



Pakistan 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Peshawar

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Extortion; Murder; Political Violence; Religious Terrorism; Kidnapping; Academia; Aviation; Nationalist; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Floods; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Drug Trafficking; Disease Outbreak; Diplomatic Missions

South Central Asia > Pakistan; South Central Asia > Pakistan > Peshawar

3/30/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The critical terrorist threat that touches all aspects of life in northwest Pakistan dominates the overall security environment.

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Street robbery, burglary, extortion, revenge and honor killings, political violence, terrorist attacks, kidnapping, sectarian killings, targeted killing of security personnel, military actions, and civil disturbances are common events in Peshawar and northwest Pakistan. Regional organized crime networks (narcotics and other contraband smugglers) are pervasive throughout northwest Pakistan and are often linked to terrorist and extremist activity.

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Following the attack against Peshawar's Army Public School in December 2014, the government launched the National Action Plan, which focused national security assets against militant and, by extension in many cases, criminal activities. While data are difficult to verify independently, the statistics published by Peshawar's Inspector General of Police at the end of 2015 showed a marked decrease in every reportable category of crime and terrorism. In addition to these published statistics, the Consulate's security and law enforcement contacts; Pakistani media; and trusted private contacts all report that Peshawar is a more permissive operating environment now than in the past several years. Several contacts highlight that, in contrast to previous years in which daily explosions were the norm in Peshawar, significant acts of terrorism no longer occur daily. Stores stay open longer hours in the evening, and market areas show more traffic, indicating residents have a greater sense of personal security.

These positive trends -- a reduction in crime and an overall decrease in the incidents of militant activity in Peshawar -- do not mitigate the perilous nature of the threat environment; the coordinated attack against the Badhabber Air Force Base in September 2015 is a recent example. Despite the effects of the National Action Plan and successful police operations, the likelihood of the next "spectacular" or large-scale militant attack continues to impact daily activities.

Other Areas of Concern

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan. The security situation in Peshawar is tenuous at best. Northwest Pakistan, consisting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KP), the provincial capital Peshawar, and the Federally

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Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is a dangerous region for all foreigners, especially American citizens. Pakistani authorities have only minimal control of many areas of KP province and FATA, including the Swat Valley and North and South Waziristan. These areas offer terrorists, extremists, and militant groups a safe haven to prepare, train, and carry out attacks. The FATA and Swat Valley are lawless and should be avoided. Pakistani government authorities restrict the access of non-Pakistani citizens to the FATA and Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Travel requires official permission from the government, and failure to obtain permission can result in arrest and detention by authorities.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road safety is poor due to decrepit physical conditions of road surfaces, lack of basic maintenance, flood washouts, and unfinished roads. Traffic safety is poor, and government regulation of vehicle and bus transportation is ineffective. Weather conditions, particularly fog and smog, cause road closures due to poor visibility. Local traffic patterns are chaotic, with many drivers who ignore common rules of the road operating unsafe, run-down vehicles. There is little to no reliable access to services for breakdowns or repairs while traveling outside Peshawar.

Police and military checkpoints present targets for militants who stage bombings or armed assaults against these outposts.

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Public Transportation Conditions

Avoid the use of public transportation.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Throughout 2015, intermittent news reports highlighted periodic concerns of militant attacks against Peshawar's Bacha Khan international airport. No attack materialized, but the possibility remains an ongoing consideration. In 2014, in two separate incidents, gunmen fired at aircraft on approach to Bacha Khan International airport; one incident resulted in the death of a passenger. Media in 2015 reported that security services arrested the person suspected of shooting the aircraft. No incidents of firing at aircraft were reported in 2015.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Critical

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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The presence of al-Qai'da, Islamic State (ISIL), Afghan and Pakistani Taliban elements, and other indigenous militant sectarian groups, and geographic proximity to the Afghanistan border, continue to pose a danger. Targeted attacks against government officials, property, military, law enforcement, and soft targets (educational facilities) are common. Consulate Peshawar receives reports that indicate IED strikes, targeted assassinations, and bombings throughout the region occur on a weekly basis.

