



Jamaica 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Burglary; Theft; Financial Security; Fraud; Murder; Rape/Sexual Violence; Assault; Kidnapping; Cyber; Riots/Civil Unrest; Drug Trafficking; Hurricanes

Western Hemisphere > Jamaica; Western Hemisphere > Jamaica > Kingston

4/26/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Critical

Crime Threats

Crime is a result of many factors: poverty, retribution, drugs, gangs, and politics. While there is no evidence to indicate criminals and gang-related activities are specifically targeting U.S. citizens for violent crime, Americans are the prime targets for financial "lottery scams." Jamaican Locally Employed Staff at Embassy Kingston are victims of crime far more frequently than their American employee colleagues -- a fact attributable to the differing demographics between upscale expatriate neighborhoods and the rest of Kingston in general.

Organized crime elements are prevalent and extremely active. Most criminal activity is gang-related. The police are only able to make arrests in 45 percent of homicides annually, and they only convict perpetrators in seven percent of the homicide cases. This leads both the

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public and police to doubt the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, leading to vigilantism, which exacerbates the cycle of violence. Based on their past experiences, most civilians fear that the authorities cannot protect them from organized criminal elements and could be colluding with criminals, leading citizens to avoid giving evidence or witness testimony.

Although most criminal activity is Jamaican-on-Jamaican violence (often involving organized criminal elements and gangs), these occurrences can impact American visitors. In 2015, the Embassy's consular section received reports from police or victims of seven Americans murdered; 44 Americans robbed; 11 Americans raped/sexually assaulted; nine American victims of aggravated assaults; one attempted kidnapping of an American citizen; six incidents of domestic violence involving Americans; three instances of child abuse involving American children; and nine other crimes (threatening phone calls, lottery scams). These numbers are not all inclusive, as many crimes are not brought to the attention of the Embassy or to the police.

A historic concern that appeared to have diminished in recent years, but which showed a sharp increase in 2015, are incidents of sexual assault against American guests by hotel employees at resort hotels on the north coast. The U.S. Embassy has engaged hotels and the Ministry of Tourism on the need for recognition of the problem, identification/elimination of the cause, and proper procedures for follow-up of an incident.

Home break-ins occur in Kingston, even in gated, affluent neighborhoods. Police are unable to adequately patrol and protect most neighborhoods, so burglaries are quite common. Most wealthy residents hire private, armed guard forces to deter criminals. Burglary is a crime of opportunity. Some past incidents have shown that when occupants neglected to use their security features, it afforded criminals opportunities to gain entry to their residences. A burglar will select a target because it offers the best opportunity to carry out a crime undetected and

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with the fewest number of obstacles. Criminals want to get in, steal valuable portable items, and get out undetected. Burglars can commit rape, robbery, and assault if they are surprised by someone coming home.

In 2015, Jamaica saw an increase in murders but a reported decrease in other serious, violent crimes. It is believed that the rise in murders can be attributed in part to violence perpetrated by gangs involved in lottery scamming. Most violent crimes, including 80 percent of all murders, involve firearms. There were 1,205 murders (the highest figure in five years, a 19.7 percent increase over 2014, an average of 3.3 murder/day), 1,069 shootings, 589 aggravated assaults, 577 rapes, 1,904 robberies, and 1,777 break-ins recorded in 2015. With a population of approximately 2.9 million people, Jamaica continues to have a high homicide rate (40.9/100,000), which places it among the top-five highest (per capita) national homicide rates in the world.

Cybersecurity Issues

Skimming is a hi-tech method by which thieves capture personal or account information from a credit card, ATM/debit card, driver's license, or passport. An electronic device used to capture this information is called a "skimmer" and can be purchased online for under US\$50. A card is swiped through the skimmer, the information in the magnetic strip is stored on the device, and can be downloaded to a computer.

