



Russia 2016 Crime & Safety Report: St. Petersburg

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Surveillance; Nationalist; Religious Terrorism; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Fraud; Murder; Assault; Other Threat / Incident; Burglary; Extortion; Cyber; Bribery; State-led violence; Aviation; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Faith-based Organization; Religious Violence; Hate Crimes; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Economic Espionage; Racial Violence/Xenophobia; Drug Trafficking; Information Security; Hotels

Europe > Russia; Europe > Russia > St. Petersburg

3/21/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The Russian economy continued to decline throughout 2015, resulting in increased unemployment, inflation, and general crime. The mainstay of the economy is oil, which, as of January 2016, plummeted to its lowest price per barrel in 13 years. The devaluation of the Russian ruble has mirrored the fall in oil prices, trading at the lowest level since December 2014.

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



With a population in excess of five million persons, St. Petersburg has crime levels commensurate with other urban centers in Russia, Europe, and the U.S. During 2015, the Ministry of Interior and Prosecutor General's Office reported that the number of reported crimes rose nationwide by more than eight percent, with crime reports increasing in more than 90 percent of the Russian Federation's 85 administrative regions. Among the top 10 regions reporting the highest percentage increases were four regions that fall within U.S. Consulate St. Petersburg's district (Murmansk Oblast (44.1 percent); Nenets Autonomous Okrug (28.2 percent); Republic of Karelia (24 percent), and Pskov Oblast (23.3 percent)). The NW Federal District, of which St. Petersburg is the administrative capital and which includes the entirety of the consular district for the U.S. Consulate St. Petersburg, led the nine Russian Federation federal districts for increases in crime reports during 2015. According to the MVD figures, reported crimes in the NW Federal District increased significantly in 2015, up 11.9 percent to 227,877 compared to 203,681 in 2014 and 200,632 in 2013. Despite nationwide increases in crime reporting and significantly increased crime reporting rates for the regions bordering the city, the number of crime reports for St. Petersburg increased by only 17 reports from 56,463 in 2014 to 56,480 in 2015.

Violence against foreigners does occur in St. Petersburg. Both MVD and the Prosecutor General's Office also reported that crimes targeting foreign nationals and non-Russian citizens increased nationwide by 17.5 percent to 17,289 instances in 2015 compared to 16,476 in 2014.

While police are generally able to deter and respond to many serious crimes, petty crimes (particularly theft-related, economic, fraud-related cases) increased nationwide in 2015. Officials noted that almost half (46 percent) of all reported crimes in Russia during 2015 were theft-related, with simple theft reports increasing more than 11 percent. Similarly, economic crimes increased 3.7 percent (111,200 reports) as did fraud case reports, up 23.4 percent to (182,401 instances) nationwide. Within the St. Petersburg Consular District, Pskov and Murmansk Oblasts led the nation in the percentage increase of fraud-related cases reported

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



to the Prosecutor General's Office during 2015. Pskov reported a 295 percent increase with 816 cases, and Murmansk Oblast reported a 255 percent increase with 1,818 cases.

Unsolved crimes also increased nationwide in 2015, up 6.8 percent to 58,050. Unsolved theft cases also made up the largest group of unsolved cases, up 4.8 percent to 25,860. Fraud was the next largest category of unsolved cases, also up 10.1 percent to 4,808 cases nationwide. Unsolved robbery (-4.9 percent), homicide, and attempted homicide cases (-19.3 percent) decreased during the year, tending to indicate that MVD officials were able to dedicate resources on these more violent crimes rather than white-collar crimes. Within the Consular district, both Murmansk and Pskov Oblasts reported the highest increases nationwide in unsolved crimes with 84.2 percent and 31.1 percent, respectively.

Nationwide, the Prosecutor General's Office reported that 22 percent of registered crimes fall into the category of 'serious or very serious' crimes, as defined under Article 15 of the Russian Criminal Code. Serious or grave crimes are defined as intentional crimes, which carry a penalty up to 10 years incarceration. Especially serious or grave crimes carry a penalty in excess of 10 years incarceration. According to 2015 MVD figures, the number of 'serious and very serious' crimes was slightly higher in the NW Federal District than the nationwide average, where they represented approximately a quarter of the total number of crimes reported (55,603 of 227,877 crimes). For St. Petersburg, 'serious and very serious' crimes represented an even higher percentage of reported crimes than the national average, 39.6 percent (22,506 of 56,480 crimes for 2015). The amount of 'serious' and 'very serious' violent crime varied within the administrative districts of St. Petersburg, often influenced by the district's economic prosperity and population density. Although the nationwide trend was a reduction in 'serious' and 'especially serious crimes', the Prosecutor General's Office identified one region within the NW Federal District, the Archangelsk Oblast, with a 30 percent increase in 'serious' crimes from January-November 2015 (957 reported cases in 2015, compared to 736 in 2014.)

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Russian law enforcement, judicial, and social agencies have made significant progress in reducing homicide and violent crime rates over the last several years, and the nationwide trend continued in 2015. Police in St. Petersburg believe that alcohol plays a significant role in homicides and violent crimes, with as many as two-thirds of suspects intoxicated at the time of arrest. Nationwide, the percentage of suspects intoxicated or under the influence of narcotics at the time of arrest is approximately 35 percent. In January 2016, the chief of the Investigation Department for the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast reported that homicides decreased to 203 during 2015, a decline of more than 20 percent from 2014 figures.

Consistent with nationwide crime data, the most prevalent crime reported to the RSO in St. Petersburg continues to be theft, primarily petty street crimes (pickpocketing). Most of the reported incidents occur in high pedestrian traffic areas (train stations, public transportation terminals, markets, underground crosswalks, shopping malls, crowded restaurants, popular tourist areas). Typically, a thief will remove a wallet or purse from a distracted victim. Thieves also routinely target cell phones, digital tablets, smart phones, cameras, and laptop computers. Large numbers of tourists and visitors, particularly in summer months, provide a target-rich environment for criminals.

Male business travelers are disproportionately victims of drugged drink incidents at nightclubs, 'gentlemen's clubs,' and hotel bars. In 2015, RSO regularly received reports of U.S. citizens and other foreign visitors being drugged or incapacitated, often in conjunction with excessive alcohol consumption, and then robbed by women whom they had met in nightclubs. The women target their victims in establishments frequented by foreigners, including luxury hotels. Typically, one or two women approach the potential victim and feign romantic interest. The victim is invited to another, unfamiliar nightclub. Once the victim is incapacitated from excessive drinking or intentional drugging, his cash is stolen, and he often finds excessive charges on his credit/debit cards. Physical/sexual assault may also occur. Thieves may also

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



target an inebriated or incapacitated victim, and scams preying on the overindulgence of alcohol are fairly common. Druggings can be caused from consumption of toxic, unregulated alcoholic beverages or from the intentional introduction of a substance into an unattended drink by a criminal. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Shaken: the Don'ts of Alcohol Abroad." RSO has received regular reports of fraudulent/altered soft drinks sold in the St. Petersburg area. Representatives of the beverage and soft drink industry reported receiving as many as 20 reports of such fake or modified soft drinks per day.

