



Nigeria 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Lagos

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Assault; Theft; Burglary; Carjacking; Rape/Sexual Violence; Kidnapping; Extortion; Oil & Energy; Fraud; Piracy; Aviation; Religious Terrorism; Elections; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Bribery; Disease Outbreak

Africa > Nigeria; Africa > Nigeria > Lagos

4/15/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Rating: Critical

Crime Threats

Crime is a risk throughout the country. U.S. visitors and residents experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, carjackings, rapes, kidnappings, and extortion.

Home invasions remain a serious threat with armed robbers threatening even guarded compounds by scaling perimeter walls, following residents/visitors, or subduing guards to gain entry. Armed robbers in Lagos have invaded waterfront compounds and businesses by boat, using the Lagos waterway as a means of escape.

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Nigerians, U.S. citizens, and other expatriates have been victims of armed robbery at banks and grocery stores and on airport roads during both daylight and evening hours.

Armed robbers have targeted occupants in vehicles; smash-and-grab robberies are common with thieves canvassing stopped vehicles for valuables. The thieves will break the vehicle's window or simply reach in and remove items while a vehicle is stopped.

The mainland of Lagos has experienced periodic, violent clashes among street gangs known as "Area Boys."

Cyber

Lagos and southern Nigeria appear to be an epicenter of identity-related and financial crimes targeting Nigerians, expatriates, U.S. citizens and American companies in the U.S. Victims are frequently targeted by email in advance fee scams commonly referred to as "419 Scams." The victims are asked to provide funds to assist someone in a business or financial transaction for a reward or compensation that the victim never sees. Even if the perpetrator is caught, the money is typically not recovered. Other variations of these scams involve a victim who believes they are in a relationship with someone they have never met in person. As the scam progresses, the victim is asked to provide funds to support this individual. These scams often center on some type of tragedy (kidnapping, major medical incident) claimed by the perpetrator.

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Areas of Concern

The Niger Delta region experiences frequent attacks and other crimes by armed local groups who continue to fight for control of the region's resources, particularly oil. Oil pipeline vandalism is common and a major source of lost revenue; pipeline vandals have also attacked and killed government security forces. Oil theft, known locally as "bunkering," is widespread and adds to the disruption of business. Piracy and kidnapping continue to be of major concern and Westerners, including Americans, have been victims.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving is a major safety concern throughout Nigeria. Although traffic laws exist, enforcement remains almost non-existent. Authorities do not require safety inspections of vehicles. The lack of traffic laws, poorly maintained roads, and unpredictable driving habits add to the risk of travel. Driving during daylight hours is preferable, and driving at night, particularly in remote areas, should be avoided.

Accidents are frequent and often involve fatalities. Many traffic accidents go unreported, and no reliable statistics exist on traffic fatalities due to the lack of centralized reporting. Vehicular

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accidents frequently draw large crowds that may become confrontational. The lack of medical response and adequate trauma facilities is also a concern.

Never leave identifying materials or valuables in a vehicle. Traveling outside of major cities after dark is not recommended because of crime and road safety concerns. Keep vehicles well-maintained, carry a usable spare tire and keep a full tank of fuel. Drivers should try to remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers, if necessary. Be alert for suspicious persons when exiting or approaching your vehicle.

Nigerians, U.S. citizens, and expatriates have experienced harassment and shakedowns at vehicle checkpoints and during other encounters with officials, particularly the military. Always slow down and politely acknowledge police/military at checkpoints. Police/military are authorized to shoot if you do not stop at a checkpoint.

Public Transportation Conditions

All public transportation is considered unsafe, and its use is discouraged. Motorcycle taxis, commonly known as "okadas," are of particular concern. Okadas present a significant nuisance and danger to other motorists with unpredictable driving and lack of compliance with all traffic rules. Okada drivers and even their passengers often become confrontational and violent when involved in accidents. Okada drivers are also known to engage in crime, either as active participants or as means of escape.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Armed robberies and attacks focus on both businesses in the immediate vicinity of Murtala Muhammad International Airport (MMIA) and arriving passengers. In July 2013, a British citizen was kidnapped while being driven from the airport. The victim was released. Security at MMIA has improved in recent years, and airport officials comply with Transportation Security Administration security standards. TSA conducts regular security assessments at MMIA. Travelers can expect to be approached by transients asking for money, sometimes aggressively. Reports of extortion and bribery solicitation attempts by airport officials have also receded but remain a concern.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There remains a significant terrorist threat, particularly in northern Nigeria. Efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime continued to prove challenging due to systemic corruption, limited operational capacity, and an ineffective military. The extremist group Boko Haram (BH) is suspected of, or has claimed responsibility for, most of the terrorist activity in Nigeria. BH carried out kidnappings, killings, bombings, and attacks on civilian/military targets, resulting in over 6,000 deaths, injuries, and significant destruction of property in 2014 and 2015. BH is

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widely believed to be the group responsible for a December 2014 prison break in Ekiti state and a bomb attack at an oil depot in Apapa, Lagos state.

