



Canada 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Ottawa

Travel Health and Safety; Cyber; Stolen items; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Winter weather; Riots/Civil Unrest; Employee Health Safety; Fraud

Western Hemisphere > Canada; Western Hemisphere > Canada > Ottawa

4/8/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is very proactive and responsive when dealing with all types of criminal activity in Ottawa. There is no evidence that Americans or U.S. government employees are being directly targeted for any criminal activity in Ottawa.

Organized crime is present and centered around drug trafficking and outlaw motorcycle gangs. The OPS has noted an increase in the use of guns in the commission of crimes. Lebanese and Russian organized crime, along with local street gangs, are also present in Ottawa and are mostly involved in the distribution of illegal narcotics and prostitution.

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Cybersecurity Issues

In May 2010, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) released a public memo indicating that cyber threats against both government and private sector industry entities in Canada were the fastest-growing and most complex problems facing the agency. While cyber espionage targeting sensitive economic and national security information from nation-state actors remains a large-scale threat, the threat by politically- or financially-motivated independent cyber actors also remains a security concern. The security firm Websense reported in 2014 that Canada ranked second in the world in terms of the number of malicious web pages designed to harvest personal and financial credentials. Also in 2014, Cisco Systems commissioned International Data Corporation Canada with surveying approximately 500 Canadian businesses and 2,000 employees spanning a number of sectors to determine the overall cyber security posture of the Canadian private sector. The survey determined about 60 percent of Canadian businesses either have no cyber security plan in place or possess one that does not account for increased data consumption and the evolving information technology landscape.

Other Areas of Concern

While the Byward Market and downtown area is an enjoyable area of boutiques and restaurants, low-level criminal activity continues to plague visitors and businesses alike. Drug-dealing, petty theft, and vehicle break-ins are common. Occasional incidents of violence have been reported as well. In addition, aggressive pan-handling has been identified in the vicinity of the Byward Market area.

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Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Normal road conditions are similar to those found in large U.S. cities. Visitors driving in the winter months should expect to encounter adverse driving conditions. Snow plowing, snow removal, and treating of major and secondary roadways is very efficient. Ottawa is a tourist and business friendly city and movement throughout the city and the province of Ontario is unrestricted. Travelers should not experience any security related issues driving around Ottawa or Ontario.

Do not leave valuables in the car. If you must leave items in the car, keep them locked in the trunk. Never pick up hitchhikers.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation throughout Ottawa and Ontario is considered safe and reliable.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

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Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport (YOW) is located 10 miles (15km) south of the city center, and a drive between the two locations takes about 20 minutes. It is the sixth largest airport in Canada and relatively small by U.S. standards yet very efficient. The airport adheres to international air safety standards as does management of flight operations. Security measures are on par with U.S. airports, and the security personnel are well-trained and effective in the performance of their duties.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

In October 2014, Canada's Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (ITAC) elevated its domestic terrorism threat level from Low to Medium, dictating that "an individual or group within Canada or abroad has the intent and capability to commit an act of terrorism in Canada." The next week a series of shootings took place at the Canadian National War Memorial across the street from Parliament. The attacker shot a Canadian soldier on ceremonial sentry duty. He then entered the nearby Centre Block Parliament building at Parliament Hill, where members of Parliament were attending caucuses. The attacker ran inside and was cornered and killed by the law enforcement officials following a shootout with Parliament security personnel. Following the shootings, the downtown core of Ottawa was placed on lockdown while police searched for additional potential threats. At the time of the shooting, the attacker, who reportedly planned to leave Canada for the Middle East, was living

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in a homeless shelter in Ottawa while waiting for the processing of his Canadian passport application. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) the "passport issue was central to what was driving" the attack. To acquaintances and co-workers, the attacker had expressed support for jihadists and others in the Middle East resisting the West's engagement in the region.

The call for self-radicalization, whether disseminated on extremist forums or via social media, continue to be a global concern. It is difficult to determine which message will inspire a violent extremist.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Demonstrations and protests occur regularly and are mostly non-violent, and orderly demonstrations are usually led by workers unions, specific ethnic groups, or student associations. Permits are required for demonstrations, and municipal and federal authorities monitor and are usually present at these events to ensure public order. Law enforcement officers often monitor these protests.

