroad/predeparture/index.html. Or contact the Center for Education Abroad for printed copies.

While your son or daughter is away, it is important for us to be able to reach parents and families if necessary. We have asked your son or daughter to provide your contact information through our online UR Study Abroad Portal. By providing this information, your son or daughter is authorizing the UR Center for Education Abroad to contact you in the event of an emergency.

We hope that you find the information in this packet useful and interesting. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call us at (585) 275-7532. You may also email us at abroad@admin.rochester.edu

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Levine
Assistant Dean and Director
“Won’t study abroad cost a lot more than spending a semester or a year at Rochester?”
The fact is, that for most students, a semester or a year abroad costs about the same as a semester at Rochester. If your son or daughter receives University of Rochester financial aid, it will transfer to a Rochester study abroad program. Advisers in the Financial Aid Office are there to help, and there are many special scholarships for which students may be eligible. Students are required to meet with their financial aid counselor before they study abroad. Students who participate in a UR-sponsored program are charged tuition and basic housing; students who participate in non-UR sponsored program will be charged an administrative fee of $1,482.

“Will my daughter have to spend an extra semester at Rochester? Will the courses transfer?”
Education abroad advisers will only recommend programs where the courses do transfer, so students graduate on time. In most cases, students can even transfer courses for majors and minors by consulting with a department adviser. The Center for Education Abroad counselors guide students through this process.

“There’s so much going on at UR - how can he leave for a whole semester?”
There is a lot out there in London, Cairo, Tokyo, Madrid, Dublin, Shanghai, Vienna, or Beijing, too. Going away for a semester does not mean giving up all of the interests and activities they have at UR. For example, musicians seek out venues to play, and athletes find teams to join. Rochester will still be here when he gets back - and he will have new perspectives on UR, the United States, and himself when he returns.

“Can a science (or engineering) major study abroad?”
Request a copy of our “Study Abroad Opportunities for Science and Engineering Students” flyer for a list of programs. There are programs in 21 countries that offer science and/or engineering courses. Faculty advisors will be very encouraging. The Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the Center for Education Abroad are working on developing new opportunities for engineers.

“My son doesn’t speak another language.”
Study abroad can change that. Or he may choose a program where courses are taught in English.

“My daughter has learning disabilities.”
All programs are open to students with disabilities. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) staff and study abroad advisers work with students to identify programs that best suits their interests, talents and academic needs. Information from CETL is provided in Part 4 of the pre-departure handbook: http://www.rochester.edu/College/abroad/predeparture/index.html

“My daughter is planning Take 5/med school/ grad school /law school. Won’t a semester abroad get in her way?”
Students who have clearly defined interests such as graduate or professional schools can plan with counselors in the Center for Education Abroad, the College Center for Advising Services, and the Gwen M. Greene Career and Internship Center. Many students have studied abroad as part of a Take Five project.

“I’m concerned about what employers or graduate schools will think of study abroad.”
Students who study abroad highlight it on resumes. Employers and graduate schools – yes, even medical schools - look for independent people who can adjust to new situations. Alumni emphasize how interested interviewers are in their international background. The Gwen M. Greene Career and Internship Center also encourages these experiences. You will find University of Rochester students who went abroad for a semester or for a year in all fields: professors, physicians, scientists, lawyers, entrepreneurs, journalists, writers, teachers, gallery and museum administrators, human rights activists, filmmakers, and academic administration, to name a few!
“Where will my son live while abroad?”
There are many types of housing on study abroad programs. Some offer residence halls, but it is more common for students to live in apartments, either with other students from US colleges and universities, or with local students. Homestays may also be an option. Particularly in locations where students are eager to acquire new language skills, students may choose to live with families. Some programs offer only one type of housing, but others offer multiple options. It is important for students to understand the different choices before committing to a program, and that they are required to live in the program’s housing. Normally, they will be in double-occupancy rooms.

