



Kenya 2012 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Crime; Terrorism

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Kenya remains critically rated for both Crime and Transnational Terrorism. Post updated the travel warning for Kenya in November 2011 to note that "as a result of recent events and threats, the areas to which travel by U.S. government employees, contractors, grantees, and their dependents is restricted have been expanded and now encompass Lamu District and the Northeastern Province, including El Wak, Wajir, Garissa, Dadaab, Mandera and Liboi.

Although this restriction does not apply to travelers not associated with the U.S. government, it should be taken into account when planning travel. The security of these areas will be regularly reviewed for possible modification." U.S. Government personnel are restricted from traveling along a corridor in eastern Kenya without RSO approval. This corridor begins just north of Lamu and continues to the east of Dadaab and Wajir continuing north to the Ethiopian border. In October 2011, Post also took measures to limit official U.S. government travel to Kenya and U.S. citizens were encouraged to take this information into account when planning travel.

The greatest threats in Kenya continue to be road safety and crime. The most common crime in Kenya's major cities, and in particular Nairobi, is car-jacking. In virtually every instance, criminals use weapons to hijack a vehicle. Victims are sometimes tied up and put in the back seat or trunk of their own car. Criminals who commit these crimes will not hesitate to shoot a victim who is the least bit uncooperative or who may appear to hesitate before complying with their assailant. However, most victims, if they are completely cooperative, are robbed of their possessions but released unharmed with their vehicles. Violent and sometimes fatal criminal attacks, including armed carjackings, home invasions/burglaries, and kidnappings can occur at any time and in any location, most particularly in Nairobi. U.S. citizens have fallen victim to such crimes within the past year. U.S. citizens in Kenya should be extremely vigilant with regard to their personal security, particularly in public places frequented by foreigners such as clubs, hotels, resorts, upscale shopping centers, restaurants, and places of worship. U.S. citizens should also remain alert in residential areas, at schools, and at outdoor recreational events.

Street crime is a serious problem and more acute in Nairobi and other large cities. Most street crime involves multiple armed assailants. In some instances, large crowds of street



thugs incite criminal activity, which has the potential to escalate into mob-like violence with little notice.

Along with other crimes of opportunity, pickpockets, and thieves often carry out “snatch and grab” attacks on city streets in crowded areas, as well as from idle vehicles in traffic. Visitors are advised not to carry expensive valuables such as jewelry, electronics, or large amounts of cash on their person, but rather store them in their hotel safety deposit boxes or room safes. However, it is not prudent to travel with such items at all, since hotel safes can be broken into or taken out of a room. These safes may also be accessible by hotel personnel even when locked. Walking alone is not advisable especially downtown, public parks, beach areas, and other poorly lit areas especially at night. In the fall of 2009, a Peace Corps volunteer was robbed and beaten unconscious while walking home alone at night.

Terrorism remains a high priority concern for Americans in Kenya. The porous border with Somalia has been of particular concern over the past year. On October 14, 2011, two Spanish nationals working for an NGO were kidnapped in Dadaab refugee camp, in northeastern Kenya. On October 1, 2011, a French national was kidnapped from a private residence on the popular tourist destination of Lamu Island on Kenya’s north coast. She died while in captivity in Somalia. On September 11, 2011, a British national wife and husband were kidnapped and the husband murdered at a coastal resort near the Kenya-Somali border. The motivation for these kidnappings is unclear, but the perpetrators took all of the hostages into areas of Somalia controlled by Al Shabaab, a designated terrorist organization, with some links to al-Qa’ida.

On October 16, 2011, Kenya initiated military action against Al Shabaab, declaring self-defense. Kenyan troops crossed into Somalia and are actively pursuing Al Shabaab in southeastern Somalia. Al Shabaab has responded to the Kenyan incursion into Somalia by threatening retaliation against civilian targets in Kenya. In the early morning of October 24, 2011, a hand grenade was tossed into a night club in downtown Nairobi, injuring 14 Kenyan patrons. Later the same day, another grenade exploded at a crowded bus stop, killing one and injuring 16 Kenyans. In North Eastern Kenya, on October 27, a vehicle carrying officials from the Ministry of Education was attacked, leaving four dead, and on October 28 a police vehicle was heavily damaged after driving over an explosive device. Responsibility for these incidents has not been determined, though an individual was sentenced on October 28 for his role in the grenade attack on the night club.

Political Violence

Kenya is generally a peaceful and friendly country in terms of political activism, but it is common during elections, referendums, and other political votes for sporadic campaign violence to occur around the country. The Kenyan government has been spending the past year preparing for the 2012 election season. The Ministry of Internal Security and Provincial Administration has been opening more police stations in areas that are more prone to political violence. Moreover, the government has established a task force out of the Ministry of



Special Programs where the main task has been to try and establish what can be done to prevent the kind of violence that was seen in 2007-2008. Post has been working with CDC and Peace Corps offices scattered throughout the country to ensure their emergency action plans are up to date ahead of 2012.