Skimming is becoming more sophisticated where thieves are rigging card payment terminals with electronic equipment to capture the card information. The recorded card numbers are stored in an additional implanted chip for thieves to retrieve later. The criminals skimming are often not the same criminals who use the data to commit identity theft/fraud. The "skimmers"

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will sell personal information to other criminals--typically for about US\$25-\$75 each. Credit cards are a popular choice for skimmers. Personal information can be used to order products/services online sometimes for several weeks before the victim becomes aware. Once personal information is captured, it can be used to make duplicates, which are very valuable, as they can be used to perpetuate credit card fraud or identity theft. Several Embassy Kingston American employees have been the victim of unauthorized charges on their credit cards and were unable to determine where the skimming occurred.

As the use of smart card technology grows, as evident with its integration with driver's licenses and passports, it is likely that skimming will continue to grow as a tactic of identity thieves. Since skimming devices are small and easy to hide, it is not difficult for criminals to skim a card without the owner noticing. Many skimming rings have been known to employ restaurant serving staff. Another common form of skimming involves store clerks skimming a credit card for a purchase. In both scenarios, a card is scanned twice, once for the legitimate transaction and once the skimming device for later use. There have been reports of clerks skimming driver's licenses when they are offered as identity verification.

It is not uncommon for a thief to tamper with an ATM. Typically, a "card trapping" device is inserted into the ATM card slot. This scans the card and stores its information or just traps the card. There is no cash dispensed in either case, and the crooks retrieve the cards and information later. ATM skimming has been a problem worldwide, with estimates that 1 in every 28 ATMs had been equipped with skimmers.

Areas of Concern

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Embassy personnel and private American citizens are advised to avoid traveling into notoriously high-crime areas of Kingston including, but not limited to: Mountain View, Trench Town, Tivoli Gardens, Standpipe, Cassava Piece, Grants Pen, and Arnett Gardens, and to avoid Flankers, Canterbury, Norwood, Rose Heights, Clavers Street, and Hart Street in Montego Bay. The downtown “Hip Strip” of bars, clubs, and vendors in Montego Bay is an area that tourists should be on the lookout for pickpockets and petty theft.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

In 2015, Jamaica saw an increase in fatal vehicular crashes. There were 361 overall fatalities. Driving is on the left side of the road. The lack of pedestrian crosswalks requires special vigilance for all pedestrians. Most roads are paved but suffer from ill repair, inadequate signage, large pot holes, and poor traffic control markings. Roads are often subject to poorly marked construction zones, pedestrians, bicyclists, and, occasionally, livestock. Driving habits range from aggressive speeding and disregard for others to inexperience and over-polite behaviors, creating uncertainty and hazards to pedestrians.

Drivers should maintain special care when entering traffic circles (“roundabouts”), which are often poorly marked and require traffic to move in a clockwise direction. Motorists entering a roundabout must yield to those already in it. Exit points are exceptionally confusing, often making it difficult to determine which exit to take.

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The A1, A2, and A3 highways are the primary links between the most important cities and tourist destinations on the island. These roads are not comparable to American highways, and road conditions are hazardous due to poor repair, inadequate signage, and poor traffic control markings. The B highways and rural roads are often very narrow and frequented by large trucks, buses, pedestrians, bicyclists, and open range livestock. Highways are traveled at high speeds but are not limited-access. Breakdown assistance is limited in urban areas and virtually unavailable in rural areas. Road and street lighting is either poor or non-existent outside larger cities, and nighttime driving is especially dangerous and should be avoided whenever possible.

Awareness and planning can help you avoid becoming a victim of carjackings. Select a safe route. Illuminated and well-traveled streets are generally safe. Have an alternate route in mind in case of problems. Keep your vehicle in good repair and be aware of your fuel level. Travel with a friend when possible – a person alone is more vulnerable. Keep your car keys separate from your house keys. Keep doors locked and windows up. Do not leave mail or other items with your home address in the car. Always be aware of your surroundings, especially people on foot near your car. Be suspicious of anyone approaching your vehicle. If someone asks for assistance, do not get out of your vehicle. Go to a safe location and call the authorities. Travel in the lane closest to the center of the road whenever legally possible. Always leave plenty of room between your car and other vehicles to allow yourself a way out. Know where to go if you think you are being followed/surveilled, but never lead the person to your house. Drive to the nearest safe haven (police station, embassy, hotel, hospital, public facility, etc.). Always be alert for motorcycles or bicycles stopping next to your car, especially if there are two riders. If you are bumped, be suspicious. Check out the car and occupants. If you are not sure of the situation, write down the car's license number/description and signal/wave the other car to follow you to the nearest safe haven.

