



# OSAC Country Security Report

## Mainland China, Hong Kong & Macau

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*This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State China Travel Advisory and [China Country Information Page](#).*

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### OSAC Country Chapters

The Mission China OSAC Country Chapter (for all of mainland China) is managed by the Regional Security Office in Shanghai. The China Country Chapter is active and hosts quarterly meetings. Individuals interested in participating in the Country Chapter or connecting with the Regional Security Officer (RSO) should contact [OSAC's Asia Team](#).

The Hong Kong/Macau OSAC Country Chapter meets several times a year. Individuals interested in participating in the Country Chapter or connect with the Regional Security Office should contact [OSAC's Asia Team](#).

## China Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers, particularly dual Chinese-American citizens, should make a risk-based decision when traveling to China. China's new national security laws expand the scope of what constitutes a threat and includes activities a person might participate in outside of China. For example, any public criticism of the Government of China, even if done outside of China, may be considered a crime and travelers may be subjected to local law to include incarceration and or exit bans. For more details on the risks involved with travel to China, read the Department's travel advisory linked in the first sentence of this paragraph.

## Hong Kong SAR

Travelers should exercise increased caution when traveling to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) due to the arbitrary enforcement of local laws.

Hong Kong SAR authorities have dramatically restricted civil liberties since the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) imposed the Law of the PRC on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR on June 30, 2020. Following the Hong Kong SAR government's enactment of its own Safeguarding National Security Ordinance on March 23, 2024, Hong Kong SAR authorities are expected to take additional actions to further restrict civil liberties.

In 2024, the Hong Kong government enacted the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO), which codified offenses for treason, sedition, theft of "state secrets," and external interference. These laws purport to cover offenses regardless of citizenship or location, which could subject U.S. citizens who have been publicly critical of the PRC and/or the administration of Hong Kong to a heightened risk of arrest, detention, expulsion, or prosecution. U.S. citizens could be subject to arbitrary enforcement of local laws, including in relation to exit bans. On multiple occasions, Hong Kong authorities have offered cash awards that unjustly target overseas democracy advocates, including a U.S. citizen and other individuals based in the United States. PRC security forces operate in Hong Kong and are not subject to oversight by the Hong Kong judiciary.

## Macau SAR

Travelers should reconsider travel to the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) due to a limited ability to provide emergency consular services and exercise increased caution due to the arbitrary enforcement of local laws.

The U.S. government has a limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in the Macau SAR due to People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs travel restrictions on U.S. diplomatic personnel.

Even in an emergency, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs requires all U.S. diplomatic personnel, including those accredited to the Macau SAR, to apply for and receive visas before entering the Macau SAR. This takes at least five to seven days, significantly limiting the U.S. government's ability to offer timely consular services in the Macau SAR.

## Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan, Hong Kong, and Macau as being **LOW**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for China.

Chinese cities are generally safe when compared to other global cities. The omnipresence of police and security personnel, coupled with a robust system of cameras (advanced facial recognition software) and other electronic monitoring, serves to deter most serious crime. However, the income disparity in Chinese society leads some to commit economic crimes. This includes targeting of foreign (including U.S.) travelers due to perceptions of wealth and their lack of knowledge about local customs and language barriers that often adversely affect the ability of foreigners to communicate effectively to local law enforcement.

The most common criminal incidents are petty crimes, which tend to occur in areas tourists frequent: airports, train and bus stations, shopping centers, and on crowded public transportation. In such locations, travelers may have little or no personal space, making them more vulnerable. Thieves may target cell phones, cameras, jewelry, cash, and credit cards, among other personal belongings.

While China is a low-threat country for violent crime, that does not mean there is no risk of being a victim thereof. Stabbings targeting foreigners have occurred. Cars and other vehicles have been used to run into crowded roadways and bus stations. Several incidents occurred in 2024, including at a hospital, near schools, and in a park. A vehicle ramming incident also took place outside a sports complex in southern China, killing 35 people and injuring an additional 43. Attacks appear to be fairly rare, though they do occur. It is difficult to tell how widespread this problem is as China routinely downplays or removes reports from news and social media sources. Travelers should incorporate common personal security practices, such as those listed in the Department of States travel advisory for China (see the link on page 2, paragraph 1), into their daily routine.

- See OSAC's report, [Recent Spate of Violent Incidents in China](#).