Post-Specific Concerns

Road safety/crime is clearly the most significant threat to persons residing in or visiting Kenya. Vehicle travel is extremely hazardous under normal Kenya conditions but particularly so at night. Defensive driving is a must for all drivers. Traffic laws are routinely ignored by most local drivers, who possess poor driving skills and/or training. In particular, many of the "matatus" or small passenger vans, show little courtesy and drive erratically and dangerously. Many vehicles are in poor mechanical condition with worn tires, broken and/or missing tail lights, brake lights, and headlights. Road conditions are considered poor at best or even worse in outlying or rural areas especially after the rainy seasons when roads deteriorate at a rapid rate causing extensive potholes and other road hazards.

Police Response

The Kenyan Police Service is almost solely a reactive force and demonstrates moderate proactive law enforcement techniques or initiative to deter or investigate crime. Police often lack the equipment, resources, training, and personnel to respond to calls for assistance or other emergencies. The police have a poor record of investigating and solving serious crimes.

Inadequate legislation results in the lack of prosecution or large numbers of acquittals.

Corruption occurs at all levels, which results in an ineffective legal and justice system.

Nairobi Area Control Room: 020 2724154; 020 3556771 Diplomatic Police Hotlines: 0716 000 559; land lines – 020 7625230/1/1/4/5 Police Headquarters: 020 341 411; 020 340731; 020 341416; 020 342305; 340225

Medical Emergencies

Kenya's country-wide emergency number is 999. There are three hospitals in Nairobi which U.S. personnel and other western ex-pats typically use:

Nairobi Hospital: 254-20-284-5000/6002/5506/7/8 Aga Khan Hospital:

254-20-366-2025/374000/3662000/3750290 Gertrude Garden Children's Hospital:

254-20-376-3474/0137/0030/4097 The quality of care at each is considered good, and U.S.

Embassy personnel assigned to Kenya often uses their services. However, the blood supply in Kenya is generally considered unsafe and the use of blood products is not recommended.

It is advised that those needing blood utilize trusted sources such as family or friends.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Normal crime prevention methods will help lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime while in Kenya. Being aware of one's surroundings has been the time-tested method for avoiding becoming an inviting target of opportunity for crime. Car-jacking and burglaries and the occasional home invasion are the most serious crimes in Kenya, but if the necessary measures are taken, they can generally be avoided. Perpetrators are likely to be armed and



resistive behavior causes more violence by the attackers. Ensure vehicle doors and windows are locked at all times while traveling, even during daylight hours. The best way to avoid being a victim of a car-jacking is to be aware of your surroundings at all times, particularly at night or early morning hours, though car-jackings do occur during daylight hours. If you see something or someone suspicious, be prepared to act quickly. Allow sufficient distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you while stopped in traffic. If you believe you are being followed, do not drive directly to your intended destination but rather detour to a public or well lit and guarded area and seek help. It is important to limit the amount of valuables and cash you carry with you, specifically ATM or credit cards. Should you be carrying ATM or credit cards, the criminal will prolong the incident so they can take the victim to multiple ATM machines even keeping you past midnight for additional withdrawals. Travelers should only use banks and ATM's in well lit locations and never at night. Credit cards can be used in certain establishments, such as major hotel chains and some local restaurants but caution is advised and remember to check your statements shortly after the transaction. Although there are a number of security and private guard companies throughout Kenya's larger cities, it is advisable to research any prospective security company for quality and reliability when considering hiring their services.

Further Information

The U.S Embassy is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya. The Consulate's American Citizen Services Unit requires an appointment for all non-emergency services. Appointments can be made online:

<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=NRB&appcode=1>

ACS is closed to the public the last Wednesday of every month and any Kenyan or American holidays. The following are some important contact information for the Embassy:

Embassy Nairobi Switchboard: 254-20-363-6000 Consular Section/American Citizen

Services: 020-363-6451 (M-TH: 0800-1600 Fri: 0800-1200) American Citizen Services

Email: Kenya_ACS@state.gov Regional Security Office: 254-20-363-6301 Embassy 24 hr.

Emergency: 254-20-363-6170 The Embassy operates a warden system to communicate with registered American citizens in Nairobi. Periodic messages are sent to test the system so that it will be effective should an emergency situation arise. To register your stay in Nairobi and ensure that you receive warden messages in an emergency, please visit our website at:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

OSAC Country Council

RSO Nairobi does have an OSAC Council that meets on a quarterly basis. -RSO POC is Regional Security Officer, Jeff Lischke, 254-20-363-6301.