If you have to exit your vehicle, take your keys and purse/wallet. Park in well-illuminated and well-traveled areas. Look around for suspicious persons and possible hiding places (darkened doorways, etc.). If in doubt, do not get out of your vehicle. Drive away and park someplace

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else. Report any suspicious activity to the authorities. Do not make yourself an attractive target by leaving your purse or valuable in plain view or by placing valuables in your trunk upon arrival. Place them in the trunk before departing your residence. Do not be distracted by talking on the cell phone, eating, etc. Be aware of persons loitering near your vehicle or suspicious persons sitting in vehicles. Be aware of any tampering with your vehicle. If you think your vehicle has been tampered with, do not get in it. Notify the authorities. Do not turn your back while loading packages and/or groceries. If you are alone, ask for a security escort or use the grocery store bagger. Teach and practice with your children to enter and exit the car quickly.

When parking, avoid leaving your vehicle on the street. Park inside a residential compound, in a parking lot with an attendant, or at least within view of your destination. When parking at a shopping facility lot, be sure to park as close as possible to the store entrance and away from dumpsters, bushes, or large vehicles. Use valet parking or an attended garage. Always lock your car and take your keys with you – even for brief errands. Be especially cautious when using ATMs. Be sure to lock your doors, close windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts/valuables in the trunk. Make it a habit to always start your car quickly and drive away immediately. When approaching your parked car, have your car keys in hand.

Prior to any road travel, ensure that your vehicle is in good operating condition, paying particular attention to the engine, brakes, tires, head/tail lights, spare tire/jack, horn, and fluid levels; always carry a first aid kit; and advise someone of your travel plans, including anticipated arrival/departure times and contact information. The following items are recommended for extended road trips: cell phone with charger; potable water and non-perishable food items; first-aid kit; jumper cables; spare tire; flares/reflectors; flashlight; and tools.

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Drivers and passengers in the front seat are required to wear seat belts, and motorcycle riders are required to wear helmets. Extreme caution should be used in operating motor driven cycles. RSO urges all passengers to use vehicles equipped with seat belts.

Public Transportation Conditions

RSO recommends that no one use public transport other than Jamaica Union of Travellers Association (JUTA) or local hotel taxis. Public buses are often overcrowded and a venue for crime. Several serious and fatal accidents take place each year involving American tourists riding in taxis without seat belts.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay is the busiest airport in Jamaica for tourists, handling more than three million passengers. The second busiest airport is Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston, handling 339,000 visitor arrivals and 746,000 total arrivals. Smaller airports (Ian Fleming International Airport in Boscobel, Negril Aerodrome and Ken Jones Aerodrome in Port Antonio) are also in operation.

Terrorism Threat

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Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

While there do not appear to be any extremist groups active in Jamaica, lax immigration controls, porous borders, availability of illegal weapons, and the ease with which fraudulent travel documents can be obtained make the country an attractive target for potential terrorists.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Westerners, and Americans in particular, are generally well-liked and appreciated in Jamaica. Strong bonds exist between Jamaica and the U.S. as a result of tourism to the island and the Jamaica diaspora in the U.S. The April 2015 visit of President Barack Obama was widely hailed by Jamaicans as a strong sign of respect for their country.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Jamaica's political system is stable; however, the country's serious economic problems have exacerbated social tensions and have become the subject of political debate. These include high unemployment (about 13.8 percent), high underemployment, a large public debt burden, and a consistently stagnant economic growth rate. The high murder rate in 2015 has become

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a major political issue for the national elections to be held in 2016.

