



Turkey 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Ankara

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Religious Terrorism; Nationalist; Stolen items; Religious Violence; Separatist violence; Faith-based Organization; Theft; Assault; Burglary; Murder; Cyber; Rape/Sexual Violence; Fraud; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Drug Trafficking; Narcoterrorism; Financial Security

Europe > Turkey; Europe > Turkey > Ankara

3/29/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

Criminal activity in Ankara is low and generally mirrors that of other European cities. There was an increase in crime levels from the 2014 reporting year; much of this rise is accredited to an increase in the Syrian refugee population in Ankara. The vast majority of crime in Ankara occurs among Turkish citizens with robbery, burglary, and vehicle theft/burglary being the most common events. Although violent crimes (sexual assault, rape, murder) do occur, they are infrequent and/or go unreported, and they have not had an impact on the U.S. Consulate community in Ankara. The Regional Security Office (RSO) has received no reports of Consulate personnel being victims of crime in 2015.

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The Consulate's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit documented 12 instances of crimes reported by U.S. citizens in the Ankara Consular District in 2015. Some of these may have been dual nationals and/or residents of Turkey. The crimes included: six stolen passports, two assaults, three cases of domestic violence, and one robbery.

Crime statistics for the Ankara province for 2015 are as follows:

Burglary: 6,160

Robbery: 3,412

Break into car: 4,833

Vehicle theft: 3,265

Homicide: 222

There have been reports about the use of sedatives in sexual assaults and the occurrence of assaults in spas throughout Turkey.

Cybersecurity Issues

U.S. government and private corporate information systems and personal email accounts are susceptible to compromise or cyber attack through social engineering and technological means. Hostile foreign governments, terrorist organizations, criminal enterprises, and other entities with nefarious intentions routinely target authorized personnel with access to official

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and private information systems in an attempt to gain access to sensitive and Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Employees and visitors alike should make every attempt to password protect your personal and employer's information systems.

Additionally, there have been several reports this year of financial Internet scams of U.S. citizens who transfer large sums of money to a "friend" in Turkey.

Other Areas of Concern

There are no travel restrictions in/around Ankara. However, for travel into the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey and borders with Syria, Iran, and Iraq, extra security precautions should be taken. U.S. government employees need prior approval before traveling to these areas.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road safety continues to be an issue, and driving can be a challenge. Although the Turkish government is attempting to enforce traffic laws through the use of automated, camera-based traffic fines, drivers are renowned for their aggressive driving and frequent disregard for basic traffic regulations. In a typical year, the RSO responds to more than 50 traffic accidents

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involving official American personnel and their families. Driving during rain and snow exacerbates the aggressive driving problem due to slippery road conditions and driver overconfidence. During snow storms, main arteries are typically salted and maintained, but side roads can be impassible. Although some Embassy employees sustained significant vehicle damage in accidents, there were no fatalities among the Embassy community.

Vehicle doors should remain locked when parked and left unattended, and valuables kept out of sight from would-be thieves.

Public Transportation Conditions

Taxis are prevalent and relatively inexpensive compared to American standards. Drivers are generally honest; however, many do not speak English. Licensed cabs are metered, so negotiation is generally not required. Drivers do not carry a large amount of change and do not expect a tip but will round up to the closest whole number. Pay attention when making change with taxi drivers. Ankara has had reports of drivers engaging in a bait and switch – accepting a 50TL note, advising then that they cannot change it and then returning a counterfeit 50TL note.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Ankara's airport is modern and located about 35 minutes from the city center. Airport security is not to U.S. standards but includes two levels of screening and limitations on entrance to

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terminals.

Open source media reported that on December 23, 2015, four mortar rounds were fired from a forested area around 2km (1.2 miles) from Istanbul's Asian-side Sabiha Gökçen airport at 2:15 a.m. local time. The bi-pod used to stabilize the weapon was found in the area. Out of the four shells that hit the apron, three exploded close to each other, while the remaining one fell remotely. Shrapnel pieces of exploding shells hit parked planes and airport staff, the investigation report said. A 30-year old airport cleaner died when she suffered a fatal head injury in the blast. PKK-affiliated TAK claimed responsibility amid clashes since July 22 with security forces in the southeast. Since the attack, security at Ankara's Esenboga airport has been at heightened alert status.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There have been violent attacks in Turkey (including against the U.S. Embassy), and the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests, from both transnational and indigenous groups, remains high. Domestic and transnational terrorist groups have targeted Turkish nationals and foreigners for more than 40 years. Terrorist groups include: Kurdish separatists, Marxist-Leninists, pro-Chechens, and al-Qai'da and its affiliates. Since July 2015,

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the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL) has conducted a number of suicide attacks. A majority of actual and thwarted attacks have been conducted by radicalized Turkish nationals.

