

Dear friends and family members:

I am shocked and saddened by the terrible events that have rocked the land I call home. I trust that you are all fine, and I only hope that none of you knew someone who was injured or killed in the attacks on the east coast. Please let me know how you are, and if you are hurting, so I can communicate on your behalf.

Things in China are fine. Life is going on as it normally would here. We had an all-school assembly this morning to tell the students of the events, and to let them know that we were all on hand if they needed to talk. I chose not to go ahead with my scheduled lessons, but instead let the students discuss their thoughts and feelings. At the end of each class, we did some journaling. All of the students here, even those who are not American, are upset and angered by the terrorist attacks.

President Jiang Zemin of China sent a letter to George Bush telling him that China is sorry that this kind of devastation has occurred, and that China hopes the USA will capture those responsible. The chief of police in Kunming came to our school to share his sympathy and offer any assistance. The office of Foreign Affairs said they would process visas immediately in case any Americans wanted to fly back to be with family members or loved ones. I stopped to buy a trinket on the street, and the man selling it asked me in Chinese if I was from the US, pointing to a newspaper I had under my arm. I looked at him sadly and nodded yes. He motioned that he was sorry, and then gave me a free tomato to express that he felt sorry for me.

The United States Embassy issued this announcement:

*"As of now, there are no special advisories, but to take normal precautions. Keep a low profile, and be aware of your surroundings. Report any incidents. The consulate is on a "no double standard" status, which means that if we know anything we will pass it right on to the Americans. We will get word out to you as we hear it. We are all shocked and horrified by the incident, please feel free to contact the consulate with any questions or concerns."*

Hence, it looks as if China is safe, probably safer than the United States at this point. I have registered with both the US Embassy in Beijing, and our closest consulate in Chengdu. I suspect the terrorists are after big groups of Americans, not just a few at an international school somewhere in China, or anywhere else for that matter.

I am thinking about all of you, both literally and figuratively. Please write and let me know that you are all right, and if you know anyone that was hurt in this terrible event. I want to communicate for all the needs of my friends and family, as well as for the leaders of the US. I am thinking of you all.

-Steven