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) experienced bombings in April, May, and June 2014. Several hundred people were killed in two attacks at a busy bus terminal on the outskirts of Abuja in April and May; another explosion occurred at a shopping complex in central Abuja in June 2014. In October 2015, 18 people were killed in two simultaneous bomb blasts in the Kuje and Nyanya areas on the outskirts of Abuja; Boko Haram claimed responsibility for both attacks.

Although there is no indication Boko Haram or any other terrorist organization is specifically targeting Americans or other Westerners, the terror threat continues to challenge business activity and travel.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There were no major protests against the U.S. in 2015. In September 2012, large protests occurred outside the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, coinciding with similar anti-U.S. protests worldwide. There have been several generally peaceful protests, voicing opinion against U.S. foreign policy. Most Nigerians have a favorable opinion of the U.S., and Americans are typically not targeted for their nationality.

Political, Economic, Religious and Ethnic Violence

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The presidential election was held in March 2015 and state gubernatorial elections in April 2015. While politically-related violence during the national election held in 2011 led to the death of 800 people, the 2015 elections were considered generally peaceful despite several reported isolated incidents of violence. Political party offices of both major parties were attacked in January 2015, including two offices of the All Progressives Party office in Rivers state. A People's Democratic Party office was set ablaze in Zamfara state the same week. Several large political rallies were held in January 2015, and although considered generally peaceful, reports emerged of crime and violence during the rallies. Travelers should avoid political rallies and other large gatherings of people.

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Endemic poverty, lack of basic infrastructure (reliable electricity, income inequality, unemployment, a poor education system) generally lead to mass dissatisfaction among the local population.

Protests during election periods are commonplace. In February 2015, protests occurred in over the possible postponement of national elections. The offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission were a common target of protestors in several states including the FCT.

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Several protests were organized throughout 2015 by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in southeast Nigeria as well as in Lagos. The protests mainly centered on the arrest of the groups' leadership as well as their dissatisfaction with perceived inequality against the Igbo community.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Ethnic and communal violence is endemic, particularly in the "Middle Belt" states of Plateau, Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna, and Nassawara. With over 40 ethno-linguistic groups in Plateau state alone, clashes are commonplace, but violence is largely localized. The U.S. Council on Foreign Relations estimates that 785 sectarian-related deaths occurred in Plateau state between 2011 and 2013. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom estimates that over 14,000 Nigerians have died from sectarian violence since 1999, indicating that more Nigerians were killed by sectarian violence than by terrorism.

Perpetrators are rarely prosecuted, and there is a common belief that some of the violence is politically-motivated. Most clashes center on land disputes between nomadic cattle herders and resident farmers. Reprisal attacks are common and lead to a perpetual cycle of violence in the Middle Belt region. Although always a concern for travelers, foreigners are not typically targeted by this inter-communal violence.

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Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Lagos ranks among the cities with the highest air and noise pollution levels globally, largely due to rapid urbanization, limited infrastructure, and a rapidly growing population. These conditions lead to an increased number of vehicles on the road, poor graded gasoline, and the extensive use of loud generators.

Nigeria has two rainy seasons: March-August and September-October. In 2012, Nigeria experienced the worst flooding in many years, which resulted in over one million people displaced and several hundred dead. Many states in the south were dramatically affected, especially those in the flood prone Niger Delta. Additionally, many dams were in danger of failure. Some additional flooding was caused by the intentional release of water in many reservoirs to help ensure their integrity. Road travel is virtually impossible under these weather conditions.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

National disaster management is not effective or functional. The civilian sector's disaster management capabilities are poor to nonexistent. The military provides crowd control during disasters but no systemic medical response. The military has no resources available for mass casualty response.