“While my daughter is overseas, who is responsible in case of emergency?”
Every study abroad program has a responsible local director, available on 24-hour call in case of emergencies. That person is fluent in the local language(s), and in many cases, is a citizen of the country. Either they, or their staff, will guide students in the event of medical or other problems. Program directors manage everything from cultural questions, mediating roommate problems, helping students adjust to local foods, registering for classes on the program, or guiding students in the event of a crisis. The Center for Education Abroad at the University of Rochester is always available for questions. Evenings and weekends, emergency issues can be addressed to UR Public Safety at 585-275-3333. UR Public Safety staff are then in contact with study abroad staff. University Health Service is available for emergency medical consultation 24 hours a day at (585) 275-2662.

“What if my son needs to leave the program?”
In the event that your child enrolls in a study abroad program and is unable to complete it, refunds, if any, will be based on the UR’s standard refund schedule, and on recoverable costs. The refund schedule is applied according to the calendar of the study abroad program. If students enroll in a non-UR program, no refund is possible for the UR study abroad fee, and they would communicate directly with the program sponsor about the possibility of any refund of the program fee.

“My daughter does not have a US passport. How will she remain in status while abroad?”
International students can study abroad as part of their UR academic program. In order to maintain their SEVIS record and eligibility for re-entry in valid F-1 or J-1 status, they must notify the International Services Office (ISO) in advance. A new immigration document will be issued to show that the study abroad is authorized. ISO will guide students and provide them with necessary information about maintaining valid immigration status.

“Does the University of Rochester Student Code of Conduct apply to my son while overseas?”
Yes. Your son or daughter is required to read and to understand the University of Rochester Code of Conduct, including the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy. A copy of this handbook can be found on-line at: http://www.rochester.edu/College/dos/conduct/. The same behavior expectations exist overseas, in matters relating to student-to-student relationships, class attendance, and academic honesty. Please be advised that if your son or daughter is placed on disciplinary or academic probation before their study abroad program begins, this may affect plans to study abroad.
Rochester-sponsored and Non-Rochester-sponsored Programs

Rochester students may choose from a wide variety of study abroad programs. A UR-affiliated program is one with which we have a formal agreement, and a complete current list appears on our web site.

There are also more than 2500 other programs offered by other institutions and universities (“non-UR-sponsored.”) Your son or daughter should meet with a study abroad counselor before choosing a program.

Advantages of a UR program

- Grades earned on a UR-sponsored program will be shown on the UR transcript, although for the most part, they will not be calculated into the grade point average (GPA). Grades earned on non-UR programs will not be shown on the UR transcript, nor will they be calculated into the GPA.

- UR programs brochures are available at the Center for Education Abroad, and the applications are coordinated by our office. Our office is the primary liaison between students and program sponsors.

- On a UR-sponsored program, elective transfer credit is automatic upon completion of approved coursework with a C or better. All students need to obtain appropriate faculty permission for overseas coursework to count towards a major, minor, or certificate program.

- Students who participate in University of Rochester-sponsored programs are eligible for additional special scholarships. Transfer credit is not granted for courses completed at UR or elsewhere.

Advantages of a non-UR program

- Although the minimum overall GPA for applying to UR-sponsored program is 2.8, many programs have more stringent requirements. Students may find that they have more flexibility with non-UR programs.

- For some students, particularly for those who do not receive any merit or need-based scholarships from UR, the overall cost of the program may be lower.

- No college or university can offer a program in every country. Allowing students to choose from the more than 4500 options available opens every possibility.

Students on non-UR programs need to obtain approval before going abroad for all coursework taken overseas, since some non-UR courses may not be accepted by UR for transfer credit. Advisers in the Center for Education Abroad assist students in determining transferability of overseas coursework. For example, it is essential that the adviser determine if the program is offered by an accredited institution.

