



China 2012 Crime and Safety Report: Beijing

Transportation Security; Nationalist; Surveillance; Stolen items; Earthquakes; Winter weather; Floods; Landslides and mudslides; Information Security; Hotels; Financial Security; Economic Espionage; Assault; Counterfeiting; Fraud; Racial Violence/Xenophobia; Theft

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Beijing, with a population of almost 20 million people, is generally safe when compared with other major urban areas. The police and security service presence throughout the city serves to deter most serious crimes, while petty crimes do occur with some regularity. The income disparity in Chinese society has been a source of social friction and has been identified as a root cause of much of the economic crime experienced in Beijing. This includes pick pocketing, credit card fraud, and various financial scams often targeting Americans and other foreigners. Violent crime is less common but does occasionally occur. These types of incidents garner significant media attention but are not considered the norm.

Crime Threats

The most common criminal incidents are minor petty crimes. Pick pocketing on public transportation, at shopping areas, and at tourist sites is quite common. Thieves also commonly target cell phones, Blackberries, cameras, and high value items. At tourist sites, thieves are generally more interested in cash and will immediately abandon credit cards. In shopping areas, both cash and credit cards are sought.

Criminals used various scams to make money from victims and have sent text messages and emails of fraudulent bills and traffic tickets to trick people into paying them. Other techniques involve criminals posing as police and levying fake criminal charges against their victims and then extorting money from them. Recently, the RSO received a report that a victim's car would not start at the Nanshan ski resort. A man approached the victim and said he could help get the car started for a small fee. Once paid, the man quickly 'discovered' that a wire was loose, and the car started immediately. Another foreigner in the parking lot had the same problem.



Violent crime is less common but does occur. Violent crime affecting the expatriate community most often occurs in the bars and clubs of Beijing's nightlife districts. Bar fights are common, and the past year has seen an increase in targeted violence against Westerners. Cultural miscommunication, xenophobia, and alcohol use all play a role, with certain bars garnering reputations for violence. Bouncers at these clubs and bars play a role in the violence and have been physically aggressive with patrons. The legal age for consuming alcohol is 18; however, most establishments do not require identification. Some bars are overcrowded, and safety standards are not routinely enforced. Prostitutes and drugs are known to be present in some clubs.

The use of unregistered or "black" taxi cabs continues to be a concern. In a limited number of cases, Americans using "black" taxi cabs have reported being sexually assaulted; have had their luggage stolen; or have been charged exorbitant fares. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to or from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded.

RSO continues to receive reports of foreigners taking rickshaws or pedi-cabs at tourist sites in Beijing and being driven through hutongs where they were shaken down for money (the victims were physically unharmed). These incidents have also taken place at tourist sites, such as Tiananmen Square and Houhai Park.

The distribution of counterfeit Chinese currency continues to plague official and private Americans. Unsuspecting Americans are passed fraudulent notes at restaurants, stores, and taxi cabs. Large numbers of 100 RMB and 50 RMB counterfeit notes continue to circulate, while even fake 20 RMB and 10 RMB (roughly 3 and 2 dollars respectively) denominations have been introduced in Beijing and other parts of the country.

Road Safety

The physical road conditions in larger cities are good; in contrast, driving conditions in rural areas are usually poor. Beijing adds some 1,200 newly registered vehicles to the roads every day, causing already congested roads to come to a standstill during rush hour. Additionally, there are a great number of pedestrians and bikers that weave through traffic creating a hazardous mix of conditions.

The greatest road hazard remains the Chinese driver; most have little experience operating motor vehicles and are either overly cautious or aggressive, resulting in several accidents per day. According to China Daily, traffic related deaths were the leading cause of deaths for those under 45 in China. Traffic laws are rarely adhered to, and policing is done remotely by



video camera (mainly speed traps). Yielding to oncoming traffic or pedestrians is virtually unheard of, as is using turn signals. Traffic signals are absent at key locations, and road closures are either poorly marked or not marked at all. DWIs are also common.

RSO continues to respond to dozens of traffic accidents on an annual basis; most are minor and are resolved on the scene. In many cases, bicyclists strike a static or moving vehicle. In traffic accidents involving U.S Embassy vehicles, the official American is often ruled at fault, regardless of the actual cause of the accident. RSO encourages employees and dependents not to argue with the other party involved in a traffic accident regardless of who is responsible. Employees are encouraged not to react to aggressive driving by local nationals and to defuse the situation in a safe and expeditious manner.

Political Violence

Historical Perspective

The threat level for political violence remains low. In most major metropolitan areas, the authorities employ an overwhelming police/security presence to ensure that demonstrations remain peaceful. Protestors must receive an official permit from municipal authorities prior to being allowed to gather.

China does have a history of political protest and violence, including the 1999 violent protests in response to the accidental NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. In response to Parisian protests of the Chinese hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics, there were counter-protests in Beijing against the French supermarket chain Carrefour. The summer of 2009 saw riots between Han Chinese and ethnic Uyghurs in Urumqi, Xinjiang Province that resulted in nearly 200 deaths, with more than 1,700 people sustaining injuries.

