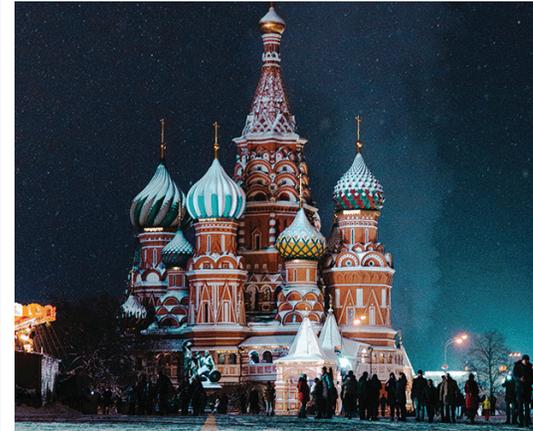


“Reconsider Travel to Russia”

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This rather profound warning from the US Department of State is one to be heeded.

The Russian Federation, under the leadership of its President Vladimir Putin, has taken on a much more provocative and aggressive posture of late.

While the risks of crime and terrorism in the Russian Federation have been high for some time, recent political events have exponentially exacerbated the risk to travellers and other foreigners resident in Russia.

In February 2018, Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok on the streets of Salisbury, England. While Russia has denied that they were responsible for the attempted murders, the attack on a well-known double agent nears the hallmarks of a Kremlin led operation. “Wet operations” of this nature have been a common tool of the Russian Special Services for nearly a century. From the assassination of Leon Trotsky by an axe wielding assassin in Mexico to the murder in London of former Russian FSB defector Alexander Litvinenko after falling victim to poisoning by radioactive Polonium-210. The Russian Special Services and their Soviet predecessors have never shied away from using violence and harassment to exact revenge and to promulgate fear amongst their adversaries.

Travellers to, and ex-pats resident in the Russian Federation, should exercise extreme caution for the

foreseeable future. In retaliation for the expulsion of Russian “diplomats” from North America and Europe, hundreds of legitimate Western diplomats have been summarily expelled from Russia. In addition to that, diplomatic premises in Russia and the US have been shuttered. Not only are there fewer diplomats to assist visitors in need, but the safe sanctuaries are fewer and far between.

This tit for tat will continue and the risks to exposed Westerners in Russia has increased and will continue to intensify. Visitors, whether on business or private travel, are low hanging fruit that can be targeted if the Russian Government sees fit to do so. Whether it be harassment at entry and exit points or routine interdictions by police and other government officials, visitors and foreigners writ large can expect to be hassled. The level of harassment could become grave.

Business travellers are particularly vulnerable to cyber and technical attacks while in the Russian federation as well as at home.

As the US Department of State has so clearly articulated, “reconsider your travel to Russia.” If you must travel, precautions need to be taken to ensure the safety and security of you, your staff and your families. The ICEN Group through its team of intelligence, law enforcement and military experts is here to help.