Study Abroad Status

All UR students studying abroad who wish to receive academic credit for their work are placed on “study abroad status.” Study abroad status maintains the student as a full-time, matriculated, University of Rochester student.
All students studying on non-UR sponsored programs are assessed a $1,482 per semester administrative fee which is charged to the term bill (see “Billing” below). Students on study abroad status are eligible for continuation of UR health insurance while abroad. Study abroad students must notify the UR insurance office if they wish to do this: insurance@uhls.rochester.edu If not, notified coverage is canceled for the semester the student is away. Students may not use Inactive Status (used for a leave of absence from UR) and receive academic credit from a study abroad program.

**Financing Study Abroad**

Listed below are general guidelines regarding financial aid eligibility for students on study abroad programs. However, as each student’s financial situation is unique, it is his or her responsibility to meet with a financial aid counselor while planning a semester(s) abroad. Financial aid can be defined as a combination of any of the following: merit scholarships from UR, need-based aid, and loans.

Students participating in UR-sponsored programs are charged UR tuition and housing. Students participating in non UR-sponsored programs are charged an administrative fee ($1,482).

**Financial Aid**

*For those participating in UR Programs:* If your child is a financial aid recipient, they will be eligible to receive financial aid during their semester abroad. If the total program cost is less than the cost of studying at UR for that semester, their need-based aid will be reduced proportionately. Merit awards will not be reduced. Please have your child meet with a financial aid counselor to discuss his or her specific situation.

*For those participating in Non–UR Programs:* If your child chooses to study on a non-UR program, they will not be eligible to receive the same financial aid they are currently receiving. Most importantly, they will not be eligible for any University of Rochester financial assistance. It is especially important for your child to discuss their plans with their financial aid counselor to determine what types of aid they will be eligible for while abroad and to ensure the continuation of their aid when they return. A small number of study abroad programs have their own financial aid or scholarships available.

In order to be reviewed for federal aid eligibility, students participating in a non-UR study abroad program must complete a Consortium/Contractual Agreement. Detailed instructions on completing the Agreement are included. A Consortium/Contractual Agreement involves multiple steps and requires several signatures, so your child should not delay in completing this requirement. **Your child’s coursework must be approved before the UR Dean can sign the Consortium Agreement.**

**Scholarships**

There are numerous scholarships and other resources available for study abroad. Application deadlines vary and some may be up to a year in advance of a study abroad program. Also, be sure your child checks with a financial aid counselor to discuss how these outside awards might affect their aid. In any case, it will be to your child’s benefit to win a prestigious national award.

A list of all of these scholarship programs is available from the Center for Education Abroad.
Billing

If your child is participating in a study abroad program in the fall, the fall semester statement will be posted online in mid-July. If your child is participating in a study abroad program in the spring, the spring semester statement will be posted online in mid-December. Your child will not receive a statement in November unless they have a balance from the fall semester. Students participating in a full-year program will be billed on a semester basis. Please note that students studying abroad will be charged the campus post office box fee, unless the post office box is closed by turning in the key and providing a forwarding address.

The balance must be paid in full from the prior semester to register for a study abroad program. If there is a past due balance, students may settle their account with the Bursar’s Office, 330 Meliora Hall, 275-3931. Your child’s registration for a study abroad program is subject to cancellation if payment is not kept current and their past due balance is $5,000 or greater, or if they submit a check that is returned by the bank, unless acceptable arrangements are promptly made.

If your child is participating in a non-UR program, UR will bill them for the study abroad fee ($1,482). This fee partially covers costs incurred by the University for administrative services and guarantees that credit will be awarded for approved courses successfully completed abroad. Your child will be billed directly for the program by the college or university that sponsors the program.

If your child is participating in a UR-sponsored program, UR will bill them for UR tuition and housing. If your child selects UR-sponsored student health insurance plan while abroad, the charges (mandatory health fee and insurance premium) will be placed on the student’s account. Contact insurance@uhs.rochester.edu to assure enrollment.