Criminals use various scams to defraud foreign victims. One scam involves locals approaching tourists and asking to practice English, visit an art house, or experience a traditional tea ceremony. Once the “service” has been “completed,” victims are charged exorbitant sums. The victims are forced to make payment under physical intimidation or threats that the police will arrest them if they do not comply. The credit cards may be charged hundreds (if not thousands) of dollars, and the victim is forced to sign the receipt. In most cases, the victims are released unharmed – though they are threatened not to notify police. In instances where the victim has reported the crime to the police, those culpable are rarely prosecuted.

Another scam involves the victim receiving a telephone call where the caller poses as a police officer and requests a funds transfer to resolve an identity theft or money laundering investigation. If the victim agrees to the transfer, the situation is “resolved.” Scam artists have also sent text messages and emails referring to fraudulent bills and/or traffic tickets to con people into transferring money.

In some tourist areas, women (sometimes men) will lure men to a private room in a bar or nearby building, using the promise of a cheap massage or under the guise of being flirtatiously friendly. These women (or men) are usually prostitutes and will aggressively transition to more sexual acts. Afterward, strongmen will extort the victim for money, forcing the victim to use a credit or debit card to access additional cash.

Counterfeit currency is not a significant concern in China. The widespread use of counterfeit currency detectors and electronic payments, such as WeChat and Alipay, have done much to curb that historic problem. Some counterfeit currency remains in circulation; visitors should be familiar with the Chinese currency’s anti-counterfeiting features. And for added protection for ATM cash withdrawals, only use ATMs at trusted financial institutions.

China has increasingly moved to e-payments for most goods and services, especially in first-tier cities. The use of cash to make purchases is rare, and it can be difficult to receive change when using cash. International credit cards are rarely accepted in mainland China. China encourages travelers to use web-based payment apps such as Alipay, which can be linked to an international credit card, when visiting. Travelers should closely follow their financial institutions’ guidance on travel notifications to reduce the risk of credit and debit card fraud.

Report crimes to the local police and contact U.S. Embassy Beijing or the nearest consulate.

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In Macau, petty street crime, including pickpocketing, occurs in tourist areas, including in and around casinos and at the airport (MFM). Violent crime, though rare, does occur.

## Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for China.

Kidnappings occur mostly over business disputes and might better be categorized as “unlawful detentions,” often in the office or hotel room of the victim. Captors generally allow victims to use their mobile phones to arrange the resolution of the dispute; victims should immediately call the police for assistance. Some local businesspeople who feel that they have been wronged by a foreign business partner may hire “debt collectors” to harass and intimidate the foreigner in hopes of collecting the debt. The U.S. Department of State has no law enforcement authority in China and can neither involve itself in private disputes nor give legal advice.

## Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan, Hong Kong, and Macau as **LOW**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for China.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any significant transnational terrorist presence in China. Details about alleged terrorism-related threats inside China, however, are difficult to verify due to a lack of transparency and information from Chinese authorities. Chinese domestic counterterrorism efforts remain primarily focused on the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a Uyghur separatist movement in western China. However, the United States has seen no solid evidence for more than a decade that ETIM is still in existence. A similar group, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), may still be active in Syria and Afghanistan.

Authorities often mischaracterize ethnic-Uyghur discontent and political dissent as “terrorist activity,” conflating terrorism with separatism and ethnic and religious identities. To that end, China often refers to the so-called “Three Evils” of religious extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in northwest China. The U.S. government and various human rights organizations maintain that authorities use counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the population of Xinjiang, as well as ethnic Kazakhs and other Muslims.

China shares international concerns regarding other terrorist groups such as al-Qa’ida and ISIS.

## Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan, Hong Kong, and Macau as **LOW**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for China. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

## Elections/Political Stability

Mainland China: Large, violent incidents have taken place in ethnic-minority areas (e.g., Tibet and Xinjiang), where grievances over human rights abuses and discriminatory policies have resulted in spontaneous outbursts of violence targeting the local and central government and ethnic-Han interests. Despite the government’s repressive efforts, spontaneous and relatively peaceful protests over property seizure and labor rights disputes still occur.

In late 2022, following an apartment fire in Xinjiang— coupled with nearly two and a half years of stringent COVID-19 restrictions—protests broke out across the country. What began as vigils for the fire victims quickly turned into calls to roll back COVID-19 restrictions. Following localized protests in Urumqi, protests started to spread across multiple regions in the PRC. Protests were recorded in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, and several other cities. Demonstrators simultaneously held vigils for the Xinjiang fire victims and called for the authorities to lift the lockdown restrictions. Footage also captured several instances of protesters calling for President Xi Jinping to step down, while demanding greater political freedoms.