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Kidnapping Threat

Kidnapping-for-ransom (KFR) continues to be a security concern nationwide and is a lucrative industry. Criminal organizations target affluent, high-profile Nigerians and expatriates throughout southern Nigeria. Kidnapping incidents in the north are more typically ideologically-motivated. Kidnapping incidents are under-reported, and the rate of unconfirmed kidnappings continues to grow.

Several kidnappings involving U.S. citizens and other foreign nationals occurred in 2015.

In February 2015, an American was kidnapped in Kogi state and later released unharmed.

In April 2015, an American was the victim of a home invasion in Ondo state, resulting in the abduction of his wife.

In May 2015, two separate incidents occurred in Ondo and Anambra states involving the kidnapping of Americans.

In August 2015, an American was kidnapped in Rivers state.

In November 2015, five Polish crewmembers were abducted off the Nigerian coast.

In December 2015, two Americans were kidnapped in Imo state.

While none of these incidents resulted in loss of life, substantial resources were used in their recovery.

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Kidnappings have also occurred in the more affluent areas of Lagos.

In March 2013, a British expatriate was kidnapped at night while waiting for security guards to open the gate to his residence on Victoria Island after a U.S.-sponsored event.

In September 2014, two American expatriates were kidnapped in the Niger Delta.

Targeting of average Nigerians for smaller monetary gains has increased in recent years. Criminals know that police are rarely contacted during a kidnapping and that families are quick to pay ransoms for the release of relatives. Kidnappers can be particularly brutal and can be expected to physically assault the victim and those delivering ransom money. The methodology involves extensive planning by the kidnappers who often have some connection to the victim and are aware of the victim's movements and habits.

Police Response

Despite a visible police presence in large cities, police assistance does not have a wide reach. Police response to incidents involving the diplomatic and consular community, although well intentioned, often relies upon transport provided by an Embassy or Consulate staff to crime scenes. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all and provide little/no investigative support to victims. A serious lack of resources (communications equipment, vehicles, skilled leadership/training) continues to undermine the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Usually, victims must maintain close contact to move an investigation forward. Crime laboratories and facilities to process evidence do not exist. Most Nigerians do not perceive the NPF as an effective law enforcement body and have little faith in the criminal

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justice system. A call to police for assistance may result in solicitation of bribes. Criminal groups do not fear arrest or prosecution for their crimes.

Local police and neighborhood associations, including vigilante groups, generally do not deter or disrupt crimes and seldom apprehend or detain suspects. NPF personnel do not patrol residential neighborhoods and numerous NPF officers assigned to private security details for either businesses or individuals routinely ignore any requests for assistance not directly associated with their assignments.

Vigilante justice is common in rural areas as well as cities. Perpetrators of crime are often beaten or burned to death by mobs before police arrive.

Never photograph public buildings, monuments or airports. Some Nigerians may object to having their pictures taken; always ask permission first. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography."

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

U.S. citizens should immediately identify themselves to police and security personnel as U.S. citizens. Under international conventions, the government must notify the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos of the detention of American citizens within 72 hours.

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If arrested, detainees should cooperate respectfully and maintain their composure when interacting with local officials. Normally, authorities do not feed detainees; therefore, individuals in custody must arrange for meals; if no one is available to assist, detainees should contact the American Citizen Services Unit (ACS) at the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate General to facilitate a loan for meals.

Crime Victim Assistance

There is no reliable national emergency communication number. The American Citizen Services unit (ACS) at the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate General should be the first point of contact for assistance. While in Lagos state, travelers may attempt to obtain police assistance by calling 767 or 112. Individuals should inquire at the nearest police station about the contact telephone numbers for that particular station. For additional information, please review the U.S. Department of State Travel Information website, "Help for American Victims of Crime Overseas": http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html.)

Police/Security Agencies

Expatriates and affluent Nigerians employ their own security and utilize armored vehicles for travel. Police officers and other law enforcement agents are frequently hired by businesses and individuals to provide private security. Most businesses employ guard services and many companies offer varying quality of service. As Nigerian law prohibits the arming of private security personnel, police often supplement guard forces. These arrangements can be made

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by your local guard company or at a local police station.

Medical Emergencies

The best health care is available in private and nonprofit medical facilities. However, even these facilities typically fail to meet U.S. standards.

