



Bahamas Hotel & Tourism Association
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Nassau, N.P., The Bahamas

February 8, 2024

Dear BHTA Members and Industry Partners,

The Bahamas Hotel & Tourism Association (BHTA), alongside the Government of The Bahamas, including The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments and Aviation (BMOTIA) have been working with key, private sector tourism stakeholders to address reports being made by international and local media, regarding the recent release of a US Travel Alert for The Bahamas in the latter part of January 2024 and the US Travel Advisory designation for The Bahamas.

The BMOTIA have moved swiftly to leverage the insight and expertise of our organization, promotion boards and other private and public sector partners to deploy a comprehensive response aimed at ensuring the perception and reality of crime and safety in The Bahamas is accurately depicted, particularly where there have been incidents of misrepresentation/miscommunication which has resulted in varying levels of misunderstandings, subsequent querying, and in some cases delayed and/or cancelled bookings by prospective visitors.

We are intent on ensuring that it is widely known that The Bahamas, a premier tourism destination that has been in the business of tourism for more than 200 years, is a SAFE destination to visit. Collectively, we are activating a cohesive communication strategy, which accurately reflects this reality.

The following key points have and will continue to be emphasized:

The Bahamas remains at a Level 2 US Travel Advisory designation where we have been since 2022. There has been no elevation of this designation. We share this status (Level 2) with 70 other countries across the world, including but not limited to some of the most popular tourist destinations on the planet: France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, Maldives, and The United Kingdom.

An article published by The Nassau Guardian, on February 6th, 2023, reported on comments made by The US Embassy's Charge d' Affairs, Usha Pitts, in response to a question posed by a reporter at a press conference for the renewal of the Air Transport Preclearance Agreement between The Bahamas and the United States. Charge Pitts, who currently resides in New Providence, Bahamas, when asked if she was concerned about the safety of Americans in The Bahamas, stated, "No. Not the least concerned," she said. The article goes on to report Pitts as saying:

“The travel advisory level hasn’t changed since 2022, I believe. It’s been a good two years since the travel advisory changed and even then, it got better because we came out of COVID, so we were encouraging people to travel more freely and feel that they could travel.

“So, I’m not concerned. We have to remember that our audience is for Americans who are coming to The Bahamas. We want to make sure that they are safe, and so we have a responsibility to warn them to be careful when they need to be careful.

“So that’s all the travel advisory is and that was our intent, to let them know what to be aware of. [There] was no change in the travel advisory level.”

(Please see full article via this link)

https://www.thenassaeguardian.com/news/pitts-no-concerns-americans-wont-be-safe-in-the-bahamas/article_e187a35a-c470-11ee-8d3b-af3858a139c9.html


Specific instances of crime that have recently garnered attention and been highly reported on by varying Press and Media outlets, particularly in the US, have occurred in certain areas located on the island of New Providence. These communities are not frequented by tourists.

Crime at any level, be it against citizens or visitors, is not tolerated in The Bahamas. We consider all forms of criminal activity to be of grave national concern and we will continue to work collaboratively with The Government of The Bahamas, private sector stakeholders, our church leaders and our community members, to address instances of crime. We are not alone in our fight against crime, destinations globally, including the United States, Canada and Europe, experience crime, and we recognize they are equally ardent in their fight against it.

The Bahamas has been in the business of tourism for a very long time, we are very good at what we do. We know how to care for the guests we invite into our home. Last year we were pleased to welcome 9 million visitors to our shores, the vast majority of whom left with great memories, having experienced the best The Bahamas has to offer, unrivalled beauty, and the genuine, warm hospitality of our people. Our success as a tourism destination is a testament to our ability to provide our guests with an incredible, enjoyable, safe and secure experience in The Bahamas.

We encourage our entire Bahamian community and tourism partners to join us as we aim to ensure that the world knows we are a safe destination. It is our very nature to nurture the incredible relationships we have developed over many years spent hosting our guests. We encourage you to share positive stories about The Bahamas; Tourism is, after all, everybody’s business.

Regards,



Robert ‘Sandy’ Sands
President
Bahamas Hotel & Tourism Association