Turkey shares a porous border with Syria and Iraq and has a contiguous land border with mainland Europe. Until recently, this has provided unrestricted movement and access for foreign terrorist fighters to transit into/out of theaters of operation. Extremist groups and affiliates are present and operating in Turkey and have access to a supply of weapons and explosives originating from Syria and cached in Turkey, enhancing the potential for attacks targeting U.S. and Western interests.

On July 20, 2015, ISIL conducted a suicide attack in Suruc that killed 32 people and injured over 100. On July 24, the U.S. and Turkey commenced air strikes against ISIL militants and their leadership in northern Syria from Incirlik Air Base.

On October 10, 2015, Ankara suffered a double suicide attack by ISIL, resulting in nearly 100 fatalities and over 200 injured – the largest terror attack in Turkey’s history. This act underscored that Turkey was not immune from ISIL.

Open source media reported that on December 30, 2015, TNP disrupted a plot to attack New Year’s Eve celebrations and arrested two suicide bombers who were allegedly scouting the capital’s central Kzlay square and nearby bars. The bombers planned a New Year’s Eve/Day attack and were in possession of explosive material at the time of their arrest.

Indigenous and international terrorist groups operate in Turkey. The bulk of attacks in the last several months have occurred in Istanbul targeting TNP and government institution near tourist centers. Turkey’s most active indigenous terror groups, the PKK and DHKP/C, focused their attacks against Turkish military and law enforcement facilities and personnel. However, on February 1, 2013, the U.S. Embassy in Ankara was attacked by a DHKP/C suicide

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bomber, killing a security guard and causing structural damage to part of the compound. In March and September 2013, the DHKP/C used rocket-propelled grenades to conduct attacks against Turkish government buildings in Ankara. In September 2013, the DHKP/C attacked Turkish National Police sites in Ankara. The DHKP/C has stated its intention to commit further attacks against the U.S., NATO, and Turkey, though Turkish law enforcement actions have weakened the organization. On August 10, 2015, a Turkish National Police (TNP) booth at the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul was attacked by a DHKP/C active shooter, causing some slight damage. DHKP/C views the U.S. as a target and has publicly stated they will continue to do so.

That same day, a complex attack was conducted against police headquarters in Istanbul that took down part of the building. The attack was initiated by a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) that led to a follow-on attack against first responders, where a high-ranking TNP commander was killed. The Peoples Defense Union (Marxist Leninist-Maoist) claimed credit for this attack.

The Kurdistan People's Congress (also known as Kongra Gel, KGK, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK) has been the most active terrorist organization in Turkey; however, PKK activity has almost exclusively targeted the Turkish government. Regardless, the possibility of collateral damage to U.S. or Western personnel cannot be ignored. The U.S. government has designated the PKK as a foreign terrorist organization. The PKK's terrorist acts over the last three decades have resulted in more than 30,000 deaths in Turkey. Since the start of peace talks between the government of Turkey and the PKK in late 2012, and especially since the PKK declared a ceasefire in March 2013, incidents of terrorism and violence attributed to the PKK have declined and were near all-time lows. But, in 2015, the peace talks broke down, and the PKK resumed attacks against the Turkish government, primarily in the southeast. Kurdish youth associated with the PKK have not observed the cease fire, and PKK has clashed with Turkish Hezbollah in parts of southeast Turkey. Also, PKK and other Kurdish elements have been involved in the conflict in Syria with some spillover into Turkey. Terrorism

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and violence emanating from other sources remain steady or are on the rise.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Demonstrations occur periodically in the downtown Kizilay area of Ankara, as well as across the street from the U.S. Embassy. Most demonstrations are directed at the government for internal policy reasons; while demonstrations near the U.S. Embassy focus primarily on U.S. foreign policy issues. Although most protests conclude peacefully, during the course of 2015, the police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse anti-government protestors. U.S. citizens should take measures to avoid demonstrations to the greatest extent possible.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

In addition to terrorist activities, there have been instances of religious violence targeting individuals working as religious missionaries or viewed as having proselytized for a non-Islamic religion. Threats and actual instances of crime have targeted Christian and Jewish individuals, groups, and places of worship in Turkey, including several high-profile murders of Christians over the last decade. The level of anti-Israeli feeling remains significant

