

## Developing

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### **Tajikistan Alert: Four Western tourists killed in armed attack in southwestern Danghara District on July 29; highlights security risks in rural areas**

#### **Please be advised**

- Four Western tourists, including two Americans, one Dutch national and one Swiss citizen, were killed and three others injured in an armed attack in Danghara District (approximately 90 km south of Dushanbe) on July 29. The incident was initially reported as a hit-and-run, but security forces have expanded their investigations to include criminal or militant motives, according to the interior minister on July 30.
- The tourists were on a cycling tour in the rural parts of the district when a car ran into them. Officials have confirmed that the crash was premeditated while mentioning that at least one of the tourists was attacked with a sharp object.
- The perpetrators fled the scene after the assault, but one of them was later killed in an altercation with authorities as he resisted detention. Another suspect was apprehended and three others remain at large, as of publication. They are believed to have been in possession of knives and firearms.



## Assessments

1. Given the current paucity of details, the motive of the attackers remains unclear. The incident highlights the significant security risks associated with travel outside of Dushanbe, particularly in rural districts such as Danghara. The province of Khatlon, where Danghara is located, is a known criminal hotspot with organized crime groups and generally weaker levels of security. This may have prompted the ongoing investigation into criminal motives associated with the perpetrators. Considering three assailants remain on the loose, authorities will likely organize raids across the district, with extra vigilance along major highways leading in and out of Dushanbe.
2. The police investigation into possible militant motives is based on the government's overall vigilance over Islamist radicalism in the country. The state remains particularly sensitive to the potential for the return of Islamic State (IS) foreign fighters from Syria, whose number is currently estimated at 1,000. The specific targeting of the Western nationals, against this background, in a premeditated manner, may have raised these concerns.

## Recommendations

1. Travel to Tajikistan may continue at this time while adhering to standard security protocols given the latent threat of militancy, crime, and unrest.
2. Those operating or residing in Dushanbe are advised to maintain heightened vigilance due to the risk of crime and militancy while avoiding unsecured travel to the country's rural districts such as Danghara.
3. We advise against nonessential travel to outlying areas in Tajikistan near the country's borders with Afghanistan, given the threat of militant activity and criminality, including drug smuggling. Nonessential travel to Tajikistan's border areas with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan should also be avoided, due to the risk of landmines and criminal activity. We also advise against travel to the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAR), due to sporadic violence and militancy in the area.