For more information about refunds and other billing questions, we strongly encourage you to read the student pre-departure handbook, “Money Matters”, available on our website at: http://www.rochester.edu/college/abroad/predeparture/index.html

Insurance

Medical Insurance: Check your health insurance coverage to find out if the student will be covered during the stay abroad, and whether any special conditions apply. If the student has been insured through the University of sponsored plan, this coverage can be extended overseas, but only by written request. UR Coverage is canceled during Study Abroad unless an extension is requested. Contact insurance@uhs.rochester.edu to request extension of enrollment.

If your child selects coverage by the UR-sponsored student health insurance plan while abroad, the charges (mandatory health fee and insurance premium) will be placed on the student’s account. Be sure you and your child know how this system works: how bills are paid, what happens in the case of a medical emergency, and how to access routine treatments. If your student is on a program that begins later or ends earlier than the semester at UR, please ensure adequate coverage is in place through your insurance provider. For programs requiring their own insurance plan, coverage begins the day the program starts and ends the day the program ends.
Should students require medical attention abroad, it may be necessary for them to have sufficient cash on hand to make payment at the time of treatment since the foreign physician and/or hospital may not be able to process medical bills through an American insurance company.

For students who study abroad during the academic year, UR provides them with a MEDEX insurance policy that provides coverage for emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains. Students who participate in UR programs sponsored by IES, CIEE, DIS and AUC, or who are covered by the UR/Aetna insurance plan already receive this benefit. This benefit does not cover routine medical services.

**Travel and Property Insurance**: Student travelers should have insurance to cover any loss of money because of trip interruption or cancellation, as well as loss of baggage and other property while traveling or living in overseas. In addition, we recommend that students consider purchasing personal liability insurance against injury or damage caused by or resulting from students’ acts or omissions during enrollment in any program.

The University of Rochester is not liable for damage or loss of personal property. Contact your insurance agent regarding property insurance.

**Safety Abroad**

Safety is understandably foremost in the minds of students and of their families. Concern for student safety abroad has always been of primary importance to The College, and it remains an integral part of our standard procedures and practices. Most study abroad destinations are statistically less dangerous than the average American city. Our approach to promoting safety abroad is founded on communication, information, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

No university can guarantee the safety of its students overseas, any more than it can guarantee their safety on the home campus. The staff of the Center for Education Abroad has access to varied resources for information about the relative political and economic stability of host countries. We are in regular contact with our overseas partners who, in turn, work closely with American consulates and embassies. We monitor international conditions daily, with information from the U.S. Department of State, our overseas partners, and our colleagues here at the University of Rochester.

We require your son or daughter to enroll for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/step.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/step.html). STEP is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows students to enter information about their upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist them in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Students who are well-informed about the international context of their study abroad host country will be best equipped to ensure their own safety. To that end, we provide students and families with the latest announcements and travel advisories from the Department of State. Also, prior to departure, all prospective study abroad students attend a mandatory orientation seminar. This seminar serves as the first meeting of a required online course. Students meet peer advisers who present important information about safety, managing money, packing, transfer credit, health issues and much more. Through good preparation, we make the transition to living overseas as smooth as possible. At the
same time, students have responsibility for their own safety by monitoring developments on their own through public sources and by not intentionally putting themselves in harm’s way.

It is important that University and program representatives are able to reach students’ families quickly in case of emergency. Before students leave for the overseas program, we ask students to provide us with up-to-date contact information through the UR Study Abroad Portal.

**Pre-departure Orientation**

The Center for Education Abroad organizes a Pre-Departure Orientation for students studying abroad in the coming semester. It is primarily online, and includes one required group meeting. All students receive a departure packet containing valuable information. We strongly encourage you to review the pre-departure booklets, available on our website:

http://www.rochester.edu/College/abroad/predeparture/index.html

**Taking Care of Business While Still at UR**

We often remind students to take care of all business before they leave the UR campus. It is much easier for students to contact professors and staff members, obtain necessary signatures, and sign important forms in person, rather than from a distance. Here is a brief checklist we provide to students in their Pre-departure packet:

