



Travel Warning: Colombia

Crime; Narcoterrorism; Kidnapping

Western Hemisphere > Colombia

11/10/2010

The U.S. Department of State released the following Travel Warning on November 10, 2010: The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Colombia. While security in Colombia has improved significantly in recent years, violence by narco-terrorist groups continues to affect some rural areas as well as large cities. The potential for violence by terrorists and other criminal elements continues to exist in all parts of the country. This updates and replaces the Travel Warning for Colombia issued on March 5, 2010 to update information on recent security incidents and criminal activity.

Terrorist activity remains a threat throughout the country. On August 12, 2010, a car bomb exploded outside the Caracol radio station in Bogota. Seven people were hurt in this incident. On October 21, 2010, Colombian authorities claimed that they had foiled another car bomb attack directed at the National Administrative Center in Bogota. That same day, the Colombian Defense Minister Rodrigo Rivera informed the media of an increased threat of terrorist activity in Bogota by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), particularly against the military, police and state government officials. While the Embassy possesses no information concerning specific and credible threats against U.S. citizens in Colombia, they are strongly encouraged to exercise caution and remain vigilant.

In recent months there has been a marked increase in violent crime in Colombia. Murder rates have risen significantly in some major cities, particularly Medellin and Cali. Kidnapping remains a serious threat. U.S. citizens have been the victims of violent crime, including kidnapping and murder. Firearms are prevalent in Colombia and altercations can often turn violent. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can still be extremely dangerous due to the presence of narco-terrorists. Common crime also remains a significant problem in many urban and rural areas. For additional details about the general criminal threat, please see the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia.

The incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak at the beginning of this decade. Nevertheless, terrorist groups such as the FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. Kidnapping in rural areas is of particular concern. On July 2, 2008, the Government of Colombia rescued 15 hostages, including three U.S. citizens, who had been held for more than five years. Although the U.S. government places the highest



priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped U.S. citizens, it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to or strike deals with kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist kidnapping victims is limited.

U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia are permitted to travel to major cities in the country, but normally only by air. They may not use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. All U.S. citizens in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions. U.S. citizens living or traveling in Colombia are encouraged to enroll with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's website (<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/index.aspx>) to obtain updated information on travel and security within Colombia.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Calle 24 Bis No. 48-50 Bogota, D.C. Colombia. Mailing address: Carrera 45 No. 24B-27 Bogota, D.C. Colombia. In case of a serious emergency that jeopardizes the health or safety of a U.S. citizen in Colombia, please call the Embassy at (571) 315-0811; Embassy fax: (571) 315-2197; Consular Section phone: (571) 315-1566. The Embassy's American Citizens Services office provides routine information at <http://bogota.usembassy.gov>. For questions not answered there, inquiries may be sent by email to ACSBogota@state.gov.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Barranquilla, which accepts passport applications and performs notarial services, is located at Calle 77B, No. 57-141, Piso 5, Centro Empresarial Las Americas, Barranquilla, Atlantico, Colombia; telephone (575) 353-2001; fax (011-57-5) 353-5216. The Consular Agency is not staffed to respond to after-hours emergencies; in case of an emergency in the Barranquilla/north coast area, please contact the Embassy in Bogota at (571) 315-0811.

As the Department develops information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threats through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. U.S. citizens should consult warden messages for Colombia at http://bogota.usembassy.gov/acs_wardenmessage.html, as well as the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia and the Worldwide Caution at <http://travel.state.gov>.

U.S. travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, for overseas callers, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.