



Niger 2011 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Crime; Terrorism; Political Violence; Natural Disasters; NGO; Stolen items; Surveillance; Threats

Africa > Niger > Niamey

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Niger is currently rated "high" for crime. It adjoins with seven countries, which makes closely monitoring its borders nearly impossible. Its central location in West Africa and the vast open Sahara Desert in the north facilitates the transit of criminals, weapons, migrants, contraband, and illegal drugs.

Crime Threats

Petty crimes such as pick-pocketing, purse snatching, backpack theft, and cell phone theft are rampant in Niamey and the other major cities. Crime occurs at all hours. More serious crimes such as muggings and assaults are committed after dark and are often perpetrated by multiple individuals. Many criminals in Niamey carry a knife or machete as their weapon of choice. However, toward the end of 2010, there was an increase in the use of handguns during muggings or robberies. Assailants are becoming more aggressive and more frequently display some form of weapon during a robbery. Usually, thieves have not harmed their victims as long as there is no resistance by the victim and all demands are followed.

In 2010, vehicle thefts increased. Of the incidents reported to police, there were two known car-jackings in Niamey and almost a dozen incidents along the southern border with Nigeria. These incidents included Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) vehicles, and in all of them the vehicle was a Toyota Landcruiser. In one instance, the NGO worker was shot after the assailants were agitated by the perceived refusal to hand over the vehicle.

There has been an increase in residential robberies throughout the city. Home invasions/residential robberies occur primarily after dark and have become more violent. There have been several incidents in which the assailants attacked the residential guard or the occupants of the residence. While thieves typically choose to rob homes that have no residential guard and/or visible residential security measures, this has not stopped some assailants from trying to rob these types of homes, including several diplomat and NGO



residences. In addition, over the last six months, there have been numerous cases of commercial robberies and a few cases of NGO offices being robbed.

Road Safety

Road conditions in Niamey and other major cities can be hazardous. While there are paved roads in the city, most residential streets are dirt/sand. The majority of highways are paved and in decent condition. Local drivers are aggressive, and rules of the road are rarely followed. Taxis are notorious for driving erratically and stopping quickly to pick up fares. A safe distance between vehicles should always be maintained. The large number of motorcycles, bicycles, push-carts, vendor carts, broken-down vehicles, beggars, and pedestrians on the streets make driving a challenge. In addition, camels, cattle, and goats are constant moving obstacles that frequently cause accidents on the roads and highways.

Traffic police officers conduct enforcement checks at numerous points throughout the city but have regular static positions at Mali Bero/Zarmaganda Intersection, the Kennedy Bridge Circle, and Place de Republique. Note that often police are effective but sometimes some traffic officers use this opportunity to try and extort money from drivers. All "Payages" (toll points) at city limits on major highways are official and should be respected. You will receive a receipt of toll payment, which you should maintain for your return trip on the same road.

The highways linking Niamey to neighboring countries are becoming focal points for highway robberies. Almost all attacks occur at either dusk, after-dark, or in the very early morning hours and always involve the use of firearms. Bandits are not afraid to use violence and even murder when victims show any sign of resistance. Daytime highway robberies have occurred but are much less frequent. There have been incidents of carjackings on the East-West Highway along the Nigeria/Niger border.

Political Violence

Historical Perspective

Niger is rated "high" for political violence. On February 18, 2010, members of the Nigerien military conducted a successful coup d'état and removed former President Tandja from power. Since that date, the country has been run by a military junta: The Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSR), which has worked to restore democracy. Presidential and legislative elections were scheduled for the end January-March 2011. Historically, the United States and Niger have had very good relations, and once the country has returned to



democratic rule, bi-lateral relations are expected to continue to improve.

Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Al-Qai'da in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active in Niger and over the last year has conducted multiple kidnapping operations in Niger and Mauritania and has attacked and killed in people in the Sahel region. AQIM has been conducting operations in the Sahel since 2006, when the Algerian-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) became affiliated with al-Qai'da and changed its doctrine. AQIM is utilizing all these countries as operational areas and is based in the northeastern desert region of Mali.

There is a loosely organized criminal element in Niger. With its large, lengthy, and porous borders with seven countries, Niger is highly utilized as a transit route for smuggling activities. In the northern part of the country in the Sahara Desert, the nomadic Taureg tribes have facilitated trade, including smuggling of commodity or contraband such as weapons, illegal drugs, fuel, vehicles, human cargo, or cigarettes. In the south and west along the border with Nigeria, criminal elements smuggle everything from fuel to rice to automobiles.

International or Transnational Terrorism

Niger is rated "high" for transnational terrorism. Niger has experienced terrorism firsthand, mainly in the form of kidnapping-for-ransom operations. Al-Qai'da in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active in Niger and over the last year has conducted multiple successful kidnapping operations in Niger and has claimed responsibility for the following kidnappings/attempted kidnappings and other violent events:

September 2010: Seven people, including five French citizens and one each from Togo and Madagascar, were kidnapped by AQIM from the northern mining town of Arlit. All are still being held hostage by AQIM.

April 2010: A French citizen and his Algerian driver were kidnapped. The Algerian was freed. AQIM claimed the French citizen was killed in retaliation for the July attempted rescue operation conducted by Mauritanian and French military forces, but the remains were never recovered.