Debit/credit card 'skimming' is a regular means of theft. Anywhere a credit/debit card is used, including online, can be associated with fraudulent charges. The Consulate receives regular reports of fraudulent charges appearing on the credit/debit accounts of visitors and members of the diplomatic and expatriate resident communities. Fraudulent charges are generally in the range of US\$1,000-\$1,500, although the Consulate has received reports of fraudulent charges totaling as much as \$50,000.

While legal and private handgun ownership is limited and regulated by police, there are unlicensed firearms in circulation, particularly within criminal groups. Police regulate pneumatic, non-lethal "traumatic" weapons. These weapons often look identical to traditional handguns and have increasingly been used in violent crimes in St. Petersburg. Though officially declared "non-lethal," individuals have died from injuries from pneumatic/traumatic weapons. Though infrequent in the city center, robberies are conducted using the threat of assault or use of weapons (knives, pistols). Nationwide, official statistics showed an increase in illicit trafficking of arms (up 2.4 percent to 26,900 crimes) and an increase in the theft of weapons, ammunition, and explosives (+9.1 percent to 1,600 cases). Within the U.S. Consulate's district, the Republic of Karelia (+43.4 percent) and Leningrad Oblast (+41.5 percent) led the nation with the highest percentage increases in illicit arms trafficking cases.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Law enforcement officials noted that the presence of a tenant in a residence is not usually a sufficient deterrent for most residential thieves. A surprising number of burglaries involve thieves using the owner's keys, normally from an earlier theft of a bag or pickpocketing, allowing the burglar access to both the victim's keys and information of the victim's address (15 percent of burglaries). Criminals have posed as police officers, health officials, and delivery persons in order to gain entry to homes.

St. Petersburg continues to experience a regular number of armed robberies and burglaries, primarily targeting small businesses (jewelry stores, cash exchanges). These smaller businesses often lack effective security measures and may be located in more isolated parts of the city. Armed robberies are more infrequent in the city center but do occur.

Vehicle thefts continue to be a problem for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast. Despite increased law enforcement operations targeting auto theft rings, the number of vehicle-related crimes in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region continues to be one of the highest in Russia, second only to Moscow and Moscow Oblast. According to the automotive analytical group AUTOSTAT, St. Petersburg and Moscow, along with their surrounding oblasts, account for almost half the stolen vehicles (49.5 percent) nationwide. Since 2013, St. Petersburg and Leningrad region reported more than 6,000 stolen vehicle crimes annually with incidents of carjacking also averaging more than 6,000 annually. Using data from 2013-2015, AUTOSTAT calculated that St. Petersburg has the highest probability of theft (0.380 percent) nationwide based on the average number of thefts during the two-year period compared to the number of registered vehicles in the region.

Traffic police identified the following vehicle models as most frequently stolen in St. Petersburg: common VAZ models, new LADA sedans, Ford Focus (approximately 50 stolen per month), Chevrolet Lacetti, Toyota Camry, Land Rover, and Infinity SUV (approximately 30 stolen per month), Renault Logan, Toyota Land Cruisers, Nissan Patrol, and inexpensive

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Mazda and Mitsubishi models. According to the same police data, vehicles are most frequently stolen in the evening and late night, with more than 70 percent of the thefts occurring from 6 pm-6 am. The lack of sufficient, safe parking facilitates auto theft, as many vehicle owners may make poor parking choices (dark, isolated, unmonitored areas). The St. Petersburg prosecutor's office detailed three general places where the majority of auto thefts occur: 25 percent at shopping centers; 22 percent in unprotected/unmonitored parking areas; and 51 percent in front of residences.

The profile of auto theft victims also changed in recent years, as owners of inexpensive vehicles represented an increasing percentage of victims in the St. Petersburg area. While expensive vehicles are still stolen, they are generally moved to outlying areas. The St. Petersburg Prosecutor's office confirmed that domestically produced cars, and foreign cars costing less than 600,000 rubles are increasingly stolen for parts. Once stolen, these vehicles are brought to 'chop shops' where they are disassembled for component parts. These second-hand parts are much harder for police to trace, and parts can be disseminated to parts supply and auto repair shops with little risk of discovery.

Foreign companies may encounter organized crime (extortion, corruption) in the local business environment. Organized criminal groups target businesses in urban areas by demanding protection money under threat of violence. A significant number of Russian businesses are forced to pay a percentage of their revenue to a "krysha" or "roof." This payment is intended to ensure that the person soliciting the money will not harm the proprietor or business, and in return the protector is supposed to defend the business against other extortion attempts or threats. Organized crime groups are not as active in St. Petersburg street-level crime as they were in the 1990s, but violent acts do occasionally occur. These organized criminal groups have evolved into more complex financial and economic crimes (credit card fraud, cyber-crime, prostitution, drug trafficking, money laundering schemes, bribery/contract fraud).

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Russia continues to struggle with widespread corruption despite high-level anti-corruption campaigns and efforts to improve the business environment. Business leaders regularly cite corruption and a lack of judicial independence and consistency as factors hampering foreign business investment. According to the most recent World Bank and IFC's Enterprise Survey for Russia, more than 20 percent of companies reported making unofficial payments in order to 'get things done.' In its most recent ratings (2014), Transparency International ranked Russia 136 of 183 countries for perceptions of corruption in the public sector. The Russian Federation has taken positive steps against corruption, including the implementation of mandatory anti-corruption training for public officials, increasing civil servant salaries, and amending the Russian Federal Anti-Corruption Law in January 2013. Under the amendment, all companies are required to establish anti-bribery compliance programs and develop internal anti-corruption policies. However, inconsistent and often non-transparent application of laws and regulations limit the country's anti-corruption efforts. The use of anti-corruption laws to target political rivals also degrades Russia's judicial system and the public's confidence in the country's adherence to the rule of law.

Cybersecurity Issues

The cyber crime threat in Russia is acute. Groups in Russia and China are believed to be the source of the majority of the world's cyber attacks, malicious code, and hacking tools. The risk of infection, compromise, and theft via malware, spam e-mail, sophisticated spear phishing, and social engineering attacks is significant. U.S. citizens and companies should remain vigilant against cyber threats and actively use cyber security measures to minimize risks.