- Find out about your banking options. Your program will most likely give you some information about banking in your host country.
- Meet with a counselor in the Financial Aid Office in Wallis Hall if you receive any financial aid (this includes need-based aid or merit awards, i.e. scholarships).
- Obtain course approvals for foreign language courses and for courses you wish to use towards your major, minor, or certificate. If you are going on a non-UR program, you will need to have all courses approved for transfer credit.
- Make several copies of your passport. Leave a copy at the Center for Education Abroad.
- Research the city and country where you will be studying.
- Forward your UR email account to a web-based email provider such as Yahoo or Gmail. All official correspondence will only be sent to your UR email account.
- Visit the River Campus post office to give a forwarding address and to maintain your CPU box.
- Obtain an insurance ID card from your insurance company.
## How to Contact the Center for Education Abroad & Other UR Offices

**University of Rochester Public Safety**  
Maintenance & Transportation Building  
TEL (585) 275-3333  
FAX (585) 273-1128  
e-mail: 4info@security.rochester.edu

**Residential Life**  
Contact: Laurel Contomanolis  
TEL (585) 275-3166  
FAX (585) 275-7941  
e-mail: housing@reslife.rochester.edu

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<th><strong>Bursar’s Office</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 275-3931</td>
<td>Contact: Nancy Specht</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAX (585) 461-3356</td>
<td>TEL (585) 275-8131</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:bursar@admin.rochester.edu">bursar@admin.rochester.edu</a></td>
<td>FAX (585) 275-2190</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:registrar@mail.rochester.edu">registrar@mail.rochester.edu</a></td>
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<th><strong>Gwen M. Greene Career and Internship Center</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Law professions, career planning</td>
<td>Contact: Glenroy A. Sicard, Sr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 275-2366</td>
<td>TEL (585) 275-3983</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAX (585) 461-3093</td>
<td>FAX (585) 275-8097</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:careers@mail.rochester.edu">careers@mail.rochester.edu</a></td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:rcpark@services.rochester.edu">rcpark@services.rochester.edu</a></td>
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<th><strong>Financial Aid Office</strong></th>
<th><strong>International Services Office</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Contact: Any Financial Aid counselor</td>
<td>Contact: Cary Jensen</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 275-3226</td>
<td>TEL (585) 275-2866</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAX (585) 756-7664</td>
<td>FAX (585) 244-4503</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:help@finaid.rochester.edu">help@finaid.rochester.edu</a></td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:questions@iso.rochester.edu">questions@iso.rochester.edu</a></td>
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<td>(UHS Health Insurance Coverage)</td>
<td>(MA, 3/2 Programs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact: Linda Dudman</td>
<td>TEL (585) 275-3950</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 273-5770</td>
<td>FAX (585) 473-7598</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAX (585) 276-0149</td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:admissions@warner.rochester.edu">admissions@warner.rochester.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:lddudma@uhs.rochester.edu">lddudma@uhs.rochester.edu</a></td>
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<td>(MBA, 3/2 Programs)</td>
<td>General academic issues: any Academic Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact: Rebekah Lewin, Executive Director of M.B.A. Admissions and Administration</td>
<td>Certificate Programs: any Academic Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 275-0492</td>
<td>Graduate Fellowships: Belinda Redden</td>
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<td>FAX (585) 271-3907</td>
<td>Health Professions: Caterina Tempest</td>
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<td>Take Five: Dale Hess</td>
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<th><strong>Office of the Dean of Students</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Contact: Dawn L. Bruner, Director of Parent Relations</td>
<td>TEL (585) 275-5415</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEL (585) 275-0151</td>
<td>FAX (585) 276-0151</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:dawn.bruner@rochester.edu">dawn.bruner@rochester.edu</a></td>
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Useful items and gift ideas for students going abroad

Here are some suggestions that can be purchased on-line, or in stores that cater to travelers’ needs.