March 2010: AQIM attacked the Nigerien military outpost in Tiloa along the Mali/Niger border. Five Nigerien military personnel were killed in the attack.



November 2009: Heavily-armed individuals attempted to kidnap U.S. embassy personnel in the city of Tahoua.

January 2009: Four Europeans were abducted by AQIM operatives along the Mali-Niger border as their tour group was returning from a cultural festival in the Malian town of Anderamboukane. Three were released after several months of being held hostage, but one was killed while in captivity.

December 2008: Two United Nations officials, former Canadian diplomats, were kidnapped by AQIM while returning to Niamey after a visit to a Canadian-operated gold mine. The officials were released in April 2009.

Civil Unrest

In 2010, Niger saw little civil unrest after the February coup d'état. Since October, there were some instances of civil unrest, primarily demonstrations by students or trade unions. Many of these were directly related to the upcoming political season. However, there have been large-scale political demonstrations, some of which have turned violent and resulted in serious injuries to protestors. Government of Niger authorized demonstrations/political rallies have been calm, non-violent, and incident free. There have not been any unauthorized demonstrations, so it is uncertain as to what actions the demonstrators and security forces would utilize during a confrontation.

Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Extreme heat is a serious environmental hazard in Niger. Temperatures can pass 130 degrees during the hot season (March – June). Also, during the rainy season (July – September), flash flooding can occur without warning. In 2010, extreme flooding in Niamey, the worst in over 75 years, damaged villages, roads, and homes and resulted in loss of life.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Niger has a very small manufacturing sector, so industrial accidents are rare.

Transportation accidents in the form of road/highway accidents occur are frequent. The majority of the accidents are due to the excessive speed and poor vehicle maintenance.



Kidnappings

Niger has become a target for AQIM kidnapping-for-ransom operations. As stated, between December 2008 and December 2010, AQIM has conducted a total of five kidnapping operations in Niger with four being successful. Kidnapping of Western expatriates is an ongoing threat in Niger.

Drug and Narco-terrorism

Illegal drugs are available in Niger; however, they are not prevalent. Niger is considered a transit country for the smuggling of illegal drugs from other West African countries to Europe. There is no concrete evidence that the drugs are connected to narco-terrorism.

Police Response

U.S. citizens who have been a victim of crime should immediately contact the local police and then the U.S. embassy. Local police can be reached by dialing 17 from any phone. The police sometimes lack the basic resources (such as vehicles and gasoline) to respond immediately to calls for assistance.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

U.S. citizens who experience police harassment or detention should immediately notify the U.S. embassy using the numbers provided below and ask to speak with the Consular Officer or Duty Officer, who is available 24 hours a day.

Medical Emergencies

Generally medical care in Niger does not meet U.S. standards and is especially limited in the rural areas. Official Americans and many people in the expatriate community chose to utilize the Gamkalley Clinic. The American-financed CURE Hospital opened in late 2010. The following is a list of medical facilities in Niamey and their contact numbers:

Medical Facilities		Office Phone Number
Gamkalley Clinic	Dr. Yovanovitch	20-73-20-33
Cure Hospital	Dr. Roark	20-35-15-94



(Pediatrics)

Kaba Clinic	Dr. Cisse Kaba	20-73-21-08
PolyClinique Rayua	Dr. Diatta	20-74-35-35
Polyclinic Lahya	Dr. Abdoulaye	20-74-09-68
Pasteur Clinic		20-72-50-16
National Hospital		20-72-23-26
University Hospital		20-31-68-78

Air ambulance services.
Assistance Medical Africaine in Lome and Libreville
Phone: +241 06-22-69-70, +241 07-41-11-11
E-mail: mafrique@yahoo.fr

Alafia Jet –Contonou/Benin
Contact : Pierre Vialaret
Phone: +241 21-208-875
E-mail: alafiajet@yahoo.fr

International SOS Paris
Phone: 0033155633155
Web site : www.internationalsos.com

SOS London
Phone: 00442087628008
Web site : www.internationalsos.com

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

U.S. citizens are urged to use commonsense and vigilance when traveling in Niger. To minimize your chance of becoming a victim maintain a low profile in public, avoid high-risk and poorly lit areas, and always be cognizant of your surroundings.



In 2010, a tactic used by petty criminals was to have a motorcycle with two riders and conduct a drive-by purse/backpack snatching. Sometimes this includes using a knife to cut the straps of the bags/backpack.

The Petite Marche should be avoided after dark as criminals linger in the area looking for potential victims. This area is notorious for pick-pocketing, purse snatching, mugging, and assault. The area around the Gaweye Hotel, National Museum, and Kennedy Bridge is also a high-risk area, day or night. Follow standard security practices: do not display large sums of cash or wealth; do not travel/walk alone, especially at night; drive with your doors locked and windows rolled-up; do not use credit cards; and lock all doors and windows at night in your residence or hotel room.

Further Information

Embassy contact numbers:
Embassy Switchboard: (227) 20-72-26-61/62/63/64
Regional Security Office: ext. 4336
Consular Affairs: ext. 4444
Marine Post One: 20-72-31-41 (after hours)
Duty Officer: (227) 94-28-90-66 (24/day)

OSAC Country Council Contact Information

Niger currently has no formal OSAC Country Council. The RSO is available to meet with American business representatives to provide current security situation information.