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following Israel's 2008 Gaza offensive. Turkish officials expressly said they exclude Jewish people, in Turkey and elsewhere, from their criticism of the government of Israel in the wake of the intervention by Israeli Defense Forces on the Free Gaza Flotilla in May 2010.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Although there have been no natural disasters in Ankara, Turkey is in an earthquake prone region. On October 23, 2011, an earthquake of magnitude 7.2 occurred in the province of Van where more than 600 people were killed and thousands more were injured.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Although Turkey is a modern city, many buildings are not built to Western seismic standards. Visitors should be cognizant of hardened cover in the case of a seismic event.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

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Some counterfeiting of luxury items does occur in some areas of Turkey. Do not buy counterfeit or pirated goods even if they are widely available. Not only are bootleg copies of copyrighted goods illegal to bring back into the U.S., if you purchase them, you are breaking local law.

Privacy Concerns

Precautions should be taken to protect sensitive computer-based programs and operations. It is not uncommon for private corporations or government agencies to fall victim to hackers or other cyber-related attacks regardless of their location worldwide.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Although Turkey purports to be tolerant of other nationalities, political affiliations, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation, visitors should not draw attention to themselves or the focus of persons or groups that are not as open-minded as other Western cultures. There have been instances of negative social media remarks regarding same-sex marriage and negative press with some U.S. foreign policy and Israel/Palestinian conflict in the Gaza strip and West Bank.

Drug-related Crimes

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Turkey is a transit country for a substantial amount of illegal drugs coming from Central Asia and Afghanistan. The PKK is engaged in trafficking and marketing of drugs. The PKK has an established infrastructure and network to produce, transport, and traffic opiates and cannabis throughout Europe. Moreover, material evidence and intelligence sources have shown that the PKK is also engaged in laundering money derived from human and drug trafficking. Therefore, the government believes that there should be a unified front in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism, as the illegal proceeds generated from the illicit drug trade directly support terrorist organizations.

Kidnapping Threat

The threat of Westerners being targeted for kidnap by ISIL cannot be discounted and is very real along the very porous southeast border region.

Police Response

Overall, the Turkish National Police is a professional police force and is responsive to crimes committed against foreigners. Ankara police, who are part of the Turkish National Police, are generally responsive to victims of crime, including foreigners. Although some police officers speak English, operators will generally try to locate an English speaker in an emergency.

Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code makes it illegal to insult Turkey, the Turkish ethnicity, Turkish government institutions, or the founder of modern-day Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Penalties for this controversial article, which took effect on June 1, 2005, carry fines and

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imprisonment for up to two years. There are several high profile cases involving Article 301, and visitors should bear this in mind while conducting business.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If you are a U.S. citizen and are detained or harassed by the police, contact American Citizen Services at +90-312-455-5555 or via email at Ankara-ACS@state.gov.

Crime Victim Assistance

The emergency line (for police, fire, ambulance) is 155. Individuals involved in a traffic accident should call the traffic police at 154. Law enforcement in rural areas is administered by the Turkish Military Police, called the Gendarmerie. They can be reached by dialing 156. For more detailed information regarding victim assistance, please refer to the Embassy website: <http://turkey.usembassy.gov/victimsofcrime.html>.

Police/Security Agencies

There are various police/security agencies within the country:

Employing almost 228,000 sworn police officers, the Turkish National Police (TNP) is one of the largest public sector organizations in the country. TNP is the leading law enforcement

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organization and prides itself on providing professional police and security services to the general public.

In addition to the TNP, the Gendarmerie is a para-military police force, which provides law enforcement services outside of major cities and in rural parts of Turkey.

Medical Emergencies

The emergency number for medical services is 112 (covers all of Turkey). Comprehensive system provides local medical response throughout Turkey; police #1-5-5; fire emergency #1-1-0; medical care #1-1-3

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

High quality medical service is available at several hospitals in Ankara. For a complete list refer to the following Embassy website link. http://turkey.usembassy.gov/hospital_list.html

Güven Hospital (Private)

Address: Simsek Sokak No. 29, Kavaklıdere 06540

POC: Aylin Yaman, MD, O: [+90] 312 457 22 62

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Hospital Switchboard: [+90] 312 457 2530

Baskent University Hospital

Address: Fevzi Çakmak Cd. 10. Sk. No:45 Bahçelievler/ANKARA

POC: Foreign Pt Coordinator: Rifat Peskircioglu

arpeskircioglu@baskent.edu.tr

O: +90 312 2036868 ext.1151

C: +90 532 3217026

Hospital Switchboard: +90 312 2128282/ +90 312 2036868

Alternate

Hygeia Hospital, Athens, Greece

Address: 4, Erythrou Stavrou and Kifissias Ave, Athens

POC: Internal Med - Dr. Cristina Kyriakouli O: +30-210-686-7425

Hospital Switchboard: +30-210-686-7000

RMO (Belgrade): Dr. Michael Mahoney O: +381-11-706-4215 C: +381-65-325-3880

HU POC: FSMP (PA) Tyrone Farias C: +30-694-026-0786 E: AthensNurses@state.gov

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Hospital is sponsored by Harvard Medical School and is the preferred hospital for American staff stationed in Athens.