From March-September 2015, dozens of bomb threats disrupted operations at shopping centers, causing evacuations, around St. Petersburg. None of the threats resulted in the

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



discovery of actual bombs, but the threats were linked to an extortion campaign of an alleged Ukraine-based group calling itself the Dillinger Team. The Dillinger Team campaign in St. Petersburg differed from some recent, anonymous bomb threats in Russia due to the group's financial demand for payment in Bitcoins. Bitcoins are attractive to criminals because they can be used nearly anonymously, making them difficult to track. Bitcoin extortion schemes are on the rise globally and often fall in the realm of cyber security. While the Dillinger Team's extortion attempts do not have known links to cyber attacks, such schemes are frequently tied to a variety of cyber attacks (ransomware, data hacking, digital currency theft). Though Bitcoin extortion schemes do not generally have a physical security nexus, some Bitcoin extortion groups have threatened their targets with physical security threats (harassment, vandalism).

Other Areas of Concern

While the majority of violent crimes are reported to occur outside the city center, a significant number of crimes take place near major hotels and affluent neighborhoods. Crime rates reflect that approximately 40 percent of crimes occur in public areas (parks) with MVD officials noting that such crimes increased nationwide more than 10.5 percent in 2015. The downtown area where most foreign expatriates and diplomats work and live does not have clearly defined lines between "good" and "bad" neighborhoods, and higher-income apartments can be found on the same block as communal and lower-income units. St. Petersburg also does not have clearly delineated zoning between commercial and residential areas. While the overall number of crimes within certain districts may not be very high, the crimes may be more violent. For example, in the Kalininskiy, Moscovskiy, and Frunzenkiy districts, more than 50 percent of reported crimes involve serious felonies (robbery, homicide, attempted homicide, serious assaults). While in the Central District, where many shopping, tourist, business, and consular offices operate, only about a third of crimes reported are serious or violent felonies.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The Department of State continues to maintain an active Travel Warning on the risks of travel to eastern Ukraine. Russia-backed separatists continue to control areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, where violent clashes have resulted in over 9,000 deaths. A ceasefire agreement established a de facto dividing line between Ukrainian government-controlled and separatist-held areas of Ukraine, with numerous checkpoints controlled by government and separatist forces. The Department of State warns all U.S. citizens to defer all travel to the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. There have been multiple casualties due to land mines or unexploded ordinance in areas previously controlled by separatists, and separatist leaders have made statements indicating their desire to push the front line to the administrative borders of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. Individuals, including U.S. citizens, have been threatened, detained, or kidnapped for hours or days after being stopped at separatist checkpoints. The government of Ukraine has stated that foreigners who enter Ukraine from Russia through separatist-controlled territory will not be allowed through checkpoints into government-controlled territory. Further, the current status of Crimea prevents official Americans from traveling to that area. As a result, the U.S. government's ability to assist American citizens in Crimea is extremely limited. More information about travel to the Ukrainian border region and Crimea can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/ukraine-travel-warning.html>

In 2015, the Russian security services conducted multiple counter-terrorist operations in the North Caucasus, reportedly targeting extremists. Violence has become less predictable and more random, creating a widespread climate of fear. Additionally, the line between a criminal and terrorist act is difficult to distinguish. Political, economic, and criminal motives overlap to create a violent, chaotic environment with attacks and suicide bombings a regular occurrence in Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and Ingushetia. Attacks had been directed almost exclusively against law enforcement, military, and government officials; however, civilians can be targeted or caught in the crossfire. It can also be difficult to distinguish civilian casualties of indigenous terrorism from those of criminal acts. Throughout the region, local criminal gangs have kidnapped foreigners (U.S. citizens) for ransom. Having close contacts within the local community does not guarantee safety. There have been several kidnappings of foreigners and Russian citizens working for media and non-governmental organizations in the region. Due to the possibility of civil and political unrest throughout much of the North Caucasus, the

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel there (Chechnya, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Stavropol, Karachayevo-Cherkessiya, Kabardino-Balkariya). The U.S. government's ability to assist U.S. citizens in the North Caucasus is extremely limited.

There are several closed cities and regions in Russia, including in the NW Federal District. If you attempt to enter these areas without prior authorization, you may be subject to arrest, fines, and/or deportation. You must list on the visa application all areas to be visited and register with authorities upon arrival at each destination. There is no centralized list or database of the restricted areas, so travelers should check with their sponsor, hotel, or the nearest office of the Russian Federal Migration Service before traveling to unfamiliar cities and towns.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Very heavy congestion makes driving in St. Petersburg challenging. Over the last several years, the number of personal vehicles on the road has skyrocketed, placing a significant burden on the city's road and parking infrastructure. While St. Petersburg has passed several new ordinances to create some level of parking enforcement within the center city area, to include a paid parking regime in the city's Central District, it has provided little overall impact on improving the parking/traffic situations. Traffic cameras have been deployed but tend to be targeted at the city's ring road traffic. Drivers frequently ignore local traffic laws, and accidents are a regular occurrence. Yielding to oncoming traffic or pedestrians is inconsistent and subjective as is the use of turn signals. Mini-buses (or "Marshrutkas") and unofficial taxis

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



("gypsy" cabs) can be dangerous because of the speed at which they travel and the lack of safety measures in the vehicles.

The large volume of traffic and extreme winter weather conditions have led to continuous road repair work in a city with an aging infrastructure, narrow streets, and numerous and changing one-way routes. In order to avoid even small potholes, drivers commonly make sudden and unexpected lane changes without signaling or checking other lanes. Collisions as a result of this behavior are common.

There are strict penalties for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol. Police conduct random traffic stops and will insist that drivers submit to a medical evaluation (Breathalyzer). It is possible to be arrested for driving while intoxicated after a single drink. Refusal to submit to the evaluation is generally treated as an admission to having consumed alcohol. The maximum punishment is a two-year suspension of a driver's license. An intoxicated driver may also be detained until s/he is sober.

When involved in a traffic accident, travelers should immediately report it to the State Inspectorate for Traffic Security (GIBDD). The GIBDD response to traffic accidents can be slow, but the law requires that the vehicles involved in an accident not be moved (even to the side of the road) until police arrive. Moving one's vehicle will result in that driver assuming full responsibility for damages. Turn off the vehicle, call police, and wait for them to conduct their investigation.

Public Transportation Conditions

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



St. Petersburg has an established public transportation system of subway (Metro), bus, trolley, and streetcars. Travelers are urged to remain vigilant and exercise good judgment and discretion when using any form of public transportation. Pickpockets work buses and trams regularly and are adept at slicing through purses, backpacks, and clothing.

Licensed taxi companies generally provide reliable, safe, and economical services. However, visitors should be alert to the potential for substantial overcharging, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Always negotiate the charge with the driver before departing. Sharing a taxi ride and splitting the fare with strangers already in the taxi is strongly discouraged. Higher charges can be expected when a cab is stopped in the street or is idling at a taxi stand. The cheapest, safest option remains arranging a car from a legitimate radio or electronic dispatch taxi service.

