



Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens: Panama, Update on Protests and Demonstrations

Riots/Civil Unrest

Western Hemisphere > Panama

2/7/2012

The State Department alerts U.S. citizens of the risks of travel along the Pan-American Highway in western Panama and other parts of the country at this time.

UPDATE:

The two sides are in negotiations to end the protests and the Pan American Highway was open as of February 7. The overall situation has led to numerous protest marches and demonstrations in Panama City that have caused partial road closures and significant traffic disruption. Additionally, there are reports of a large concentration of protestors and a lack of police presence in the Volcan area. Current road closures in the Changuinola area are affecting the availability of food and fuel in the islands of Bocas del Toro. The U.S. Embassy urges American citizens to avoid traveling to the Volcan area at this time.

BACKGROUND:

Violent confrontations between Panamanian security forces and indigenous groups have resulted in continued disruptions and demonstrations along the Pan-American Highway near the San Felix area in Chiriqui (Ngobe Bugle region) and elsewhere in Panama. There are reports of violent confrontations between the Panamanian police and protestors in the San Juan, San Felix, Horconcos, and Viguí areas. There are further reports of demonstrations in the areas of David, Changuinola and Panama City.

The U.S. Embassy urges American citizens to proceed cautiously with travel along the Pan-American Highway in western Panama at this time. While the Pan-American Highway is reported to be open, protesters continue in their attempts to block it with rocks, trees, and burning tires at various points between Chiriqui and San Felix. Protesters have been reportedly throwing rocks at passing vehicles. Panamanian Security Services continue to use tear gas and other riot control measures. American citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations, to defer traveling to and within areas known to have current protest activity, and to exercise caution in any area of confrontation between police and protestors.

Other protests on this or other issues may occur with little or no warning. The Embassy continues to caution its employees and all U.S. citizens to exercise heightened security awareness and avoid crowds and any areas where there are demonstrations or where confrontations could occur.

For updated information on the security situation in Panama, please contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy at (011)-507-207-7030. The Consular Section of



the U.S. Embassy is located in Clayton, Building 783, in the Clayton section of Panama. The Embassy web site is <http://panama.usembassy.gov/> and e-mails should be addressed to Panama-ACS@state.gov. The after-hours and emergency phone numbers are (011)-507-207-7000 or (011)-507- 207-7200.

For up-to-date information on security, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>. Further information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Panama are encouraged to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By enrolling, you make it easier for the U.S. Embassy to contact you in case of an emergency.