Available Air Ambulance Services

London Medevac Centre

** Coordinate care thru London HU **; RMO London: Dr. Mark Cohen, MD;

O: +44-20-7894-0506; C: +44-315-664-6275; E: CohenMJ@state.gov

REGA Air Ambulance Service

CH-8058, Zurich, Switzerland

24/7 O: +41-333-333-333;

Ops O: +41-58-654-3980;

Admin O: +41-44-654-3311;

E: ops@Rega.ch

Response: N+4+2

Airframe – Challenger CL-604

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Red Star Aviation

34912 Kurtkoy, Istanbul, Turkey

Ops O: +90-216-588-0216

O: +90-216-588-0216

F: Fax: +90-216-560-0770

E: Ops@RedStar.com.tr

Response: N+X+1

Configs: Jetstream Super 32, Learjet 45; on-board medical crew

Alternate:

London's Air Ambulance

7-8 Philpot Ln., London EC3M 8AA

O: +44-20-7220-5470

Helipad at The Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel, London E1 1BB

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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Visitors should only drink bottled water and not from the public water supply.

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

OSAC Country Council Information

To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Ankara

110 Atatürk Boulevard, 06100, Kavaklıdere

Working Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 17:30 p.m (Closed on American and Turkish Holidays)

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Embassy Contact Numbers

Telephone: (90) (312) 455-5555

Emergency after-hours telephone: (90) (312) 455-5555

SRSO Turkey – Don Jurczyk (90) (312) 457-7014

Marine Security Guard Post One: (90) (312) 457-7221

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

Nearby Posts

Consulate Istanbul: <http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Adana: <http://adana.usconsulate.gov/>

Izmir Consular Agent: Izmir@state.gov

Embassy Guidance

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U.S. citizens should register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP - <https://step.state.gov/>) to ensure that they receive security messages and notices from the U.S. Embassy. Registration allows the Embassy or Consulate to more easily locate U.S. citizens in the case of an emergency.

RSO refers OSAC members refer to Turkey's Country Specific Information sheet for additional information on crime throughout Turkey.
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/turkey.html>.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

The Embassy and Consulates have received e-mail complaints from U.S. citizens about online scams, ranging from fraudulent awarding of diversity ("lottery") visas to fronts for Internet dating and romances to scams about purchasing pets, and were subsequently defrauded of hundreds or thousands of dollars. In particular, there has been an increase in cases of foreigners establishing contact with U.S. citizens on the Internet and over several months building a romantic interest. After purporting to run into an accident, arrest, travel emergency, intention to visit, or other situation, they request funds. Be very careful about suspicious requests for deposits and various types of registration fees. The State Department's International Scams webpage has a section detailing some of the more common scams.

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U.S. citizens sometimes report a particular kind of confidence game in Turkey, mainly in Istanbul, that targets lone male tourists. The con induces unsuspecting men to patronize certain eating and drinking establishments where the costs for food and beverages are hyper-inflated. Generally an inside person associated with one of these establishments, usually another unassuming male, will befriend a target and invite him to visit a bar that he knows. Once at the bar, drinks are brought to the table, and the target is usually joined by one or more females and others who work there. The target is unaware of the costs of food and drinks that are either ordered or simply delivered to the table until after the bill arrives. Since the prices are not clearly marked in menus, patrons generally have little recourse but to pay the final bill, no matter how outrageously high the total is. People who refuse to pay are intimidated and sometimes forcibly taken to an ATM to withdraw money. When dining out, patronize well established restaurants, and if you are off the beaten path, always ask to see a menu before ordering anything.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Although Ankara does not have the same level of street crime as other high-tourist European cities, U.S. citizens should exercise caution and common sense. There are dozens of neighborhoods and shopping areas throughout Ankara that attract tourists and, therefore, petty criminals. Travelers should be aware of their surroundings and keep wallets/purses close to the body.

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