Foreigners taking unmarked taxis have been victims of nearly everything from price gouging to assaults and robberies. Criminals using taxis to rob passengers often wait outside bars/restaurants to find passengers who have been drinking and are more susceptible to robbery. Robberies may also occur in taxis shared with strangers. You should always use authorized services when arriving at a major airport. The Consulate generally advises visitors to avoid Marshrutkas and gypsy cabs, especially if visitors do not have a strong grasp of local customs and the Russian language.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The safety of air transportation has been a concern although the government has taken steps to replace aging aircraft, increase civil aviation oversight, and strengthen regulatory regimes. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of air carrier operations. Several carriers have participated in the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) program, an industry-sponsored safety audit program.

The Russia Federation's Interstate Aviation Committee (K), which investigates air accidents in Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), reported that it investigated 41 aviation incidents in 2015 in Russia or involving Russian aircraft (commercial, private, rotary wing aircraft). Of those incidents, 19 involved fatalities, including the October 31 downing of Metrojet Flight 9268, operated by Kogalymavia Airlines, over the Sinai Peninsula en route to St. Petersburg. Further information may be found in the MAK's annual flight safety analysis reports issued by the Air Accident Investigation Commission. According to the most recently released IATA statistical data from April 2015, the region has an aviation accident rate of 3.63 per million flights (1:275,000 flights), the second-worst rate of any IATA region. Although the CIS region, which includes the Russian Federation, had the worst performance in incidents involving jet hull loss, IATA noted that the region had also significantly improved its performance from 2010 to 2013. IATA cited deficiencies in regulatory oversight and failure of the crew to adhere to standard operation procedures as contributing factors in 50 percent or more of the incidents.

Other Travel Conditions

In 2015, the Consulate continued to receive reports of U.S. citizens being detained by the Federal Migration Service (FMS) for purportedly entering the Russian Federation on the wrong type of visa or failing to register properly with police or FMS officials upon arrival. The

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



people who were detained faced legal repercussions based on a liberal interpretation of immigration laws. In some instances, it was not clear which type of visa was appropriate for certain activities.

Terrorism Threat

In the last decade, Moscow and St. Petersburg have been the targets of terrorist attacks. Bombings have occurred at Russian government buildings, airports, hotels, tourist sites, markets, entertainment venues, schools, residential complexes, and on public transportation (subways, buses, trains, scheduled commercial flights).

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

For 2015, federal MVD and Prosecutor General's officials reported significant increases in the number of recorded terrorist and extremist crimes throughout Russia. According to MVD data, the number of terrorist crimes increased more than 35 percent to 1,531 cases, and the number of reported extremist crimes increased more than 27 percent to 1,308 cases. The 2015 increases followed similarly significant increases in 2014 with reported terrorist offenses increasing more than 70 percent and extremist cases increasing more than 14 percent over 2013 numbers. In November 2015, Vladimir Makarov, the deputy head of the anti-extremist department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, addressed Russia's Federation Council and noted that the number of extremist crimes has grown 100-fold during the last 10 years.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



According to Makarav, 130 extremist crimes were registered by Russian law enforcement in 2004 whereas the number of cases exceeded 1,000 in 2014. He also noted that the Internet was used in 54 percent of extremist crimes in the Russian Federation, with more than 3,000 foreign online resources in Russian that contain propaganda materials of an extremist or terrorist nature.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed that no terrorist attacks occurred in the Russian Federation in 2015. However, on October 31, a Russian charter plane exploded in mid-air over Egypt due to an improvised explosive device on board. All 224 people -- 219 Russian nationals -- on board were killed. Russian authorities, in addition to the U.S. and UK, determined the incident was an act of terrorism.

On September 30, 2015, Russia initiated military operations in Syria. In response, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and affiliated terrorist organizations have issued threats vowing retaliatory terrorist attacks in Russia. These threats, combined with ISIL's terrorist attack in Paris in November 2015, prompted the Russian security services to enhance security measures at many public venues, including tourist sites. Following the commencement of Russian military action in Syria, ISIL members made numerous threats of retaliation, including publishing a video in November threatening "that soon blood will spill like an ocean" in Russia and beheading a citizen of Chechnya in December. Russia's Supreme Court had issued a ruling recognizing ISIL as a terrorist organization and banned its domestic activity in December 2014. With the ruling, participation in ISIL activities became a criminal offense. At the end of 2015, the government estimated 2,900 Russian citizens were fighting with ISIL in Syria and Iraq. During the year, authorities convicted at least 80 individuals for fighting with ISIL or the "opposition" against the Syrian government, according to open sources.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



In December, the FSB Director announced that in 2015, 20 sworn terrorist leaders had been neutralized in the North Caucasus region.

Since the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, bomb threats against public venues in St. Petersburg have dramatically increased, with multiple, large evacuations reported regularly. Nationwide, the surge of false bomb and terror threat calls, more than 1,200 annually, has led Russian lawmakers to push for harsher penalties for persons making such calls. To date, all of these threats have been unfounded, but the Russian security services have been diligent about evacuating and clearing all areas, such as shopping malls, train stations, and government buildings. If you are at a location that receives a bomb threat, follow all instructions from the local police and security services.

There are no indications that U.S. institutions or citizens have been targets of terrorist attack plans, but there is a general risk of U.S. citizens becoming victims of indiscriminate terrorist attacks. U.S. citizens should be aware of their personal surroundings and follow good security practices.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

The U.S.-Russian bilateral relationship remains strained due to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and U.S./Europe-imposed sanctions, generating significant anti-American and anti-Western sentiment. In particular, anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric is widespread in both official media sources and on social media. Despite this strain, there were no incidents of wide-scale violence specifically targeting American citizens.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



RSO St. Petersburg noted that protests and harassment targeting employees of the U.S. Consulate increased during 2015. RSO recorded more than 75 incidents in 2015 of verbal/physical harassment, threats, assaults or violence targeting Consulate employees and incidents where pedestrians tossed bottles, eggs, or other items at the Consulate or individuals attempted to defecate or urinate on the Consulate façade.

During 2015, right-wing, nationalist, and pro-government activists in St. Petersburg shifted tactics and increasingly targeted persons viewed as “national traitors,” which included U.S. Consulate employees. The targeting has included aggressive propaganda and protests designed to isolate opposition groups, foreign nationals, or foreign business/diplomatic organizations from the greater Russian population. Members of the National Liberation Movement (RUS: -), Great Fatherland Party (RUS: /), and the People’s Council (RUS:) have been in the forefront of these activities, and members of these group have joined with other ultra-nationalist, pro-Kremlin groups to create umbrella movements under the names “Shield St Petersburg” and “Anti-Maidan St Petersburg.” These groups have targeted Consulate employees, family members, and visitors at events held at the Consul General’s residence in June, July, and November 2015. At the events, ultra-nationalist groups have filmed and photographed arriving guests and Consulate staff, posted details regarding those filmed online, and called on members of the community via social media sites to identify so-called “enemies of the state.”