After several days of protests, the PRC’s public security services ramped up policing throughout several cities, particularly near previous protest sites. In addition to increased patrols, police reportedly conducted random phone searches of commuters’ devices in Shanghai. Guangzhou experienced the most violent protests.

The Chinese government controls nearly all information available to Chinese citizens by censoring topics in books, social media, news outlets, radio broadcasts, billboards, and magazines. Many Chinese citizens are unaware of controversial Chinese issues well-known outside of mainland China.

Hong Kong SAR: The government remains focused on maintaining social stability and preventing civil unrest caused by economic and social complaints. In 2019, the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement carried out some of the largest and most violent protests Hong Kong has faced in recent years. During these protests, many who participated faced violence and arrest from the police and government. In order to quell the movement, the Chinese government imposed the Hong Kong National Security Law in 2020, using it to target protesters, pro-

democracy activists, lawyers, lawmakers, journalists, academics, teachers, and those who criticize the Chinese government. Many have fled Hong Kong since the law came into effect. The National Security Law also covers offenses committed by non-Hong Kong SAR residents or organizations outside of the Hong Kong SAR, which could subject U.S. citizens who have been publicly critical of the PRC and/or the administration of the Hong Kong SAR to a heightened risk of arrest, detention, expulsion, or prosecution. The last chief executive election was on May 8, 2022 (next scheduled for 2027) and the last legislative council election was on December 19, 2021 (next scheduled for 2025). Since 2021, elections have barred most opposition candidates and have featured lower voter turnout.

## Protests & Demonstrations

Protests outside of official U.S. facilities occur occasionally, but the majority tend to be small and peaceful.

In Hong Kong, participating in demonstrations or other activities that authorities interpret as constituting an act of secession, subversion, terrorism, or collusion with a foreign country could result in criminal charges under the 2020 National Security Law and/or the 2024 Safeguarding National Security Ordinance. Be aware of your surroundings and avoid demonstrations

## Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

In the past few years, detentions and regulatory harassment have risen alongside U.S.-China tensions. The Chinese government consistently targets Westerners with arbitrary detentions and exit bans as a form of hostage diplomacy during times of geopolitical tension. Additionally, the Chinese government has frequently targeted individuals associated with U.S. businesses with regulatory harassment, lack of privacy, and travel difficulties. This has included: pervasive and intrusive technical surveillance and monitoring; serious restrictions on free expression, including physical attacks on and criminal prosecution of journalists, lawyers, writers, bloggers, dissidents, petitioners, and others as well as their family members, and censorship and site blocking; interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws targeting nongovernmental organizations; severe restrictions and suppression of religious freedom; and substantial restrictions on freedom of movement. In 2019, Chinese authorities detained three Canadian citizens as a retaliatory measure towards Canada. In 2021, authorities sentenced one of those Canadian citizens to death, and another to an 11-year prison sentence, though the PRC government eventually allowed both Canadian citizens to leave China later that year. China has also targeted businesses that have made statements on human rights issues within China.

Occasionally, U.S. Department of State employees report being harassed or assaulted by Chinese nationals due to their occupation. In 2018, an apparently emotionally disturbed person injured himself by setting off an improvised explosive device along the perimeter of U.S. Embassy Beijing's compound. The attacker survived, and no other injuries were reported.

In 2025 China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) put out multiple notices warning its citizens against foreign spies attempting to steal sensitive information from Chinese citizens. The MSS have specifically warned their government workers to be careful about posting on social media and to watch out for "honey traps" from foreign agents.

## Law Enforcement

Mainland China: Local police forces in China are effective at deterring crime. Urban forces in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other first-tier cities, where authorities have spent millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure, are generally better trained and equipped than in other locales. Investigative training and forensic equipment are improving but in some ways, they remain substandard when compared to other developed countries. Chinese law enforcement relies heavily on the large volume of cameras to police public areas and makes regular use of their facial recognition technology. In addition, businesses must install camera systems with a 45-day capacity for digital video recording, which serves as a crime deterrent (despite numerous privacy concerns). Authorities also use this technology to monitor any kind of protest activity, which will normally meet with a robust police response.