The availability of dependable and safe over-the-counter and prescription medications is a concern. Although local pharmacies are abundant, counterfeit products, including medications, have affected many Nigerians. Visitors should consider bringing a sufficient supply of needed medication. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

All private hospitals and clinics require cash payments before receiving any care. Prices can be quite high, and it is often difficult to withdraw the required amount of money in a single bank transaction. Hospitals may detain patients who have not paid in full or deny services, even during exigent circumstances. For more information, please review the Department of State Travel Information website, "Medical Information for Americans Abroad" at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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International SOS Clinic

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Lagoon Hospital

Modupe Dada, Clinical Manager, dupe.dada@lagoonhospitals.com

8 Marine Road, Apapa

Tel: 08023113522; 07029175512; 08087183137

Dr. Onakoya, Medical Director

Cell: 08034020277

Office: 01 870 7011, 01 628 3812-4

customerservices@lagoonhospitals.com

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www.lagoonhospitals.com

Reddington Multi Specialist Hospital

Dr. Neil Davidson, Dr. Lawani, and Dr. Owabowale

12 Idowu Martins Street

Victoria Island, Lagos

Near Mega Plaza

Tel: 234 0 806 004 5651 or 271 5340-3

info@reddingtonhospital.com

www.reddingtonhospital.com

Atlantic Medical Centre

8A Maroko Close

Off Oyinkan Abayomi Drive

Ikoyi, Lagos.

Dr. El-Harake

Cell: 0803 400 2400

01 7753838

atlantic@nova.to

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First Cardiology Consultants

20A Thompson Avenue

Next to the British Council

Off Glover Road

Off Old Kingsway Road

Ikoyi, Lagos

Dr. Adeyemi Johnson

Tel: +234 (0)803 5250205; (0)17406284; (0)17406285; (0)8082114266

frontdesk@firstcardiologyconsultantsonline.com

The Children's Practice

25 Raymond Njoku Street,

Off Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos

Dr. A.L. Anga

Tel: +234 (0)1-460-1941; (0)1-893-0723; (0)8022235834

info@childrenspractice.com

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Available Air Ambulance Services

For the information pertaining to air ambulance services, please visit:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1470.html#companies

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Malaria is widespread among the local population, and most visitors take some form of malaria prophylaxis.

For CDC country-specific vaccination and health guidance, please visit:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/nigeria.htm>.

OSAC Country Council Information

Nigeria's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Country Council is located in Abuja and in Lagos. General membership meetings of the Lagos Country Council occur every other Tuesday at the Consulate General's Guest Quarters (GQ) facility (6 Queens Drive, Ikoyi, Lagos, Lagos State). Abuja Country Council meetings occur the last Thursday of every month at the Sheraton Hotel (Ladi Kwali Way, Abuja, FCT). Access is restricted to active OSAC members only, so please contact the RSO at the Embassy in Abuja or the Consulate General

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in Lagos before attending the meeting. The RSO can be contacted at:

Lagos: 234-1-460-3514 or at RSOLagos@state.gov.

Abuja: 234-9-461-4175 or at RSOAbuja@state.gov

To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email OSACAF@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Lagos Contact Information

2 Walter Carrington Crescent

Victoria Island, Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria

Consulate Contact Numbers

Regional Security Office: (234) 1-460-3514 Consulate Operator: (234) 1-460-3400

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Marine Security Guard at Post One: (234) 1-460-3410

Duty Officer: (234) 807-550-0167

Website: http://nigeria.usembassy.gov/general_consul.html

Nearby Posts

Embassy Abuja: <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

The Consular Information Sheet for Nigeria provides additional information for any traveler to the country: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_987.html. It is also recommended that any traveler register with the U.S. Department of State: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email OSACAF@state.gov.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

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Situational Awareness Best Practices

Due to the widespread poverty and perception of Western affluence, Americans should take extra precautions when traveling.

Avoid disputes with local citizens. Always be polite and respectful of police officers and soldiers. Avoid large crowds. Be wary of business offers promising large payoffs for little/no investment. Avoid guides and other strangers who may approach you with offers of assistance.

Do not use personal checks, credit cards, or Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). Due to the proliferation of identity and financial fraud, do not carry detailed information about yourself and your finances that you do not need. Carry only the amount of cash that you need and distribute funds among several pockets. Avoid displaying any items of value. If approached by an armed robber/carjacker, cooperate.

All U.S. citizens should remain aware of current situations including curfews, travel restrictions, and states of emergency in the areas they are in or plan to visit. This information is commonly announced by the news media but can change with very little notice.

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