1. TRAVEL GUIDE / MAP
2. “HEALTHY TRAVEL” GUIDE
3. PAPERBACK COOKBOOK
4. INEXPENSIVE WATCH
5. SMALL FLASHLIGHT
6. SAFETY WALLET
7. SMALL PHOTO ALBUM OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS
8. DECK OF CARDS OR HAND-HELD GAME
9. PHONE CARD
10. “SLEEP SACK”
11. CAMP TOWEL
The Department of State is updating the Worldwide Caution to provide information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. Recent terrorist attacks, whether by those affiliated with terrorist entities, copycats, or individual perpetrators, serve as a reminder that U.S. citizens need to maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This replaces the Worldwide Caution dated January 9, 2015.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. In August 2014, the United States and regional partners commenced military action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated terrorist organization in Syria and Iraq. In response to the airstrikes, ISIL called on supporters to attack foreigners wherever they are. Authorities believe there is an increased likelihood of reprisal attacks against U.S., Western and coalition partner interests throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Kidnappings and hostage events involving U.S. citizens have become increasingly prevalent as ISIL, al-Qa’ida and its affiliates have increased attempts to finance their operations through kidnapping for ransom operations. U.S. citizens have been kidnapped and murdered by members of terrorist and violent extremist groups. ISIL, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) are particularly effective with kidnapping for ransom and are using ransom money to fund the range of their activities.

Extremists may elect to use conventional or non-conventional weapons, and target both official and private interests. Examples of such targets include high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas, shopping malls, and other tourist destinations both in the United States and abroad where U.S. citizens gather in large numbers, including during holidays.

U.S. citizens are reminded of the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure. Extremists have targeted and attempted attacks on subway and rail systems, aviation, and maritime services. In the past, these types of attacks have occurred in cities such as Moscow, London, Madrid, Glasgow, and New York City.

EUROPE: Current information suggests that ISIL, al-Qa’ida, its affiliated organizations, and other terrorist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. and Western interests in Europe. On January 7, 2015, two armed gunmen entered the Paris offices of a satirical news magazine and killed 12 people, including two police officers. Al-Qa’aida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) took credit for the attack. On January 9, a man attacked a kosher market in Paris immediately killing four people. Also in January, Belgian counter-terrorist units foiled what was described as an imminent terror attack, when they killed two gunmen and wounded another in a shootout in the town of Verviers, near the German border. On February 14, at an event in Copenhagen, Denmark called Art, blasphemy and the freedom of expression, a gunman opened fire killing one person and wounding three police officers. On June 26, terrorists attacked a U.S.-owned factory near Lyon, France, killing one and injuring others. Authorities believe the likelihood of terror attacks in Europe will continue as European members of ISIL return from Syria and Iraq. Additionally, there is a continuing threat in Europe from unaffiliated persons
planning attacks inspired by major terrorist organizations but conducted on an individual basis. European governments have taken action to guard against terrorist attacks, and some have made official declarations regarding heightened threat conditions.

MIDDLE EAST and NORTH AFRICA: Credible information indicates terrorist groups also seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. The U.S. government remains highly concerned about possible attacks against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests. Private U.S. citizens are strongly discouraged from traveling to Iraq, Syria, or any other country to join in armed conflict. No part of Syria should be considered immune from violence. The security situation remains dangerous and unpredictable as a civil war between government and armed anti-government groups continues throughout the country. There is an increased threat of terrorism from groups such as ISIL, al-Nusrah, as well as other extremists whose tactics include use of suicide bombers, kidnappings, use of small and heavy arms, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In the last several years, the United States has received reports of numerous foreigners kidnapped in Syria, some of whom have been killed while others remain in captivity. The majority of the victims are journalists and aid workers. U.S. citizens and other Westerners have been murdered by ISIL in Syria. Violent extremists from various countries operate in Syria and may be planning attacks against the United States and other Western targets.