A historical review shows that terrorist incidents rose dramatically from 2007-2010, with late-2009-mid-2010 marking a high point of large-scale attacks on the outskirts of Peshawar. Subsequently, from mid-2012-early 2014, brazen attacks against high-level Pakistani targets in Peshawar rose, despite perceived better security near the city. The summer of 2014 saw a decline in militant activity and a relatively stable period, which was shattered on December 16 when seven Taliban gunmen killed 150 children and teachers at the Army Public School inside a military-controlled area of Peshawar. Following this attack, the government implemented the National Action Plan and focused efforts by the security apparatus on targeting militants and their sanctuaries across the province. As reported by the Office of the Inspector General of Police, this concerted effort captured or killed thousands of militants and seized some 20,000 weapons and thousands of kilograms of explosives.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There were no reported attacks against Western interests in northwest Pakistan during 2015. The threat of violence against U.S. citizens and Westerners remains critical. A minimal Western presence, infrequent movements, and limited engagement with Pakistanis by Western personnel may have made militants' targeting more difficult; or the National Action Plan may have neutralized the threat; or militants may have chosen not to target Western interests last year. Instead, government targets were the most frequently attacked during 2015. Militants, terrorists, and criminal organizations that have historically targeted

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Westerners and Americans for attacks and kidnappings remain active. Although the National Action Plan disrupted militant operations and diminished the capacity of these groups to conduct daily attacks, militants continue to demonstrate the ability to inflict massive casualties in catastrophic attacks.

Threat reporting indicates that terrorist groups will continue to carry out attacks against U.S. interests and persons throughout Pakistan if given the opportunity. Western targets, in particular U.S. diplomatic premises, personnel, and vehicles, have been attacked repeatedly in Peshawar over the past several years:

In 2010, militants launched a multi-phased attack against the U.S. Consulate compound that included several vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and a vehicle ramp that militants intended to use to jump a VBIED over the physical security countermeasures.

In May 2011, a motorcade was attacked with a car bomb in University Town.

In September 2012, a U.S. Consulate motorcade was attacked utilizing a sophisticated surveillance network and a suicide car bomb, resulting in numerous casualties and property damage.

In November 2012, two separate indirect fire (IDF) incidents were directed at the Consulate's University Town housing compound (At the time, no Americans lived in the housing compound); a number of Consulate residences sustained minor damage, and one Consulate guard was injured.

In 2011, there were several incidents that negatively impacted local perceptions of Americans, including the raid in KPK that killed Osama bin Laden. As a result, in 2012, numerous anti-American protests took place, including large-scale protests against the anti-Islamic movie, "Innocence of Muslims." During the past two years, there have been no protests at the Consulate and no reported demonstrations against American interests. Historical evidence suggests that this positive trend could change in an instant following any event that local

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residents perceive as an affront to Pakistani culture or interests.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Critical

Civil Unrest

Planned and spontaneous protests and demonstrations occur, and in 2015, police and security forces controlled these gatherings effectively. There were no significant acts of violence related to civil unrest. Most protests and demonstrations are anti-government in nature, with student issues, utility/fuel shortages, and political grievances as the most common reasons for protests.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

A few religious traditions include marches or parades. In past years, there has been occasional violence specifically associated with these events.

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Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Earthquakes continue to be a concern in the region. In 2015, there were several quakes throughout the year: a 7.5 magnitude quake in October; a 5.9 magnitude quake in November; and a 6.2 magnitude quake in December. Proper stocks of supplies and an earthquake plan are a must for this region.

Flooding is another environmental hazard. In 2015, in the region outside of Peshawar, floods closed roads and displaced families. Government and NGO services are limited in their capacity to provide relief. Regional refugee migrations from flooded areas can quickly overwhelm local resources and result in an increase in communicable diseases.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Inadequate emergency services worsen the consequences of industrial and transportation accidents.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

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Intellectual property rights are openly violated in Pakistan. DVDs can easily be obtained at any video store for a fraction of the legal production price.

