



Security Message for U.S. Citizens: Luanda (Angola), Developing Crime Trends

Crime

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U.S. Embassy Luanda, Angola
Security Message: Developing Crime Trends
April 29, 2016

The U.S. Embassy informs U.S. citizens in Angola that crime continues to be a serious problem in Luanda. This security message highlights some developing crime trends and includes suggestions on how U.S. citizens can keep themselves and their families safe. Recently, several foreigners have been kidnapped and held for ransom in and near Luanda. On March 30, 2016, a Lebanese-Belgian citizen was kidnapped by unknown armed gunmen while driving near his home in central Luanda, and later released for ransom. On April 18, two Chinese citizens were kidnapped in Kilamba after they were removed from their vehicle by three gunmen. On April 20, a French citizen was kidnapped by gunmen while being driven by his chauffeur near the Sogester dry port facility in Viana, and was released three days later for ransom. There is speculation that all three of these abductions were carried out by the same group. We are also monitoring the murder of two Portuguese citizens on the night of April 26 in Viana.

The Angolan authorities are committing significant resources to this problem. Relative to the region, Angola has had very few kidnappings for ransom in recent years. The best way to avoid kidnapping is to be an unappealing target. You are most vulnerable while in transit. When driving, do your best to leave room to maneuver. Keep music off or at a reasonable level and maintain awareness of your environment beyond what is immediately in front of you. Vary your routes and travel times. If you are unable to change the route completely, alter the manner in which you drive, including adult passengers and alternating drivers when possible, and vary the times when you go to and return from your commute. You should also review your routine for how you enter your residence. Do not fumble for keys or linger outside an open vehicle gate. Where it takes time for local guards to open the gate at residences, use that time to observe your surroundings and remember to drive away if you see something

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odd. These same techniques can be used when visiting sites other than your residence (meeting places, grocery stores, restaurants, etc.). Always keep a charged cell phone and/or other communication device with you. Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. When possible, travel in a group -- in this region, an individual driving alone is more likely to be kidnapped than a group in a vehicle.

The Embassy also reiterates that U.S. citizens should be aware of their environment and the potential for violent crime. Violent crime is more common at night than during the day, but vigilance is required at all hours. If you choose to walk, you are in greater danger than if you drive. If you do walk, minimize the risk of an attack by traveling in areas with which you are familiar, remain aware of your surroundings (i.e. do not listen to music or text), and walk confidently and attentively with your head up. Observe the people around you and walk a route that creates space. To the extent possible, avoid doorways, bushes, alleys, and poorly lit areas. Switch sides of the street when prudent. Walk in groups when possible and have a plan before you are confronted. If confronted, comply with demands and give up your items unless you feel resistance is the only way to avoid grave danger. As soon as possible, move to a safe area, make contact with your employer or family, and write down or make a mental note of everything you remember about the incident. While the recent kidnappings for ransom have involved abduction from vehicles, there is no reason to believe that individuals walking would be any less at risk of abduction.

Review your personal security plans; remain aware of your surroundings, including local events; and monitor local news stations for updates. Maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance your personal security and follow instructions of local authorities.

For further information:

- See the **State Department's travel website** for the **Worldwide Caution**, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and **Country Specific Information for Angola**.
- Enroll in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Angola, located at Rua Presidente Houari Boumediene, 32, Luanda, Angola, at (244) 222-641-000, (244) 222-445-481, 222-445-727, or 222-446-096, After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is (244) 923-404-209 or (244) 923- 640-154.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday

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