Protests outside of official U.S. facilities continued throughout 2011, but gatherings remained small, relatively peaceful, and were generally focused against the Chinese government. The People's Armed Police usually breakup most demonstrations within minutes. Geopolitical events often influence the occurrence of political demonstrations, but such demonstrations are rarely out of control.

Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Due to the overwhelming police presence, regional terrorism is generally low. The government considers East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Xinjiang as the main terrorism threat in the country. The U.S. Department of State also considers ETIM in Xinjiang to be a terrorist



organization. After the 2009 Xinjiang riots, the police presence in Urumqi and other Xinjiang cities increased, greatly reducing terrorist-type activities. According to the government, there were two terrorist incidents in 2011 in Xinjiang, claiming 17 lives and injuring 48. In both incidents, ETIP claimed responsibility.

While organized terrorism does not appear to be a major problem, homegrown terrorism, perpetrated by individuals with unclear motivations, continues to occur. However, the U.S. Embassy has received fewer bomb threats in 2011 than 2010.

There are currently no indications that organized crime is a significant safety concern for the American community. Organized crime certainly occurs in the region and can be quite violent but has historically been focused in southern China and includes kidnapping, ransom, extortion, and the production and sales of illicit drugs.

Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Natural disasters are not uncommon in China; a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan Province in May 2008, killing more than 69,000 people and leaving nearly five million people homeless. Severe weather, such as large snowstorms, has brought parts of the country to a virtual standstill at times. Even smaller-scale storms often lead to multiple traffic accidents; snow removal is typically slow and is accomplished by employing thousands of laborers armed with shovels and brooms. China's southern coast is subject to heavy rainfall, flooding, and monsoons during key times of the year. Southern China experienced massive mudslides in 2010, causing significant property damage.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China's heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking in China. Commercial transportation accidents involving motorized vehicles are not uncommon. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers are poorly trained. Bus accidents are also common. Poor driver training, overloaded buses, and the lack of safety checks are major contributors to accidents.

Drugs and Narco-terrorism



Historically, narco-terrorism has not been an issue. The government is concerned about domestic drug use, and enforcement efforts are widespread; however, illicit drugs are available in Beijing to both Chinese citizens and expatriates.

Privacy Concerns

All visitors should be aware that they have no expectation of privacy in public or private locations. The U.S. Embassy regularly receives reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. private businessmen and visiting American citizens. The areas around the U.S. Embassy and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance - dozens of security personnel are posted outside of facilities and around residences, while video cameras are visible throughout diplomatic quarters (offices and residential neighborhoods) of Beijing. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in Chinese taxis.

All hotel rooms and offices are considered to be subject to on-site or remote technical monitoring at all times. Hotel rooms, residences, and offices may be accessed at any time without the occupants' consent or knowledge. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are also under continuous surveillance.

Embassy employees are warned not to discuss sensitive information in their homes, vehicles, or offices. Post strongly encourages members of the private sector to take similar precautions to safeguard sensitive, personal, and/or proprietary information.

All means of communication--telephones, mobile phones, faxes, e-mails, text messages, etc.--are likely monitored. The government has access to the infrastructure operated by the limited number of internet service providers (ISPs) and wireless providers. Wireless access to the Internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming more common. As such, the Chinese can more easily access official and personal computers.

The government has publicly declared that it regularly monitors private e-mail and Internet browsing through cooperation with local ISPs. Some bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny where such activity is often carefully monitored and in some cases, depending upon the subject matter, blocked. Common western social media websites, including You Tube, Facebook, and Twitter, are blocked.

Police Response



Police response for foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim (private citizen, diplomat, VIP, etc.). Urban forces in Beijing and other first-tier cities are better trained and equipped than in other locales because authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Local police are semi-effective at deterring crime; 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 some cases, local police authorities will serve as a mediator between the victim and criminal to agree upon financial compensation (sometimes in lieu of jail time).

Investigative training and forensic equipment is improving but remains substandard in comparison with Western countries. Local police cooperation with the RSO remains scant, and requests for assistance from the RSO are often not met.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

If U.S. citizens become the victim of a crime anywhere in China, they should contact the police by dialing 110 regardless of location (English language capabilities will vary). They may also contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the Embassy or nearest consulate (contact information is listed below). ACS officers can recommend appropriate medical facilities, provide contact information for local attorneys, notify family members, and explain how to transfer funds to China.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care continues to improve in many urban areas. In Beijing, some medical facilities provide acceptable Western-style medical care. Some conditions that previously led to a medical evacuation can now be safely treated in-country. It is recommended that American citizens use Western medical centers whenever possible or, when necessary, seek out the VIP section ("gao gan bing fang") of the hospital where there are more likely to be Western-trained physicians and more modern medical equipment.