A number of extremist groups also operate in Lebanon and the potential for death or injury in Lebanon exists because of periodic terrorist bombing attacks throughout the country. As a result of spillover violence from the Syria crisis, Sunni groups are active and Hizballah, a group designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization, has been present and active for many years.

U.S. citizens in Iraq remain at high risk for kidnapping and terrorist violence. Numerous insurgent groups, including ISIL, remain active and terrorist activity and violence persists in many areas of the country. ISIL controls Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, as well as significant territory in northern, western, and central Iraq, particularly along the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, and the group continues to attack Iraqi security forces and civilians in those areas. U.S. government facilities and western interests remain possible targets, as evidenced by the April 17 bombing in the public area outside U.S. Consulate General Erbil where one U.S. citizen was injured. In addition, several anti-U.S. militia groups fighting ISIL, such as Kataib Hezbollah (KH) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) are operating throughout Iraq and may present a threat to U.S. citizens.

In Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria, groups affiliated with ISIL, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and other terrorist groups have conducted attacks against both foreign and local targets. In Libya, various groups have called for attacks against U.S. citizens and U.S. interests. On January 28, 2015 in Tripoli, Libya, a car bomb was detonated outside the Corinthia Hotel. Three militants rushed inside the hotel and opened fire before blowing themselves up. Five foreigners were among those killed. On March 18, several gunmen attacked the Bardo Museum in the center of Tunis, Tunisia, killing 21 people including 18 foreign tourists. On June 26, a terrorist killed 38, mostly western tourists, on a beach in Sousse, Tunisia. In Algeria’s Kabylie region, an ISIS-affiliated group kidnapped and killed a Westerner in September 2014, and, in south-western Algeria, terrorists killed 39 workers, including westerners, and held hundreds hostage at a gas processing facility in January 2013.
In Yemen, the security situation has greatly deteriorated, necessitating the suspension of operations of the U.S. Embassy. Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a potent force there.

AFRICA: Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Murabitun remain active in northern Mali and Niger. Terrorist groups have stepped up their rhetoric calling for additional attacks or kidnapping attempts on westerners and others, particularly those linked to support for international military intervention.

The terrorist group AQIM has declared its intention to attack Western targets throughout the Sahel (an area that stretches across the African continent between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea to include Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Eritrea). It has claimed responsibility for kidnappings, attempted kidnappings, and the murder of several Westerners throughout the region.

Al-Shabaab assassinations, suicide bombings, hostage taking, and indiscriminate attacks in civilian-populated areas are frequent in Somalia. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated their intent to attack Somali authorities, the African Union Mission in Somalia, and non-military targets such as international donor offices and humanitarian assistance providers. Al-Shabaab retains its demonstrated capability to carry out attacks in government-controlled territory in Somalia and in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Djibouti.

In fact, al-Qa’ida and its affiliate, al-Shabaab, have attacked targets in Kenya for years. Since late 2013, there have been numerous attacks killing hundreds and causing injury to hundreds more within the Nairobi area, along the coast, and in the northeastern region of the country. Most of these attacks occurred in northeastern Kenya, mainly in Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera counties. The most deadly of these took place on April 2 at the Garissa University College, where al-Shabaab terrorists killed 148 people, primarily students, and wounded many others. Grenade and improvised explosive device attacks have occurred in Nairobi, including the January 2014 attack at a restaurant in the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. In 2014 and 2015, the Mombasa area had at least eight such attacks.

Boko Haram, an extremist group based in northeast Nigeria, has claimed responsibility for many attacks, mainly in northern Nigeria. Thus far, 2015 has seen a continued increase in Boko Haram attacks and clashes with Nigerian government security forces in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram has also targeted women and children for kidnapping, reportedly kidnapping women in northern states for marriage as “slave brides.” Boko Haram is known to descend on whole towns, robbing banks and businesses, attacking police and military installations, and setting fire to private homes. U.S. citizen missionaries in northern Nigeria have received specific written threats to their safety and well-being, although none have yet been harmed. Boko Haram has carried out attacks in Cameroon’s Far North Region, and has targeted foreign expatriates, tourists, and government leaders in this region. In Chad, the entire Lake Chad region – not only Chad’s border with Nigeria – is vulnerable because of rising activities by Boko Haram.