The two major political parties have historical links with the two largest trade unions--the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) with the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) and the People's National Party (PNP) with the National Workers Union (NWU). The center-right National Democratic Movement (NDM) was established in 1995, and the populist United Peoples Party (UPP) in 2001; neither has links with any particular trade union, and both are marginal movements.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations can be unpredictable in time, place, and intensity. Although protests and demonstrations are infrequent in Kingston, they do occur. Even protests and demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Activities observed in past protests include, but are not limited to: using tear gas, rubber bullets, setting off fireworks, rock throwing, tire burning, road blocks, bus/vehicle burning, and some degree of physical violence between law enforcement and protestors. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. interests are not immune to the effects of these protests.

Post-specific Concerns

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Environmental Hazards

Earthquakes strike without warning. Although nothing can stop an earthquake, preparation/planning can make a difference in protecting your home/family from the effects of an earthquake.

Jamaica is also in the middle of “Hurricane Alley” and has experienced several direct hits from hurricanes/tropical storms. Hurricane season is June 1-November 30. Looting is a common problem immediately after storms.

Due to the potential for business closures during and immediately after a hurricane/strong tropical storm and in other types of emergencies, the Embassy recommends that employees stockpile two-weeks’ worth of emergency supplies (food, water, infant formula, prescription medications, etc.). Make sure you have a can opener and disposable utensils. Do not forget nonperishable foods for your pets. Be sure to have non-prescription drugs and medical supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough/cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins. Stocking water reserves and learning how to purify contaminated water should be among the top priorities in preparing for an emergency. A normally-active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day, but children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more. You will need additional water for food preparation and hygiene. If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period. Food may be rationed safely (except for children, pregnant women, and ill persons). If your water supply is limited, avoid foods that are high in fat/protein, and do not stock salty foods. Eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with high liquid content. Use the canned foods, dry mixes, and other staples. Familiar foods are important; they can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of stress. Try to include

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foods that the family will enjoy and that are high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking are best. Individuals with special diets/allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers, and the elderly. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned dietetic foods, juices, and soups may be helpful for the ill or elderly.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) put measures in place in the event of an emergency or natural disaster.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Despite the diverse ethnic and religious background of its population, Jamaica has a reputation of being one of the least accepting countries toward homosexuality. Public displays of affection between the same sex are uncommon while incidents of violence against homosexuals is not.

Drug-related Crimes

Jamaica is a transit point for South American cocaine to the U.S., Canada, and Europe. It is also the largest Caribbean producer and exporter of cannabis (marijuana). A vibrant

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drugs-for-guns trade also exists with Haiti. The government has a National Drug Control Strategy that covers supply and demand reduction. The government has intensified and focused its law enforcement efforts on disrupting shipments of large amounts of cocaine through Jamaica and its territorial waters. The government also has cooperated in several major international narcotics law enforcement initiatives, which have resulted in the arrest and extradition to the U.S. of high-profile Jamaican, Colombian, Bahamian, and Panamanian narcotics traffickers responsible for the manufacture, trans-shipment, and distribution of vast amounts of cocaine throughout the central Caribbean region.

Kidnapping Threat

In 2015, Jamaica continued to see a significant reduction in kidnappings; however, kidnapping is one of the most underreported crimes. All of the data regarding kidnapping is based on partial crime statistics and can only produce best-guess estimates. Despite the lack of hard data, there is no evidence that kidnapping is a growing problem/concern.

Kidnapping can happen in any part of Jamaica and can be executed by a wide range of players with varying levels of professionalism and differing motives. At one end of the spectrum are high-end kidnapping gangs that target high-profile/high-net worth individuals. Such groups employ teams of operatives who carry out specialized tasks (collecting intelligence, conducting surveillance, snatching the target, negotiating with the victim's family, and establishing/guarding safe houses).

On the other end of the spectrum are gangs that roam the streets and randomly kidnap targets of opportunity. These gangs are generally less professional and often will hold a victim for a short period, often referred to as an "express kidnapping." In many instances, these

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groups hold the victim just long enough to use the victim's ATM card to drain his/her checking account or to receive a small ransom. Sometimes express kidnapping victims are held in the trunk of a car for the duration of their ordeal, which can sometimes last for a couple of days if the victim has a large amount in a checking account and a small daily ATM withdrawal limit.