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Religious/Ethnic Violence

The Constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. When there are reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practices, prominent societal leaders often take positive steps to promote religious freedom and condemn intolerance.

Post-specific Concerns

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Public Safety Canada identifies 10 sectors of critical infrastructure (Health, Food, Finance, Water, Information and Communication Technology, Safety, Energy and Utilities, Manufacturing, Government, and Transportation). Canada's critical infrastructure is massive, geographically dispersed, and owned by many players (mostly private sector). Public Safety works with its partners to manage risks and reduce vulnerabilities across these sectors. The National Strategy supports the principle that critical infrastructure roles and activities should be carried out in a responsible manner at all levels of society. Responsibilities for critical infrastructure are shared by federal, provincial, and territorial governments and critical infrastructure owners and operators. Individual Canadians also have a responsibility to be prepared for disruption and ready to cope for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency. Canada and the U.S. share cross border critical infrastructure with movement of people and goods.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), and other Canadian law enforcement agencies are committed to undertaking coordinated action to counter the threats posed by intellectual property crime. According to the RCMP:

Twenty years ago, most members of the public, as well as most police officers, had never heard of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Crime in Canada. Today, the situation is dramatically different both domestically and internationally. Organized crime has discovered that the manufacturing and distribution of counterfeit goods are easy ways of generating huge profits rivalling those in the drug trade but with very little risk of getting caught. Even if apprehended and convicted, there is only a slight chance of incarceration.

In addition to the tremendous losses to government tax revenues and the legitimate economy, recent seizures of counterfeit goods (pharmaceuticals, electrical products, brake parts, and contaminated shampoo and food products) show that unscrupulous counterfeiters care nothing about the health and safety of Canadian consumers. Intellectual property is an important part of the economy, and, as the country shifts toward an information-based economy, intellectual property rights are increasingly important. As such, the priority of criminal intellectual property investigations has increased especially when dealing with counterfeit products that represent a health and safety concern to the consumer.

Privacy Concerns

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There is a relatively low risk to privacy concerns in Canada. The Privacy Commissioner handles several complaints each year about violations of privacy rights. According to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada:

Canada has two federal privacy laws, the Privacy Act and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. The Privacy Act took effect on July 1, 1983. This act imposes obligations on some 250 federal government departments and agencies to respect privacy rights by limiting the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. The Privacy Act gives individuals the right to access and request correction of personal information about themselves held by these federal government organizations. Individuals are also protected by the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) that sets out ground rules for how private sector organizations may collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of commercial activities. The law gives individuals the right to access and request correction of the personal information these organizations may have collected about them. Initially, PIPEDA applied only to personal information about customers or employees that was collected, used or disclosed in the course of commercial activities by the federally regulated private sector, organizations such as banks, airlines, and telecommunications companies. The Act now applies to personal information collected, used or disclosed by the retail sector, publishing companies, the service industry, manufacturers and other provincially regulated organizations. The Act does not apply to the personal information of employees of these provincially regulated organizations. The federal government may exempt organizations or activities in provinces that have their own privacy laws if they are substantially similar to the federal law. PIPEDA will continue to apply in those provinces to the federally regulated private sector and to personal information in inter-provincial and international transactions by all organizations engaged in commercial activities. Oversight of both federal Acts rests with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada who is authorized to receive and investigate complaints.

Drug-related Crimes

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Drug use (cannabis, methamphetamine) occur in parks in the Ottawa area and around the downtown homeless shelters. Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), OPS, and RCMP continue to pursue and arrest those involved in drug operations.

Kidnapping Threat

Parental child abductions between Canada and the U.S. do occur. Procedures for coordinating with courts, establishing jurisdiction, and other issues are prescribed under the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention"), of which Canada is a signatory.

In 2012, the RCMP created a new unit, The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains. The unit will maintain a national database for finding missing people and identifying human remains that will link investigators when their cases match. The database will provide support to police, coroners, and medical examiners and let them compare their findings to cases from across the country.

