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# BU cancels semester in Niger

Move prompted by recent deaths

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

Globe Correspondent / January 17, 2011

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**Boston University has canceled its study abroad program in Niger because of the recent abduction and slaying of two Frenchmen.**

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Fifteen BU students had been scheduled to travel to the former French colony this month for the spring semester program. The university has sent around a dozen students to the African nation each fall and spring semester since the program began 20 years ago, said campus spokesman Colin Riley.

The school had also sought to launch its first summer program there this year, but those plans have been canceled “for the foreseeable future,” Riley said.

“University officials have decided that the heightened level of risk in Niamey [Niger’s capital, where BU students live and study] is unacceptable,” said an announcement posted on the university’s website last week. “We are very sorry to take this action. The BU program in Niger has always been one of the true stars of BU’s programs abroad. However, the safety and well-being of our students and staff must always be our primary concern.”

There currently are no BU students in Niger.

Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the abduction of the two 25-year-old Frenchmen, who were seized at gunpoint Jan. 7 while eating dinner at Le Toulousain restaurant. The open-air eatery was popular with BU students.

The two men were killed as French soldiers closed in on the kidnapers, according to wire service reports.

No other Massachusetts colleges appear to have students in Niger as part of official study programs, according to officials at the schools and a review of international programs listed online.

BU has more than 75 study-abroad programs, sending students to some 20 countries. About 40 percent of last year’s 4,000-student graduating class had studied abroad at some point, Riley said.

One of those planning to study in the coming semester’s Niamey program, BU junior Ana Maria Duque, said she decided to attend the university last spring, after completing a two-year program at Miami-Dade College, in part because

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of BU's international offerings.

From her home in Florida, Duque, a native of Colombia, said Friday that the cancellation of the Niger program was disappointing, but "our main concern is the people in Niger," particularly those who live and work at the facility where students in the program live and attend classes.

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