Those conducting a kidnapping are most vulnerable to detection during the surveillance periods – before they are ready to deploy and carry out their attack. Most criminals are not very good at conducting surveillance. This is the only time perpetrators are exposed to detection. The primary reason they succeed is that no one is looking for them. It is best to spot the kidnapers early and avoid their trap before it is sprung. Ignoring the very real value of critical, proactive measures (situational awareness, surveillance recognition, varying your times and routes, and emergency planning) can be a fatal mistake.

A scam is the telephone kidnapping (virtual kidnapping) phone calls. Although telephone calls may vary in style, the methodology is the same: the virtual kidnapping call includes a crying/pleading voice immediately after the call is answered and before the "kidnapper" gets on the phone. In this manner, they hope to confuse the victim and get them to give away important information. For example, if the crying voice sounds like a child and you call out your child's name, the caller knows the name of your child who could be a kidnap victim and will use this against you. The voice of the "victim" will usually be crying/hysterical, making it difficult to identify and increasing the likelihood that you will believe it is your loved one. Criminals will try to use fear, tact, and timing against you. They may plan their calls to coincide with times when it will be difficult to contact the child or another adult immediately (e.g., when child is on their way to/from school). All calls demand money for the release of the loved one and stipulate no police involvement. Often times, the callers will give statements to suggest surveillance. These are very vague but imply that they have been watching your family and using fear and everyday routines against you to reinforce the threat of the kidnapping. Know the details of your family's travel and location (where are they supposed to be, who are they supposed to be with, etc.). In addition, it is equally important that you ensure good

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communication (land-line/cell phone numbers) with your family members.

If you become the target of a telephone/virtual kidnapping phone call:

Try to remain calm. The vast majority of these calls are hoaxes. The perpetrators are attempting to exploit your fears. If you have caller ID, write down the number.

Ask to speak to your child to confirm his/her identity. This will foil the majority of these calls, as the virtual kidnapper only has the upper hand as long as you believe that s/he really has your loved one. Do not be afraid to ask questions like 'what is my child's name?' If the caller refuses to let you speak with your child and stays on the line (many will hang up at the first sign of stubbornness), ask the caller to ask your child something that is known only to the family. If the caller can answer the question but does not let you speak with your child, this may be an "inside job," and they still may not be holding your loved one.

Do not tell the caller where you live or agree to any money transfer. Never volunteer information.

If you cannot locate your child after the caller has answered the question or the caller actually puts your loved one on the line, it is very important that you attempt to do the following:

Keep the caller on the line as long as possible and have another family member contact the police. If you are alone, contact the police as soon as possible.

Listen and take notes of the demands, tone, or accent of the caller, background noise, and any other information that could assist the police.

Ask for a way to make contact with the caller. If the caller refuses to answer, ask when the next call will come.

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Police Response

Local police assistance is available throughout the island. The Jamaica Constabulary Force is considered to be underpaid, poorly trained, and understaffed. Police support for foreign victims of crimes varies between semi-responsive and responsive due to a shortage of manpower, training, vehicles, and other resources. Although the police receive some training from U.S. and UK law enforcement entities, they endure a lack of funding, resources, and management.

Police corruption and police involvement in criminal activity is not uncommon. Citizens are often indifferent to police authority, adding to a perceived sense of lawlessness. The general perception is that the majority of crime victims do not report crimes against them due to fear of reprisals by the police, the belief that police are corrupt, or the feeling that nothing would come from such reports. Reporting crime can seem archaic, and the confusing, lengthy process is widely believed to be a waste of time except for the most serious of crimes where a police report is required for insurance purposes.

U.S. citizens are advised to cooperate with police if stopped or questioned.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If you feel you have been unjustly stopped, detained, or harassed, request that the U.S.

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Embassy be contacted on your behalf.

Crime Victim Assistance

Jamaica operates a 119 police and 110 for ambulance and fire system.

The Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) can be reached by dialing 119, which connects the caller to the nearest police station. Police do not usually mistreat Americans who are victims of crime, but response times, investigation techniques, and the arrest/conviction rates of suspects are below the standards found in U.S. police departments.

If involved in a traffic accident or victimized by crime, one may be required to accompany the investigating police officer to the local police station to file a complaint or respond to questions. Should a police report be required for an insurance claim, a nominal fee will be charged.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care is more limited than in the U.S. Comprehensive emergency medical services are located only in Kingston and Montego Bay. Medical facilities outside of Kingston and Montego Bay are not recommended by the Embassy medical staff. Visitors in need of medical attention

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should make every effort to reach Kingston or Montego Bay. Doctors and hospitals often require cash payment prior to providing services.

An ambulance service is available in Kingston at tel (876) 978-2327, (876) 978-6021 or (876) 923-7415.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The recommended hospital for U.S. citizens is the University of the West Indies (UWI) at (876) 927-1620. In Montego Bay, the Cornwall Regional Hospital (876) 952-9100 or the Montego Bay Hope Medical Center (876) 953-3649 are the recommended facilities.

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

For air ambulance service (recommended for severe injuries or illnesses best treated in the U.S.), contact AEA International at 800-752-4195.

Recommended Insurance Posture

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Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization/medical evacuation can cost thousands of dollars. For international treatment and medical insurance: AEA International, 206-340-6000.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Additional health information can be found at: CDC International Traveler's hotline – 24 hour information available at 888-232-6348 or 800-232-4636 or at http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/jamaica?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Department of State and Embassy Kingston supports an OSAC Country Council, with a growing membership. The point of contact is Regional Security Officer Michael Rohlf who can be reached at (876) 702-6153 or kingstonRSO@state.gov. 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

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142 Old Hope Road
Kingston 6
Jamaica, West Indies

Business hours for the Embassy are 7:15 am to 4:00 pm, Mon-Fri.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: (876) 702-6000

The operator can assist U.S. citizen in contacting the American Citizen Services (ACS) officers in the consular section.

U.S. Marine Security Guard: (876) 702-6055

After business hours and on weekend and holidays, the U.S. Embassy Marine Security Guard can assist U.S. citizen travelers in contacting the embassy's Duty Officer for assistance with their emergency. The Marine Security Guard is there to assist in emergency situations only.

Regional Security Office: (876) 702-6153 or through the Marine Security Guard

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

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Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Criminal elements victimize American citizens through lottery scams. These criminal elements, posing as legitimate lottery companies, have convinced unsuspecting Americans to send large amounts of money to obtain claimed lottery winnings. This lottery fraud/scam operates predominantly from the north coast at/near tourist resort areas. Persons organizing these scams may be obtaining personal information on tourists and using it to conduct their operations.

In addition to a number of lottery and investment scams, relatives of U.S. citizens visiting Jamaica and U.S. citizens who are prisoners in Jamaica have received telephone calls from people claiming to be police officers, other public officials, or medical professionals. The caller usually states that the visitor/prisoner has had trouble and needs financial help. In almost every case, these claims are untrue. The caller insists that money should be sent by wire transfer to themselves or to a third party who will assist the visitor or prisoner, but when the money is sent, it fails to reach the alleged in-need visitor/prisoner. Do not send money if you receive such a call.

The Embassy also received several reports of Americans being victimized in extortion attempts originating in Jamaica where a caller threatens the victim if they do not send a sum of money.

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Another financial scam reported is the “Damsel in Distress” where a partner met over the Internet falls into a series of unfortunate events and needs money with the promise of rewards at a later date (such as an in-person meeting).

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Simple precautions may help to mitigate the numbers of crimes committed against Americans. Visitors should always be aware of their surroundings. Always try to travel in groups. Inform family of your daily plans and how to get in contact with you. Maintain a low personal profile. Avoid chokepoints. Know how to recognize surveillance. Do not wear expensive jewelry or carry expensive bags/briefcases. Avoid walking around at night. Avoid conversations with beggars, as they can easily become confrontational. Try to find a restaurant seat in an area not clearly visible from the street.