RSO St. Petersburg has noted an increase of violent rhetoric targeting the U.S. and EU on social media websites and in the media generally since March 2014. While authorities maintain tight control over protests and the government continues to provide reasonable levels of security for U.S. facilities in St. Petersburg, the government’s continued anti-U.S. and anti-EU rhetoric might be interpreted by some elements of society as tacit approval of more violent acts directed at the Consulate or U.S. citizens. As political tensions between the U.S. and Russia increase as a result of disputes over a number of issues (Syria, Ukraine, human

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



rights, trade issues), visitors should be aware that speaking English or wearing items that clearly identify them as U.S. citizens may subject them to additional attention from local residents.

Immediately following the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia by the U.S. and Europe in response to Russian actions in Ukraine, some American “iconic brand” companies were heavily scrutinized by the authorities and, in some cases, closed, if only temporarily, for various administrative reasons.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Ultra-nationalist and extremists have been involved in bomb attacks in St. Petersburg, usually with crude, homemade devices. In December 2015, the FSB detained two St. Petersburg residents suspected of planting explosive devices at traffic police posts in October and March 2015, one of which detonated and severely injured a 66-year old woman. The detained individuals reportedly claimed to be protesting against the authorities and resisting world domination by the Antichrist. The suspects do not appear to have prior criminal records or affiliation with any known extremist group.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



In 2015, street demonstrations (to include single person pickets) about social matters occurred regularly in St. Petersburg, although these remained small, strictly controlled, and monitored by the authorities. The government expends considerable resources to control protests through the deployment of barricades and police officers. According to the Civil Initiatives Committee, founded by former Russian Federation Finance Minister Aleksey Kudrin, protest activity in Russia during the first six months of 2015 increased 15 percent compared to the same period in 2014. The organization noted that St. Petersburg was among the regions with high protest activity. Kudrin's organization also reported shifts in the reasons for the protest activity, with domestic political and economic issues increasing to almost 20 percent and foreign policy ones (Ukrainian conflict) decreased from approximately 10 percent to just under two percent. Social issues (19.3 percent) and urban environmental problems (17.9 percent) continued to remain significant protest causes.

Beginning in November, hundreds of commercial truckers staged public traffic slowdowns and related protests over the implementation of a new tax and truck-tracking program. The truckers cited concerns about corruption in the design and deployment of the program, how the collected fees will be used, and the overall impact on their livelihood. These protests were sustained over several weeks and took place on roads surrounding St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as on inter-city roadways. Although the protests were generally peaceful, they were designed to cause traffic delays on already congested roadways in major cities. The protests also underscored increasing frustration with national economic conditions.

In St. Petersburg, protests most frequently occur in the area of "Gostiny Dvor" metro station or at the Field of Mars, both downtown. Legal protests require approval from the authorities in advance, and authorities generally deal with unsanctioned protests harshly. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow and U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg monitor protests for their potential impact on the official/business community.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Since March 2014, the frequency of public protests outside of the Consulate increased. Members of the St. Petersburg branch of the National Liberation Movement have been the most active and sustained protestors, with weekly demonstrations and regular single-person pickets outside the Consulate and at major points throughout the city. The individuals first appeared in February 2014, carrying nationalist flags, handing out fliers to passing pedestrians, and displaying placards stating, "USA Hands Off of Ukraine" and "Homeland, Freedom, Putin," and using anti-American chants, songs, and slogans. The group regularly utilized a truck with anti-U.S. slogans and signs on it that circles the streets in front of the Consulate and reinforces the group's message. Since the summer of 2015, members of the organization have regularly filmed or photographed staff members and family members entering/exiting the building, and the group's messages have included personal attacks against the U.S. Ambassador or claims that Consulate staff are 'murderers' and 'spies.' Late in 2015, the group began to target U.S. companies in St. Petersburg that have contracts with Russian government ministries for accounting and financial services, claiming that their work is a threat to Russian national security.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious workers and missionaries have encountered negative attitudes from some elements of the population and scrutiny from the MVD and FSB, particularly when engaged in active proselytizing or if religious workers are perceived to be exceeding their visa status. The SOVA Center NGO reported 44 acts of ideologically-motivated vandalism in 27 regions of Russia. The main targets were religious objects (19), Orthodox churches (6), mosques and Muslim graves (6), Jewish objects (5), government offices (4), Jehovah's Witnesses-related buildings (3), and pagan idols (1).

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Throughout 2015, FSB, police, and immigration officials, including those in St. Petersburg, continued to conduct operations targeting potential illegal immigrants, particularly focusing on ethnic minorities from Central Asia and the Caucasus region. According to local news reports, several detainees remained in custody due to alleged ties to religious extremism. Several others were jailed or deported for direct ties to terrorist organizations. In January 2016, the head of St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblasts Federal Migration Office reported that the number of migrant workers in the city and oblast had decreased by 500,000 in 2015.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

During the spring thaw, flooding is possible in many parts, to include northwest Russia. As St. Petersburg is located on the Neva River, flooding was a problem, but the city and regional government have a number of mitigation measures in place.

The Ministry of Emergency Situations (EMERCOM or Rus:) posts regular updates on environmental hazards, including weather-related emergencies, on its webpage. Daily weather forecasts, information on natural disasters, and updates for transportation emergencies are routinely posted on the main site and on sites for the regions. Main page for Ministry of Emergency Situations: <http://www.mchs.gov.ru/>; St. Petersburg focused page: <http://www.78.mchs.gov.ru/>; and <http://www.78.mchs.gov.ru/operationalpage/forecasts/>

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Russia has experienced a number of industrial accidents resulting from inadequate enforcement of safety/health standards. Aging infrastructure and endemic corruption in regulatory bodies has contributed to several well-publicized disasters. Fines and facility closures are normally enforced only after an accident.

The Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant (approx.. 40 miles west of St. Petersburg) in Sosnovy Bor, Leningrad Oblast, has operated since 1974 and has periodically reported safety incidents of potential concern. The most recent incident occurred in December 2015, when a broken steam pipe caused the stoppage of one of the nuclear power units, although officials reported that no radiation leakage resulted.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

American businesses are susceptible to industrial espionage. When patronizing local services for banking, security, and medical treatment, it is important to ensure that they are reputable. Even then, police investigations have found that employees have passed sensitive personal, medical, or financial information to criminals or intelligence agencies. Personally identifiable information (PII) and proprietary business information can be sold or used to threaten and extort businesses/employees. Companies can increase their chances of defending against industrial espionage with strong employee vetting programs, verifying the background/qualifications of potential partners, establishing information technology security and recovery plans, and utilizing computer network protection infrastructure. U.S. businesses

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



should always conduct detailed pre-employment screening and background checks prior to hiring any overseas staff, to include Russian partners and employees. Businesses can be held liable for illegal or malicious actions on the part of their employees.