Police Response

The OPS is typically the primary first law enforcement responder in the case of any emergency. Dial 911 for emergencies and life-threatening situations.

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The OPS is proactive in addressing criminal activity. The capabilities of both city and federal law enforcement agencies are on par with their U.S. counterparts. Police can be relied upon to respond to the scene of crimes in a timely manner. Police agencies and emergency medical services in the Ottawa area, also known as the National Capital Region, have the same capabilities as U.S. emergency services.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Reports of police detention of U.S. Citizen can be directed towards American Citizens Services in Consular Affairs during normal working hours (Tel: 613-238-5335). The after-hours number is 613-688-5249 and the caller will be forwarded to the U.S. Embassy duty officer.

Police/Security Agencies

Federal Police: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is the national police service and an agency of the Ministry of Public Safety Canada. The RCMP is a national, federal, provincial, and municipal policing body. The RCMP provide a total federal policing service to all Canadians and policing services under contract to the three territories, eight provinces (except Ontario and Quebec), more than 190 municipalities, 184 Aboriginal communities, and three international airports.

Ontario Provincial Police: The Ontario Provincial Police is the largest deployed police force in Ontario and the second largest in Canada. The service is responsible for providing policing

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services throughout the province in areas lacking local police forces. It also provides specialized support to smaller municipal police forces, investigates province-wide and cross-jurisdictional crimes, patrols provincial highways (including Ontario's 400-Series Highways), and is responsible for many of the waterways.

Ottawa Local Police: The Ottawa Police Service is the police of jurisdiction in the city of Ottawa, which is divided into six police districts.

Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Ottawa Civic Campus is a full-service hospital including trauma care and air-lift unit. The hospital is located near the downtown area and is easily accessible. Ottawa Hospital contact information is: 613-563-4000.

Available Air Ambulance Services

The recommended air ambulance service is the Ottawa Civic Campus hospital, tel: 613-563-4000.

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Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change produces an hourly Air Quality Index report, which forecasts ranges from good to moderate air quality similar to moderately sized U.S. cities. Ontario has a comprehensive drinking water safety net from source to tap; since 2004 more than 99.9 percent of water quality tests continue to meet local quality standards.

Ontario is home to almost one quarter of the farms in Canada. Farming, to include livestock farming, is a billion dollar industry in Ontario. Therefore, food contamination (microbial, chemical, physical) is always of concern and is regulated by five federal acts that govern food products (Meat Inspection Act, Fish Inspection Act, Agricultural Products Act, Food and Drugs Act and The Consumer Protection Act). In 2008, Canada had 43 cases linked to an outbreak of listeriosis from Maple Leaf Consumer Foods operations in Ontario. A total of 22 deaths occurred during this outbreak. Since 2008 no other provincial outbreaks have occurred.

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/canada?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

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U.S. Embassy Ottawa does not have an OSAC Country Council; however, U.S. Consulate General Toronto maintains an active OSAC Country Council. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Ottawa

490 Sussex Drive Ottawa, ON K1N 1G8, Canada

Hours: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator (613) 688-5335

American Citizens Services: (613) 238-5335

Consular Affairs (613) 688-5361

After hours contact (613) 688-5249.

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Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

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E-mail scams for money, utilizing U.S. military information and bogus U.S. federal law enforcement agencies (grandparent scams), have been identified and reported to the U.S. Embassy for verification.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

U.S. citizens are advised to take the same security precautions they would take while traveling to or living in any major city in the U.S. All visitors should practice sound security procedures, be aware of their surroundings, and re-evaluate daily activities to reduce the chance of becoming a victim. All visitors are encouraged to report unusual incidents to law enforcement.

Always be aware of your surroundings. Avoid short cuts, narrow alleys, or poorly illuminated streets. Travel in groups at night. Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Be wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices. If confronted, surrender your valuables. No personal possession is worth an injury or your life. Keep the door to your hotel room or home locked at all times. Do not flash large amounts of money. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.

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