Vary daily routines; try to avoid predictable patterns when departing/arriving from/to your home. When you are leaving/entering your home, be aware of your surroundings and of anyone who may be in the immediate vicinity and report them to the police. When you leave/enter your residence, physically check that the door is secured. This is especially important for garage doors. When away, make your residence look occupied. Use timers for lights, radios, and TVs. Do not let newspapers pile-up. Do not place a note on the door that reveals that your home is unoccupied. If you plan to be away from your residence for more than 24 hours, ask a trusted colleague/neighbor to keep an eye on your property. Consider leaving a copy of your keys with them in case of an emergency. Tell them of your travel plans and when you plan to return. Maintain control of your keys. Do not leave keys in the locks for convenience. Never hide a spare key to your residence under a mat, in your mailbox, or near

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an entrance to your residence. Hide your car keys in the house (criminals have been known to burglarize homes and drive away in the occupant's vehicle).

If you need to use an ATM, use one inside the mall or some other well-illuminated, populated area. To protect against skimming, closely watch anyone who you give your card to for processing. If possible, do not let them out of your sight. If a clerk makes a hard copy, retrieve the carbons. Keeping a low limit on your credit cards restricts the amount of money that thieves can steal. Although not a prevention tactic, it will help if you fall victim. Sign all credit cards immediately upon your receipt of them. You can also write "Check ID" so that the clerk should ask for ID for verification during a transaction. Cancel all credit cards that you do not use and monitor the ones that you do use. Prior to inserting your ATM card, check the card reader to make sure that it looks appropriate and unaltered. When at an ATM, cover the key pad when entering your PIN. Do not leave receipts at ATMs, teller windows, gasoline pumps, or with a clerk. Some people make it easy for criminals by writing the PIN to their credit/debit card on something in their wallet or even on back of the card itself. Commit the PIN to memory. Keep a record of all your credit/debit card numbers in a safe place at home so you can report lost or stolen cards by their numbers.

When shopping, stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you. If shopping near your home, consider returning home to drop off gifts. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a credit card whenever possible. Carry your keys, cash, and credit cards separate from each other. Remember exactly where you parked your car. Be aware of your surroundings as you come and go from your car. Do not be shy about asking mall or store security personnel for an escort. Teach children to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated. Have a family "code word" in case you get separated. This word can be given to security staff so that your child can discern friend from foe.

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For residential security, use all security features (the entire residential security system) to ensure the highest degree of protection. Know who belongs and does not belong in your neighborhood. Do not keep valuables, heirlooms, passports, important documents, or large sums of money in your residence. If a safe is available in your office, use it. Only keep in your residence items you can afford to lose. If you do not have access to a safe or lockable cabinet at work, consider investing in a home safe that is placed out of sight. Make an inventory of personal property, record the serial numbers, take photographs of all valuable items, and ensure these items are covered under your home insurance policy. Keep a second copy of this information in your office. If a disturbance occurs in the vicinity of your residence, ensure that doors, windows, and grilles are secured, stay away from windows, and alert the police. It is recommended that you store emergency contact numbers in your cell phone (with the prefix "AA" in front of the name so they will be the first two numbers posted alphabetically in your phone book). Post emergency numbers next to all landlines in the home. Blinds, drapes, and curtains should be arranged so that movement within the house is not easily observed from the street. Get to know your neighbors. Keep an eye on your neighbors' homes. Play the "what if" scenario game with family members. Rehearse safety drills and be aware of procedures to escape danger and obtain help. Teach them how to properly lock and unlock doors, gates, and grilles. Inform them who to contact and how to contact help in an emergency. Develop a simple easy-to-follow plan. Know the neighborhood name, street name, and the actual number to your house to help expedite an emergency response.