Privacy Concerns

Security and law enforcement agencies have wide investigative powers to prevent and investigate criminal activity and to collect information on events or actions that pose a threat to the military, economic, or ecological security of the Russian Federation. In practice, these are broad powers that enable authorities to monitor and seize any forms of electronic communication. As a result, travelers should assume communications are monitored and should have no expectation of privacy.

The System for Operational-Investigative Activities (SORM) enables authorities to monitor and record all data that traverses Russia's networks lawfully. Through SORM, authorities have access to any information transmitted via telephone and Internet networks. All emails, phone calls, and faxes are subject to collection by authorities, and the information may be analyzed and stored for up to three years.

Foreigners may experience other types of surveillance. Hotel rooms (including meeting rooms), offices, cars, and taxis may be monitored onsite or remotely. Personal possessions (computers) in hotel rooms may be searched without consent/knowledge of the owner. Foreign visitors may also witness or encounter individuals associated with the security/intelligence services entering their domiciles. While not criminally-motivated, such entry attempts may be difficult to discern from a criminal burglary. Those perpetrating clandestine entries are sophisticated and skilled at surreptitious entry. In general, visitors

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



should be aware that they have no privacy in public or private. Visitors should assume that host government personnel could monitor their movements and conversations. Discretion should be exercised at all times and in all places.

Personnel-Background Concerns

U.S. Embassy and Consulates continue to be concerned by the steady number of racially-motivated incidents, violence against ethnic minorities, and attacks against the LGBT community and LGBT-themed events. These incidents involved assaults and violence that primarily targeted victims described as 'non-Slavic' or 'Asian' in their ethnicity or perceived to be affiliated with the LGBT community. In spite of frequent arrests, membership in local right-wing, nationalist, or racist groups continues. Young ultra-nationalists, who profess the sentiment "Russia for Russians," continue to carry out attacks on ethnic minorities.

The Moscow-based SOVA Center NGO, which tracks racist, xenophobic, and ethnically-motivated violence, reported nine people killed and 68 people injured as a result of racist, xenophobic, and ethnically-motivated attacks in 17 regions of Russia in 2015. St. Petersburg, in which three people were killed and 14 injured in 2015, is consistently among the leading locales for such types of violence. The most common targets in these nationwide attacks were natives of Central Asia (3 killed, 5 injured), and people identified as being of "non-Slavic appearance" generally (1 killed, 10 injured). Also targeted were natives of the Caucasus (5 injured), people with dark skin (2 injured), and Jews (2 killed).

In March 2015, St. Petersburg hosted the International Russian Conservative Forum, which attracted considerable public attention due to its inclusion of European and U.S right-wing and nationalist groups as participants and speakers. Members of pro-government nationalist

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



movements within the United Russia party, specifically the National Liberation Movement (NOD) and Rodina (Motherland), participated in the conference along with more extremist right-wing groups. While public interest in Ukraine-related events appeared to wane during the year, both NOD and Rodina continued to organize pro-Novorossiia and related Ukraine public events in St. Petersburg.

Racism among soccer fans continues to be an issue in Russia and is particularly acute in St. Petersburg. Soccer fans at matches in St. Petersburg and other urban areas, regularly display swastikas, Viking runes, and other symbols associated with neo-Nazi groups. Prior to soccer matches with teams or players from the Caucasus, fans have drawn anti-Caucasian pictures or committed attacks, accompanied by xenophobic slogans and insults.

Vladimir Makarov, the deputy head of the anti-extremism department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, specifically identified the threat of right-wing, neo-Nazi groups in his presentation, saying "Groups in various social networks that support and disseminate the Nazi ideology are a serious problem. Most of them are registered in the foreign segment of the Internet, which significantly impedes the identification and deterrence of these groups."

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is widespread, and LGBT individuals, activists, and supporters have been targeted for harassment, threats, and acts of violence. Nationalists, including local politicians, claiming to be defending traditional Russian values have attempted to disperse/disrupt events, sometimes violently, that were being held in support of LGBT rights/issues. These groups have targeted annual conferences and film festivals highlighting social issues or LGBT rights sponsored/attended by the St. Petersburg Consular community. The SOVA center NGO reported that nationwide in 2015, nine people were injured in attacks due to their sexual orientation or identification as LGBT. Another five people were injured in "by association" attacks when trying to stand up for victims. Vykhod, a gay rights group in St. Petersburg, documented 36 attacks on the city's LGBT community in

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



2014, including severe beatings and assaults using mace. St. Petersburg-based member anti-LGBT activists have also gained notoriety for various online harassment campaigns of individuals (local teachers, civil servants) that purportedly target people who violate Russian laws restricting LGBT propaganda.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crimes continue to pose a problem for St. Petersburg law enforcement officials. For 2015, the Prosecutor General's Office reported that St. Petersburg has the second highest percentage in Russia of drug-related crimes as a percentage of all criminal cases reported (24.2 percent). The Republic of Ingushetia (27 percent), Republic of Dagestan (21.3 percent), North Ossetia (20 percent), and the Republic of Chechnya (19.2 percent) have similarly high percentages of drug-related crimes. The majority of these crimes were felony offenses ('grave and especially grave') and covered all types of illicit trafficking and production of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, cannabis, hashish, cocaine, methamphetamines, and other controlled substances.

While nationwide, illicit drug and narcotics crimes decreased 6.4 percent over 2015, the number of people who were under the influence of illicit drugs or narcotics at the time they committed criminal acts increased 4.8 percent.

According to 2015 figures, MVD and Federal Narcotics Control Service (FSKN) officials reported a decline of 2.5 percent in drug crimes for St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast: 15,696 crimes in 2015 versus 16,093 crimes in 2014. FSKN and MVD officials reported seizing more than 1,781kg of illicit substances, including precursor chemicals, in 2015 in St.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Petersburg and Leningrad region. These officials reported significant increases in seizures of cannabis-based drugs, cocaine and its derivatives, synthetic drugs, and methamphetamines.