The main domestic security agencies include the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Public Security, and the People's Armed Police. The People's Armed Police are under the dual authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission. The People's Liberation Army is primarily responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. Local jurisdictions frequently use civilian municipal security forces, known as "urban management officials," to enforce administrative measures. While civilian authorities maintain effective control of the security forces, there have been reports that members of the security forces commit serious and pervasive abuses.

Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Police Force maintains internal security in Hong Kong SAR and reports to the Security Bureau. The Security Bureau continues to report to the chief executive; however, the National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force, established by the National Security Law, operates under central government supervision, and the law permits the embedding of mainland security personnel in the department. The National Security Law also established a Committee on National Security in the Hong Kong government that reports to the central government and an Office for Safeguarding National Security staffed by members of mainland security agencies. Unaccountable under Hong Kong law, this office allows mainland China security elements to operate openly, contradicting the spirit of and past practice under the Joint Declaration. It is no longer clear if Hong Kong's civilian authorities maintain effective, autonomous control over the city's security services.

Macau: The Secretariat for Security oversees the Public Security Police, which has responsibility for general law enforcement, and the Judiciary Police, which has responsibility for criminal investigations. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

## Police Response

Police response for foreign victims of crime will depend upon the type of infraction, location where it occurred, and the social status of the victim (e.g., private citizen, diplomat, VIP). Most responses to alarms/emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police are informed that the victim is a Westerner or person of importance. In many cases, local police will serve as a mediator between the victim and criminal to agree upon financial compensation in lieu of incarceration.

## Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in China, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

## Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for China.

The PRC government does not recognize dual nationality. Dual U.S.-PRC citizens and U.S. citizens of Chinese descent may be subject to additional scrutiny and harassment. If you are a U.S. citizen and choose to enter mainland China on travel documents other than a U.S. passport and are detained or arrested, the PRC government may not notify the U.S. Embassy or the U.S. Consulates General or allow consular access.

Although officials face criminal penalties for corruption, the government and the CCP do not implement the law consistently or transparently. Corruption, in a Western sense, remains common. Many cases of corruption involve areas heavily regulated by the government, such as land usage rights, real estate, mining, and infrastructure development, which are susceptible to fraud, bribery, and kickbacks.

The government arbitrarily enforces local laws, including exit bans on U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries without fair and transparent processes under the law. U.S. citizens might only become aware of an exit ban when they attempt to depart the country, and there may be no available legal process to contest an exit ban in a court of law. The PRC government has used restrictions on travel or departure from the PRC to compel individuals to participate in PRC government investigations; pressure family members of the restricted individual to return to

the PRC from abroad; resolve civil disputes in favor of PRC citizens; and gain bargaining leverage over foreign governments.

U.S. citizens traveling or residing in China may be detained without access to U.S. consular services or information about their alleged crime. U.S. citizens in the PRC may be subjected to interrogations and detention without fair and transparent treatment under the law.

Foreigners in the PRC, including but not limited to businesspeople, former foreign-government personnel, academics, relatives of PRC citizens involved in legal disputes, and journalists have been interrogated and detained by PRC officials for alleged violations of national security laws. Authorities have also interrogated, detained, and expelled U.S. citizens living and working in China.

### Hong Kong and Macau SARs

In Hong Kong SAR, the law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. In Macau SAR, the law provided criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented the law effectively.

The Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR governments do not recognize dual nationality. Dual U.S.-PRC citizens and U.S. citizens of Chinese descent may be subject to additional security and harassment. If you are a dual U.S.-PRC citizen and enter Hong Kong SAR or Macau SAR on a U.S. passport, and you are detained or arrested, PRC authorities are under an obligation to notify the U.S. Embassy or a U.S. Consulate General of your detention and to allow U.S. consular officials to have access to you. In reality, however, U.S. consular officers may be prevented from providing consular assistance, even to those who have entered on their U.S. passports.

For more information, visit [Consular Protection and Right of Abode in HK\(SAR\) for Dual Nationals – U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong & Macau](#).

### Cybersecurity

There is no expectation of privacy in China. The Chinese government has the capability and intent to monitor all devices connected to the internet (wired, wireless, or via mobile network) and to pinpoint their location. China is known for sophisticated cyber and technical capabilities, including spear phishing, targeting of mobile devices, social engineering, and network manipulation. Viruses, spyware, and other forms of malware are common. This no expectation of privacy clause includes China's capabilities of recording private conversations, with or without video, in public spaces (hotels, hotel rooms, restaurants, places of worship, conference centers, popular attractions, etc.) It also includes the ability to track individual movement using its sophisticated camera systems and facial recognition technology.