Lock all doors, windows, and garages when you are home and away. There have been incidents where intruders have entered an unsecured door while the occupant was at home. Additionally, secure all sliding glass doors and never leave doors or windows open when you are sleeping (unless you have locked grilles). Periodically examine your padlocks, grilles, and other security features for signs of tampering. Criminals have been known to visit a residence over an extended period to cut through locks or grilles little-by-little, minimizing the overall noise they make and the time it takes them to gain entry. Garage doors are a frequent point of entry for many burglars. If you store bicycles in the garage, remember to chain lock them. You should also ensure that your vehicle is secured and that there are no valuables left in it. If you have window grilles and bars, review fire safety plans for escaping your home with your family. Learn how to operate the emergency escape devices. Do not block bedroom windows

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used for emergency egress. Keep at least one good fire extinguisher on each floor, especially in the kitchen. Learn and show family members and domestic help how to use an extinguisher. Keep flashlights in several areas. Check the batteries often, particularly if you have children. Make sure smoke detectors are tested and that the batteries have been changed. Each entrance and each perimeter façade should be well illuminated. Use all porch/perimeter lighting in the evenings and during the night. Check lighting regularly and replace burned out exterior security lighting. If you have a residential alarm, use it. Be sure family members know how to use it. Learn how to operate your alarm system, including the different securing modes. Each system comes with a panic code capability. These systems are battery powered, so it is important to be able to tell when these need to be changed. If your alarm is triggered, immediately lock yourself inside your designated safe haven. Notify the police. DO NOT leave this area until you are satisfied that the situation is all clear. Do not leave codes/passwords by the keypad. Keep them hidden so they cannot be used by an intruder.

Make sure you are confident about who you are allowing into your home. Personnel are urged not allow anyone access to your residence that you are not expecting/know. Unannounced/unidentified visitors should not be admitted into the home. Use your door viewer to identify visitors. If you do not have a door viewer, you should think about having one installed. Speak with them through the door. If they claim to be policemen or other officials (from maintenance, a utility company, a survey company), ask them to show their identification and ask for their supervisor's name and telephone number. This also applies to a person who requests to make an emergency call. Offer to make the call for them. Some burglars will operate in pairs. One will try and stall you at the front door, while the other is looking for another way to get into your residence.

When choosing domestic staff, remember that they can aid or detract from the security of your household. You should try to find someone used previously by other expatriates. Conduct police and reference checks on all domestic staff before you make a hiring decision. Ensure that your domestic employees are aware of proper security practices. This should be

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rehearsed and re-briefed from time to time. Make sure that children and domestic staff are also briefed on how to answer a door. Instruct domestic staff that no one is to enter your residence without your permission. Go over proper telephone answering procedures. They should never give a caller the impression that nobody is home or tell the caller when you are expected home. They should be instructed to say that you are busy and will return the call, taking the caller's name and phone number. Instruct them not to answer questions from strangers concerning your family. Do not give a copy of a key to the guard/domestic help. If you must give a key to your domestic help, only give one key (each exterior door should have two locks). Get all keys back after terminating employment. Advise them not to carry your keys in their purses or backpacks. Thieves have been known to target personnel who work in affluent neighborhoods in an effort to obtain keys for easy access to homes. This will also prevent you from having to pay for re-keying the locks if their purse is stolen. Monitor their activities from time to time. Suspicious activity on the part of domestic staff should be reported to the police. Ensure they know how to reach you or emergency personnel by phone. Make sure they know to report to you all suspicious or unusual activity. Domestic staff should not be allowed to overhear family or official plans. Letters and business information should not be left unsecured in the residence.

Never volunteer name, address, or telephone number to an unknown caller. All family members should memorize telephone numbers for emergency use and know how to use the local telephones. Establish a family code word for use in emergencies. Every member of your family should know how to request the assistance of local police, fire department, ambulance, or other emergency services. Any unusual occurrences, such as anonymous phone threats or harassing calls, should be reported to the police. Home telephones around the world – possibly in Jamaica -- have been tapped.

We strongly caution that resisting an assailant or attempting to flee may place you in great danger. Your personal safety – not the potential loss of property – must always remain the primary concern. Resistance to the robber's demands, especially if he has or says he has a

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weapon, may escalate the situation and increase the risk of personal harm. Your best course of action is to plan ahead and be prepared.

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