International SOS maintains a 24-hour alarm center. SOS representatives will advise on the availability of care in most urban areas. Collect calls are accepted. Contact information is as follows:

Beijing: 86-10-6462-9000
Hong Kong: 852-2528-9900
USA: 215-942-8226



Both municipal and private ambulance service remain substandard. Response time is typically very slow, and transport to the nearest hospital can take a considerable amount of time due to congested traffic conditions. Most ambulances are poorly equipped, staffed by individuals without English skills, and lack EMT training akin to that found in the U.S. or Western Europe.

Air Ambulance Services

Air ambulance service varies by city. International SOS is the main Western air ambulance provider along China's east coast. MEDEX also provides regional air ambulance services; its representatives can be contacted at: <http://www.medexassist.com/>.

Medical evacuation by air is expensive: \$60,000 - \$100,000 per flight depending upon the patient's condition and final medevac destination. Visitors are strongly encouraged to purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling to China.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

For the latest security and other information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site (<http://travel.state.gov>) where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings can be found, as well as important information for Americans who face emergencies abroad. U.S. citizens in China are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate by entering their travel itinerary and contact information at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui>. In case of difficulties registering online, please contact the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to be aware of their surroundings. Continued vigilance is necessary to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. As a general rule, lesser developed areas in major cities have a higher rate of crime. Statistically, more crimes of opportunity transpire during early morning hours; for example, individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs, and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations after midnight.

The U.S. Embassy recommends that visitors disperse money in more than one location on their person, taking care to separate small and large denominations. Men should place their wallets in front pockets, while women should drape the shoulder straps of purses across their body, keeping them in view and under positive control at all times. If you use a backpack, do not place items of worth inside. Hotel safes should be used but are not a failsafe method to



safeguard your belongings.

Travelers are encouraged to make copies of their passport photo page and visa, as well as credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information in the event the card is stolen); these copies should be stored in their hotel or residence in the event the actual items are stolen. Travelers should not flash large amounts of money, jewelry, or electronics, all of which can be an indicator of wealth.

Public payphones are becoming less common in urban areas. The U.S. Embassy recommends that long-term visitors purchase cellular telephones and that short-term travelers contact their cellular phone provider to determine if it provides coverage in both mainland China and Hong Kong.

Individuals are encouraged to use official taxis (two-tone sedans in Beijing) that employ meters. If a driver refuses to use a meter, exit the vehicle and use another taxi. Some hotels can provide guests with taxi cards written in English and Mandarin that include the hotel name and address and several common points of interest.

Counterfeit products are readily available, but it is illegal to import them into the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials have the authority to seize suspect goods and impose fines on travelers caught attempting to enter the U.S. with counterfeit items.

Further Information

The addresses and contact information for U.S. Mission facilities are listed below. Normal hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. Facilities are normally closed for U.S. federal and Chinese holidays.

U.S. Embassy Beijing

Address: No. 55 An Jia Lou Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100600

Telephone: 86-10-8531-4000 (24 hours)

Post One: 86-10-8531-4444

Fax: 86-10-8531-4000 (American Citizen Services)

Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov.

Internet: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>

Medical Unit: 86-10-8531-4777

Consular Affairs: 86-10-8531-3333



U.S. Consulate Chengdu

Address: 4 Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nan lu, Chengdu 610041
Telephone: 86-28-8558-3992, 8558-9642; after hours: 86-0-137-0800-1442
Fax: 86-28-8558-3520
Consular Section Fax: 8558-6229
E-mail: consularchengdu@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Guangzhou

Address: 5th Floor of the Tianyu Garden Building, 136-146 Lin He Zhong Lu, Tianhe District, Guangzhou 510133
Telephone: 86-20-8518-7605; for after hours emergencies, please call 86-20-8121-8000.
Fax: 86-20- 3884-4410
Email: GuangzhouACS@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Shanghai

Main Address: 1469 Haihai Zhonglu, Shanghai 2000031
Consular Section Address: 8th floor of the Westgate Mall, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041
Telephone: 86-21-3217-4650; after hours 86-21-6433-3936
Email: Shanghaiacs@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Shenyang

Address: #52, 14 Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003
Telephone: 86-24-2322-1198; after hours 86-24-137-0988-9307
Fax: 86-24-2323-1465
Email: ShenyangACS@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Wuhan

Address: New World International Trade Tower I, N. 568 Jianshe Avenue, Hankou, Wuhan 430022
Telephone: 86-027-8555-7791
Fax: 86-027-8555-7761
Email: chenz@state.gov (Consul General's assistant)

OSAC Country Council

Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai all have active OSAC Country Councils. The initial point of contact for each Council is the Regional Security Officer at each Post who can be reached via



the numbers listed above or via e-mail.

RSO James Lemarie (Beijing): LemarieJD@state.gov
RSO James Reynolds (Guangzhou): Reynoldsjm@state.gov
RSO William Gannon (Shanghai): GannonWB@state.gov

Questions should be directed to the Beijing Regional Security Office at 86-10-8531-4111.