U.S. citizens considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there have been armed attacks, robberies, and kidnappings for ransom by pirates. The threat of hijacking to merchant vessels continues to exist in Somali territorial waters and as far as 1,000 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia, Yemen, and Kenya in international waters. There has also been a recent rise in piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, including hijackings.
U.S. government maritime authorities advise mariners to avoid the port of Mogadishu and to remain at least 200 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. In addition, when transiting around the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, or in the Red Sea, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys and maintain good communications at all times. U.S. citizens traveling on commercial passenger vessels should consult with the shipping or cruise ship company regarding precautions that will be taken to avoid hijacking incidents. Commercial vessels should review the Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's Horn of Africa Piracy page for information on maritime advisories, self-protection measures, and naval forces in the region.

SOUTH ASIA: The U.S. government continues to receive information that terrorist groups in South Asia may also be planning attacks in the region, possibly against U.S. government facilities, U.S. citizens, or U.S. interests. The presence of al-Qa'ida, Taliban elements, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, indigenous sectarian groups, and other terror organizations, many of which are on the U.S. government's list of designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, poses a potential danger to U.S. citizens in the region. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and ability to attack locations where U.S. citizens or Westerners are known to congregate or visit.

The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a danger to U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan. Across the country, terrorist attacks frequently occur against civilian, government, and foreign targets. Attacks have included armed assaults on heavily guarded sites, including Pakistani military installations and airports. The Government of Pakistan maintains heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities. Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.

No province in Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence and crime, and the strong possibility exists throughout the country for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against U.S. and other foreign nationals at any time. Elements of the former Taliban regime and members of other terrorist organizations hostile to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and foreign nationals remain active in every province of the country. Furthermore, travel to all areas of Afghanistan remains unsafe due to ongoing military combat operations, landmines, banditry, armed rivalry between political and tribal groups, and the possibility of insurgent attacks, including attacks using vehicle-borne or other improvised explosive devices. U.S. citizens are increasingly targeted for kidnapping. The threat situation in Afghanistan is still considered critical and is expected to remain so through the current political and military transition.

India continues to experience terrorist and insurgent activities which may affect U.S. citizens directly or indirectly. Anti-Western terrorist groups active in India include Islamist extremist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Indian Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. Past attacks have targeted public places, including some frequented by Westerners, such as luxury and other hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas. Attacks have taken place during the busy evening hours in markets and other crowded places, but could occur at any time.

CENTRAL ASIA: Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al-Qa'ida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. government interests.
EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC: Information from credible sources suggests that there is a continued risk of armed terrorist and criminal groups operating and planning attacks against foreigners, including U.S. citizens, in the East Asian and Pacific region. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group, have cells operating throughout Southeast Asia and JI is linked to al-Qa’ida and other regional terrorist groups. There is a risk of travel to the southern Philippines, specifically related to kidnapping threats in the Sulu Archipelago and the ongoing threat of violence on the island of Mindanao, particularly in Central Mindanao.

Over the past year there have been several kidnappings-for-ransom targeting foreigners in the Eastern Sabah province of Malaysia and in the southern Sulu Sea area by terrorist or insurgent groups based in the Sulu Archipelago of the Philippines. In addition to incursions on the coastal and island resorts themselves, criminal or terrorist bands may attempt to intercept boats ferrying tourists in the area.

Indonesian security forces have disrupted a number of terrorist cells, including JI, a terrorist organization that carried out several significant bombings in Jakarta and Bali over the past decade. Although Indonesian counterterrorism efforts have been successful in preventing terrorists from conducting large-scale attacks in recent years, extremists in Indonesia may demonstrate a willingness and ability to carry out small-scale violent attacks with little or no warning.