Drug-related Crimes

Illegal drug use among the local population is widespread and underreported due to cultural sensitivities. Peshawar has been at the crossroads of trade, including drugs (opium, hashish, marijuana), for centuries.

Kidnapping Threat

Police statistics for the seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province reflected 101 reported cases of kidnapping-for-ransom in 2014 and 51 cases in 2015. No national police database exists, and independent verification of these statistics is not possible. Public sentiment and anecdotal reports suggest kidnapping-for-ransom happens less frequently than in the recent past, even as it continues to be a concern for Westerners and local elites and their families. Kidnapping-for-ransom plots targeting foreigners are reported and usually linked to regional and transnational terrorist activity. Narcotics and illicit goods trafficking and kidnap-for-ransom fund terrorist activities. Other reports note kidnapping of Pakistani citizens for monetary and political motives. Family members who refuse to pay ransoms encounter violence and other intimidation tactics.

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Police Response

A combination of civilian and military forces comprises the security agencies in northwest Pakistan. Security forces are professional; nonetheless, they lack adequate equipment, communications technology, and training. In general, police response to criminal incidents is inconsistent. Police and government forces are common targets of terrorist attacks, and the local threat environment requires authorities to focus on anti-terrorist activity, force protection, and infrastructure security. As a result, police often neglect routine law enforcement work against criminals.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event of police harassment or detention, remain calm, cooperate with police, and insist on contacting the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar or the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

Crime Victim Assistance

If you are victim of crime, report the crime to the nearest police station. Local police and emergency services can be summoned by calling 1122 on any phone.

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The U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar does not have an American Citizens Services section. The consular assistance to Americans is extremely limited, and almost all issues will be handled by the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

Contact for American Citizen Services:

Islamabad: (+92) (51) 208-0000

Karachi: (+92) (21) 3527-5000

From the United States: 1-888-407-4747

Medical Emergencies

Local emergency services can be contacted by calling 1122 from any phone. There is no centralized coordinated ambulance response in Peshawar. The majority of local ambulances are not able to offer adequate care in transit, and first responders have little/no medical certification or training. Due to security restrictions, the Consulate Medical Officer cannot conduct surveys to assess local medical capabilities and cannot verify the competency of any local medical facilities.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Rehman Medical Institute, 5/b-2 Phase 5, Hayatabad, Peshawar

Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Mall Road, Peshawar Cantonment

Lady Reading Hospital, Grand Trunk Road, Peshawar

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

As a result of continued terrorist attacks against polio vaccination teams, a resurgence of polio has been documented in the northwest.

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

OSAC Country Council Information

Consulate General Peshawar does not have an OSAC Country Council. Constituents may direct inquiries to Embassy Islamabad or contact RSO Peshawar directly for consultations by appointment. To reach OSAC's South and Central Asia team, please email OSACSCA@state.gov.

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U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Peshawar

11 Hospital Road, Peshawar Cantonment

Peshawar, Pakistan

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 0800-1630

Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: +92-91-526-8800

Regional Security Office: Extension 8833

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

Nearby Posts

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Embassy Islamabad: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Karachi: <http://karachi.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Lahore: <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

Consular services are not available at the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar. Americans are urged to register with the U.S. Embassy's STEP program prior to traveling and to learn the latest travel safety notices.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Ensure your family knows your travel plans and emergency contact information. Be aware of your surroundings and maintain a low profile. Know how to contact the Consulate.

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Maintain good situational awareness. Always avoid protests and large gatherings as peaceful demonstrations can become violent quickly.

Avoid setting patterns by varying times/routes for all required travel.

Ensure that travel documents and visas are valid. U.S. citizens have been arrested, deported, harassed, and detained for overstaying their visas or travelling with an inappropriate visa classification.

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