



## Macedonia 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Cyber; Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hate Crimes; Earthquakes; Counterfeiting; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Macedonia; Europe > Macedonia > Skopje

1/26/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

### Crime Threats

Violent crime against American citizens is rare. Pickpocketing, theft, and other petty street crimes do occur, particularly in areas where tourists and foreigners congregate. There were two instances of pickpocketing of American personnel, one in March and another in November 2015. Pickpockets use various diversionary tactics to distract victims.

In November 2015, visiting Americans had their car window broken and contents removed.

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Ministry of Interior (MOI) crime statistics (January-November 2015):

Illegal production, possession, and trafficking of weapons and explosives

2014: 224 offences

2015: 175 offences, and 204 suspects arrested

Weapon Seizures

2014: 185 pieces of various kinds of weapons; 9,919 pieces of ammunition

2015: 222 pieces of various kinds of weapons; 22,330 pieces of ammunition

Violent crime in 2015

18 reported murders, and 20 suspects arrested

33 reported attempted murders, and 34 suspects arrested

143 reported grave body injuries, and 176 suspects arrested

11 reported abductions, and 20 suspects arrested

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25 reported extortions, and 37 suspects arrested  
19 reported blackmails, and 17 suspects arrested

#### Thefts and Robberies in 2015

9,401 reported severe thefts, and 3,283 suspects arrested  
236 reported robberies, and 268 suspects arrested  
2,024 reported burglaries

#### Sexual Abuse of Minors

2014: 47 cases of sexual attacks on minors. 6 cases of showing pornographic material to a child; 5 cases of production and distribution of child pornography.

2015: 37 cases of sexual attacks on minors. 2 cases of showing pornographic material to a child; 8 reported case of production and distribution of child pornography.

#### Cases of Family Violence

2014: 901 cases of family violence; police arrested 911 suspects. 926 victims of family violence.

2015: 762 cases of domestic violence: police arrested 781 suspects. 829 victims of

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domestic violence.

Organized crime is present in Macedonia and can result in violent confrontations between members of rival organizations.

### Cybersecurity Issues

In 2014, there were 103 incidents of computer crime: 76 cases of unauthorized penetration into a computer system, 4 cases of computer fraud, 4 cases of abuse of credit cards, 18 cases of production and use of a fraudulent credit card, and 1 case of computer forgery. In 2015, there were 48 incidents of computer crime.

### Transportation-Safety Situation

#### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions differ significantly from those in the U.S. High speeds, unpredictable drivers/pedestrians, poor vehicle maintenance, uneven road surfaces/widths, and poor lighting all contribute to precarious driving conditions. Most major highways are in good repair, but

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secondary urban and rural roads vary widely in condition and lighting. Horse-drawn carts, livestock, rocks, or other objects can be found in roadways. Many vehicles are quite old by Western standards. Mountain roads can be narrow, poorly marked, lacking guardrails, and become dangerous in inclement weather. Roadside emergency services are limited. Useful information regarding traffic safety can be found at:

<http://www.mvr.gov.mk/Uploads/MvrFlaeri/EN%20web.pdf>

The Ministry of Interior provided the following statistics on vehicle accidents

2014: 3,914 severe traffic accidents, 124 people killed.

2015: 3,532 traffic accidents, 132 people killed

Pedestrians should exercise extreme caution when crossing the street.

A valid U.S. driver's license and an International Driving Permit are required for Americans to drive. Driving is on the right side of the road. Speed limits are posted, with maximum speed limits of 50 km/h in populated areas. Use of headlights is mandatory day and night. Drivers and passengers should always wear seatbelts. Drivers are not allowed to use a cell phone while driving. Do not leave valuables, including cell phones and electronic items, in plain view in unattended vehicles. In traffic, leave space in which to maneuver. If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest safe area: Embassy, police station, or other public place (do NOT go home). Lock doors and windows in vehicles. Do not leave any valuables in view in your car; put them in your trunk or take them with you.

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In case of emergency while on the road, drivers may contact the police at 192 or go to the nearest police station, the Ambulance Service at 194, Roadside Assistance at 196 and 9159, and/or U.S. Embassy Skopje (American Citizen Services) at + 389-02-310-2000.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Taxis and buses are commonly used and are generally reliable and safe.

Train service is reportedly unreliable.

### Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

On April 21, 2015, an armed group of approximately 40 people seized weapons, ammunition, and radio communication supplies from a border police station in Goshince near the border with Kosovo. On May 9-10, 2015, the Macedonian police authorities carried out a police action in Kumanovo, ostensibly to recover the stolen equipment. This action resulted in the deaths of

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eight Macedonian police officers and 10 members of the armed group. Although the motives of the armed group remain unclear, the government of Macedonia classifies the incident as an act of terrorism and has charged three suspects with leading a terrorist organization and 26 with participating in a terrorist organization.

In addition, there were several minor incidents that could be classified as terrorist acts. For example, unknown perpetrators placed an improvised explosive device at a government building housing the main court on February 18. The device failed to detonate properly and caused minimal property damage. Small explosions also caused minor property damage in April next to the Government Building in Skopje, in May near ethnic Albanian political party DUI's headquarters in Tetovo, in July in a parking garage in Kumanovo, in July at the Skopje City Police Station, and in October in a residential neighborhood of Skopje. The police have not identified suspects for any of these incidents, all of which remain under investigation.