Social media accounts are widely monitored in China. Chinese law allows local authorities to use information they deem controversial against both the poster of the material and the host of

the social media forum. Individuals have also been held responsible for the content that others place within social media spaces they control. This includes information posted outside of China on non-Chinese social media platforms.

The government proactively monitors all media outlets and will temporarily block international media outlets during broadcasts of news stories considered unfavorable to the Chinese government. This includes international news organizations like CNN, BBC, and France 24.

The government controls the internet within China. The Great Chinese Firewall prevents access to common internet sites based outside of China to include email services. OSAC constituents frequently report incidents involving restricted bandwidth or high latency too.

Information security is an organization-wide challenge that merges both physical and cyber security. Organizations must develop a holistic approach to defend against cybersecurity threats, including the following basic countermeasures:

- Use temporary devices that have limited information on them and can be erased or discarded after a trip is complete;
- Minimize the number of mobile devices you carry, and keep devices with you at all times to maintain their integrity;
- Do not accept electronic gifts, including USB devices, including from apparently benign sources;
- Do not download software applications or software and system updates on mobile devices (unless they are disposable devices) while in China;
- Enable two-factor authentication for email and apps, including social media; and
- Actively determine what type or scope of data will be stored on servers in China to keep and protect critical business information and technologies in offshore servers and data centers.

In April 2024, the Ministry of State Security issued documents that “empower its officers to gather ‘electronic data’ relating to an investigation including ‘mobile phone text messages, emails, instant messages and group chats,’ along with ‘documents, images, audio and video, apps and ... log records’ from electronic devices.”

While Hong Kong is not yet subject to the same cybersecurity laws as mainland China, travelers to Hong Kong should act as if they have no expectation of privacy when it comes to electronic communications.

## Import/Export Restrictions

In addition to an arms embargo in effect since 1989, the United States maintains export restrictions on dual use goods, software, and technology destined to China. Certain commodities, exports to specified end users included on the Entity List, or items intended for use by military or military intelligence organizations or in other prohibited end uses may be subject to a U.S. export license requirement. Refer requests for additional information on these license requirements to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security.

The Treasury Department also maintains sanctions programs that may limit investment, trade, provision, or receipt of services to/from Specially Designated Nationals or persons or entities designated under various Sanctions Programs or prohibitions. Refer requests for additional information on these programs to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

China's Export Control Law implemented guidelines that may apply to businesses or persons wishing to export dual use or munitions items from China.

### Hong Kong SAR

Hong Kong strictly enforces its regulations on controlled items transiting Hong Kong. This includes temporary importation and re-export. Hong Kong International Airport (HKG) thoroughly screens luggage loaded onto aircraft in Hong Kong. This applies to all baggage regardless of whether the passenger is departing or transiting. If the authorities discover weapons or ammunition of any kind, the police will investigate the owner of the luggage, who may be arrested or detained. Weapons and ammunition include mace, pepper spray, stun guns, bullets, air gun pellets, switch blades, handcuffs, self-defense batons, knuckle-dusters, and other self-protection weapons.

If you bring controlled items into Hong Kong without the necessary Hong Kong permits, the goods may be seized, and you may be prosecuted. The penalty for trafficking in dangerous drugs can be life imprisonment and/or a heavy fine. You must also declare liquors, tobacco, cigarettes and cigars, methyl alcohol, and merchandise imported for commercial purposes. There are no currency restrictions for travelers. Please refer to the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department for more details.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of controlled and/or prohibited items: dangerous drugs; psychotropic substances; controlled chemicals; antibiotics; arms; ammunition; weapons; fireworks; strategic commodities; rough diamonds; animals; plants; endangered species; telecommunication equipment; game; meat; poultry; eggs; and powdered infant formula.

### Macau SAR

Macau customs authorities strictly enforce import and export regulations regarding items such as firearms, ivory, certain categories of medications, and other goods. If you bring controlled items into Macau without the necessary Macau documents, even if only transiting, you may be

prosecuted, and the goods may be seized. The penalty for trafficking in dangerous drugs can be life imprisonment and a heavy fine. Please see the Macau Customs Service website for further information.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of controlled and/or prohibited items: animals and plants; counterfeit goods or illegally produced copies of copyrighted items; electronic cigarettes; ivory; meat and poultry; narcotics; pharmaceuticals; sensitive high technology or military products; television decoders requiring a subscription; and weapons, not limited to firearms and ammunition.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

*Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).*