Russia is a transit and a consumer country for Afghan opiates. The opiates are transported through Central Asia to Russia. In June 2015, the FSKN estimated the Russian Federation had approximately seven million drug addicts, of which 1.5 million were heroin users. FSKN officials added that approximately 70,000 deaths occur annually due to drugs among the 15-34 age bracket, with only about 700,000 registered drug addicts receiving some type of treatment. FSKN and MVD officials concluded that people addicted to heroin generally require two daily doses, valued at up to US\$100 daily, which fuels crime rates, particularly in a declining economy. Surprisingly, FSKN officials reported a significant decline in seizures of heroin in St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast in 2015, with only 9kg seized during the year compared with 112 in 2014, 64 in 2013, and 97 in 2012.

St. Petersburg has witnessed an increase in the amount of cocaine being imported and seized in recent years. These shipments are delivered to organized crime and drug trafficking groups throughout Russia, entering the country via seaports in the NW region. According to FSKN statistics, seizures in St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblasts increased significantly in 2015, up 246 percent, with 99kg of cocaine and its derivatives seized compared to 28kg in 2014.

Synthetic drugs (methamphetamines, 'krokodil/crocodile') are also a continuing problem in the region. Law enforcement officials reported significant seizures of synthetic drugs and psychotropic substances in the St. Petersburg area in 2015. Law enforcement officials seized more than 747kg of psychotropic substances and more than 189kg of synthetic drugs in the city and surrounding oblast during 2015.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



FSKN officials reported seizure of 708kg, an increase of 23 percent over 2014, of cannabis-based drugs in the St. Petersburg area, primarily hashish (661kg) and marijuana (40kg).

An additional three million Russians are registered as alcoholics with at least 10 million more categorized as 'alcohol abusers.'

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings have occurred in the North Caucasus region, primarily to extract ransom payments, although some have been political. These kidnappings occasionally resulted in the execution of the victim. Outside of the Caucasus region, kidnappings occur with significantly less frequency.

Police Response

Although the government has embarked on a police reform effort, an institutional transformation into something comparable to that of Western European or U.S. standards is still ongoing. Low salaries combined with high costs of living and an over-emphasis on quickly closed cases contribute to widespread police corruption. Professionalism and responsiveness of local law enforcement in St. Petersburg is generally satisfactory. However, individual assessments can differ depending on the particular unit or jurisdictions involved. According to the Prosecutor General's Office, the law enforcement agencies under the MVD account for

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



approximately 90 percent of all crime reports nationwide and are most likely to be the agencies encountered by expatriate travelers.

Police do not need to show probable cause in order to stop, question, or detain individuals. People stopped by police for routine identification checks should remain courteous in dealing with officers and be respectful.

U.S. citizens have been arrested for attempting to leave the country with antique items they believed were legally purchased from licensed vendors. Rigorous searches of baggage and strict enforcement of customs regulations against the exportation of items of "cultural value" can occur. Any article that could appear old or as having cultural value (artwork, icons, samovars, rugs, military medals, antiques) to the Customs Service must have a certificate indicating that it has no historical/cultural value. Travelers should obtain receipts for all high-value items (including caviar). Certificates may not be granted for certain articles, either due to their cultural value or antiquity. Where certificates are required, they may be obtained from the Russian Ministry of Culture.

Individuals are regularly detained/arrested for possession of WWII era weapons, ammunition, or unexploded ordinance, much of it unstable and recovered from nearby battlefields.

Work in research/data collection, including mapping natural resources to support commercial or scientific interests, can result in seizure of equipment/arrest if authorities decide that national security is compromised. Similarly, scholars conducting academic research, particularly at government archives, have been ordered deported if found to be conducting research while on a tourist visa or researching politically-sensitive topics. Likewise, students

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



who attempt to work unofficially (teaching English) are routinely detained, fined, and ordered to depart Russia.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

The U.S. Consulate has received decreasing numbers of reports from U.S. citizens of harassment or unprofessional behavior by police. However, visitors should be aware that the practice of racial/ethnic profiling is common. Police often target ethnic minorities from Central Asia and the Caucasus or those perceived to be ethnic minorities from those regions. Police often support such profiling by pointing to the large number of illegal or undocumented ethnic minorities from Central Asia. Individuals of ethnically African descent are also subject to profiling-based harassment. It is common to see profiling after terrorist incidents or threats thereof. American citizens should report problems with the police to the American Citizen Services Unit at the Consulate.

In the event a police officer does behave in an unprofessional or harassing manner, travelers should obtain the officer's name, badge number, patrol car number, and note where the stop happened; this information will assist officials in the event that victimization occurs. If detained by the police, U.S. citizens should contact the American Citizen Services at the Embassy or nearest Consulate. The U.S. Consulate does not recommend the payment of bribes in any circumstance.

Crime Victim Assistance

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The quality of assistance to foreign citizens varies. U.S. citizens should report all crimes immediately to the police and to the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg.

Due to the limited number of English-speaking police officers, travelers lacking strong Russian skills may have a frustrating interaction with police. Police try to provide English-speakers when possible, but travelers should not assume that one would be available to assist. Travelers are encouraged to locate a friend or colleague who can assist with translating. Experiences of foreign victims in St. Petersburg can vary, depending on the nature of the crime being reported and other factors including one's ability to communicate in Russian with law enforcement.

In the event police assistance is required in St. Petersburg, individuals should call the following numbers within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD):

Fire Department/Emergency Management: 112 / +7 (812) 299-99-99

General police emergency number: 102 / +7 (812) 573-21-81

Traffic accidents: 102

City Police ("GuMVD"): +7 (812) 573-26-76

Task force for crimes against foreigners: +7 (812) 764-97-87

Criminal Investigative Division: +7 (812) 573-21-77

MVD Economic Crimes /Anti-Corruption Division: +7 (812) 573-31-76

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Lost and Found (with police - Zakhar'evskaya 19): +7 (812) 578-36-90

City Tourism Information Office (Sadovaya 14): +7 (812) 310-28-22

City Tourist Helpline: +7 (812) 300-33-33 / 0333

Police/Security Agencies

Police and security services are organized on a federal level. Almost all federal agencies have some representative office in St. Petersburg or the Northwest Federal District. For a detailed description of various police and security agencies within Russia and their general purpose, please refer to the Moscow CSR:

<https://www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=17069>.

A Russian federal law ('On private detective and security activity,' March 11, 1992, No. 2487-1) regulates private detective and security agency activities. An amendment to the law came into effect on January 1, 2010. According to the law and its amendment, no security company can be owned by a non-Russian entity, including a Russian subsidiary owned by a foreign entity, and the law includes restrictions on the use of foreign capital in the firm's operation. Russia agreed during WTO negotiations, however, to remove restrictions on foreign participation in this sector upon its accession. Items used in the private security sector (communication, surveillance, protective equipment) are closely regulated by the Russian Federation.