Macedonia recognizes the threat of global terrorism and is a solid ally for the U.S. on counterterrorism (CT) issues, including an August CT operation that resulted in the indictment of 37 people and the arrest of 15 individuals under the recently-passed law on foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Dozens of Macedonian citizens have traveled to the Middle East as FTFs, though there are indications that the recent arrests have had a deterrent effect. Macedonia does not provide a safe haven to terrorists or terrorist groups.

#### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Significant political violence against American interests occurred twice in recent history.

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On March 25, 1999, 2,000+ demonstrators converged on the former U.S. Embassy (the Embassy has since changed locations) to protest NATO airstrike on Yugoslavia. The demonstration turned violent and resulted in over \$750,000 damage to U.S. government facilities.

On July 24, 2001, protestors again entered the former U.S. Embassy (old site), setting fires and damaging property in response to the West's response to inter-ethnic violence.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

### Civil Unrest

There is potential for political violence. Political disputes with neighboring countries and within Macedonia between rival political parties and ethnic groups add an element of uncertainty.

Demonstrations and public protests occur frequently. Many groups demonstrate in front of Parliament and other government buildings. Demonstrations and rallies are generally peaceful. However, in February 2013, violent demonstrations resulted in extensive property damage and injuries in downtown Skopje.

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In 2015, there were 81 reported demonstrations. The majority of these were anti-government demonstrations. Several protests were in response to the information contained in released wiretapped conversations highlighting government corruption and the government's role in election rigging and possibly murder. At times, the demonstrations turned violent, causing property damage and injuries to police and demonstrators in downtown Skopje, and in some instances, police in riot gear and demonstrators clashed with injuries on both sides.

In May, approximately 60,000 demonstrators protested against the ruling party.

Also in May, 70,000 demonstrators took to the streets in a pro-government rally.

Travelers are cautioned to avoid such gatherings. While recent demonstrations have not targeted American citizens or interests, travelers should be aware of their surroundings and current events.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

Violent, ethnically-motivated demonstrations also occurred in May, July, and August 2014.

#### Post-specific Concerns

#### Environmental Hazards

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Earthquakes have occurred, and travelers and residents should be prepared for them. Some useful websites include: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/index.shtm>, <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/prepare/>, and <http://www.dropcoverholdon.org/>.

### Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Counterfeit goods and pirated movies are widely available; purchasing these items is a crime both in the U.S. and Macedonia.

### Drug-related Crimes

#### Ministry of Interior (MOI) crime statistics

#### Drug – “Use of Narcotics and Enable Other to Use Narcotics”

2014: 717 offences

(577 cases of unauthorized production and release for trade of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors, and 140 cases of enabling drug use; 714 suspects arrested)

2015: 549 offences

(463 cases of unauthorized production and release for trade of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors, and 86 cases of enabling drug use)

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## **Police Response**

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

American citizens who have been detained should contact U.S. Embassy Skopje American Citizen Services for assistance. The law requires warrants issued by an investigative judge for arrest and detention, and police generally follow this requirement. The law states that prosecutors must arraign a detainee within 24 hours of arrest. An investigative judge, at the request of a prosecutor, may order detention of suspects for up to 72 hours. Police generally adhere to these procedures.

### Crime Victim Assistance

Police support for foreigners who are victims of crime is very satisfactory. The language barrier can be a major concern when calling for emergency assistance.

## **Medical Emergencies**

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Medical Emergencies: 194

REMEDIKA General Hospital

16th Makedonska Brigada Street, Zelezara.

Tel: +389 2 2603 100

SISTINA Hospital

Skupi Street 5A

Tel: +389 2 3099 500

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/macedonia>.

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

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Please contact [DS\\_RSO\\_Skopje@state.gov](mailto:DS_RSO_Skopje@state.gov) for information on the OSAC Skopje Country Council. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email [OSACEUR@state.gov](mailto:OSACEUR@state.gov).

## **U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Skopje

21 Samoilova Street

1000 Skopje

U.S. Citizen Services working hours: Monday-Friday 2:00p.m.-4:00p.m. by appointment, except on U.S. and Macedonian holidays

### Embassy Contact Numbers

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Switchboard: +389 - 2 - 310-2000

Website: <http://macedonia.usembassy.gov/>

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

American travelers should take the same precautions against becoming crime victims as they would in any U.S. city. Maintain a low personal profile by not drawing attention to yourself. Pedestrians should be aware of their belongings and surroundings. Stay alert to what is going on around you. Keep your wallet in a front or secret pocket, not in a back pocket. Do not carry more cash than you need. Do not leave your things unattended in public. You should securely lock the windows and doors of your residence when it is not occupied. Pedestrians should be aware of their belongings and surroundings. Victims should report crime to the police and if their wallet is stolen, cancel their credit cards as soon as possible. ATM use is generally safe; however, travelers should take standard safety precautions.

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