Medical Emergencies

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Medical care in St. Petersburg can be expensive, difficult to obtain, and may not be comprehensive. Some facilities offer quality services, but many restrict services to normal business hours and/or to members or persons willing to pay for services in advance. Russian doctors often demand pre-payment for medications, x-rays, and medical supplies. Acceptance of insurance in lieu of pre-payment is rare. Most patients pay in cash and apply for reimbursement from their insurance companies upon their return to the U.S.

The Russian national medical system provides emergency care that, while officially free, often ranges from poor to mediocre. Nursing care is not to levels most U.S. citizens are accustomed to, and patients may need to make their own arrangements for food, clean sheets, and clothing.

Pharmacies (Rus: A) are common and frequently offer 24-hour service, although the English language ability of staff may be limited. The Consulate has noted periodic shortages of some types of imported medicine in St. Petersburg. Additionally, travelers from the U.S. have had problems bringing prescription medication into the Russian Federation, even when accompanied by a doctor's prescription. Many types of opiate-based medications used as painkillers in the U.S. are illegal or not available in Russia and pain management remains poorly addressed in the Russian medical sector. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Traveling with Medication."

Ambulance (city government service): 03 (Russian language only)

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The expatriate community in St. Petersburg routinely uses the medical clinics listed here. These clinics have English-speaking staff, maintain staff qualified to provide specialized medical and dental care, and can assist with medical evacuation from St. Petersburg.

Ameda Klinik/German Medical Center

5 Kovensky Pereulok

Tel.: 336-63-75 (M-F 0900-2100; Sat-Sun 1000-1800)

Fax: 336-63-75

<http://amedaklinik.com/lang/en>

American Medical Clinic

Tel.: 740-2090 (24 hours)

Fax: 310-4664

Moika emb. 78

www.amclinic.ru

Euromed Clinic

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Suvorovskiy Pr. 60

Tel.: 327-0301 (24 hours)

Fax: 327-0301

www.euromed.ru

The International Clinic Medem

Marata St. 6 (metro Mayakovskaya)

Tel.: 336-3333 (24 hours)

Fax: 336-3334

<http://www.medem.ru>

International Medical Center "SOGAZ"

Malaya Konyushennaya St. 8

Tel.: 406-8888 (24 hours)

Fax: 406- 8887

www.sogaz-clinic.ru

Skandinavia Clinic (AVA-PETER)

Liteynyy Pr. 55-a,

Tel/Fax.: 600-7777

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



www.avaclinic.ru

Recommended Insurance Posture

Medical evacuation is expensive, costing US\$4,000-\$30,000. The Consulate strongly urges travelers to Russia to purchase overseas medical insurance that includes coverage for hospitalization and medical evacuation. The U.S. Social Security Medicare Program does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs in Russia.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC recommends all travelers have current routine vaccinations and Hepatitis A. Additionally, the CDC recommends some travelers be inoculated against Hepatitis B, Japanese Encephalitis, and/or rabies. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/russia?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The Regional Security Office in U.S. Embassy Moscow established a Country Council for Russia in 2012. While the Country Council is based in Moscow, the RSO in St. Petersburg is available to meet with OSAC constituents about security concerns/questions by appointment. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

15 Furshtatskaya Street

St. Petersburg, Russia

Business hours: Mon-Fri, 0900 to 1730.

Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: +7-812-331-2600 during hours of operation

Regional Security Office: X 2666

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



MSG Post 1: X 6666

American Citizen Services Unit: X 2620

American Citizen Services Email: StPetersburgACS@state.gov

After Hours Duty Officer: +7 812 939-5794

Website: <http://stpetersburg.usconsulate.gov/>

Nearby Posts

Embassy Moscow: <http://moscow.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Vladivostok: <http://vladivostok.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Yekaterinburg: <http://yekaterinburg.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

Travelers should visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>. STEP is a secure, online travel registration that allows American citizens to record trip and residence information that the Department of State can use to communicate and assist enrollees in case of an emergency. U.S. citizens who travel or reside abroad can access this site directly at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about the

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



STEP travel registration website, please email CAIbrs@state.gov.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulates receive occasional reports of fraud committed against U.S. citizens by Internet correspondents professing love and romantic interest. Typically, the Russian correspondent asks the U.S. citizen to send money or credit card information for living expenses, travel expenses, or “visa costs.” The anonymity of the Internet means that the U.S. citizen cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality, or gender of the correspondent. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates have received reports of citizens losing thousands of dollars through such scams. Never send money to anyone you have not met in person. These Internet dating scams include some common themes:

Misrepresentation about the costs and requirements of a U.S. visa,

Claims that airline tickets must be purchased only in Russia,

Use of professional models’ photos taken from Internet web sites,

Sudden financial hurdles encountered when trying to leave Russia,

Requests to send money only through a specific company,

A scan of a (usually fraudulent) U.S. visa to prove intent to travel.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers must remain aware of their surroundings in Russia. Constant vigilance is necessary to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime, political violence, or terror attack. U.S. citizens are encouraged to provide a copy of their trip itinerary to a friend, family member, or coworker.

Men should place their wallets in front pockets, while women should drape the shoulder straps of purses across their body, keeping them visible and under positive control. If you use a backpack, avoid carrying high-value items inside or in easily accessible external pockets.

Travelers should make copies of their passport photo page, visa, and credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information on the back of the credit card in the event the card is stolen). Copies should be stored in a safe location in the event that the original items are stolen. Using the safe in a hotel room is encouraged to protect against theft but is not a guarantee to safeguard your possessions. Travelers should not flash large amounts of money, jewelry, or electronics. Travelers should be cautious when using ATMs; look for evidence of device tampering, illegal card readers, low-profile video cameras, and for individuals loitering in the immediate area. If using credit/debit cards, monitor the accounts frequently and properly dispose of receipts and other documents containing account numbers.

Individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs, and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations after midnight. Individuals should exercise caution and common sense when visiting nightclubs and other late-night establishments. Drinks should

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



never be left unattended, especially when sitting with strangers. Do not accept a beverage in an open or re-sealable container from a stranger or recent acquaintance. It is best not to engage in “shot-drinking” contests.

When entering a residence or hotel, travelers should be aware of individuals loitering near the entrance, lobby, stairwell, and elevator. It is equally important to confirm the identity of persons seeking access to one’s home or hotel room. Individuals should be prepared to call the police to verify the identification of persons claiming to be officials. The St. Petersburg Prosecutors Office identified several recurring vulnerabilities common in most reported residential burglaries and thefts. Among the most common factors in burglaries are thieves disabling poor quality door locks (70 percent of incidents) or gaining entry through unsecured windows or balcony doors on the first or second floors of residences, particularly at night (15 percent of burglaries). The Prosecutors Office noted that the lowest numbers of burglaries target residences that use an alarm (one percent) or buildings with a concierge or similar access control method such as videophones (less than one percent).

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.