



Mexico 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Hermosillo

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Murder; Rape/Sexual Violence; Burglary; Fraud; Financial Security; Narcoterrorism; Cyber; Cargo Security; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hurricanes; Earthquakes; Kidnapping; Extortion; Bribery; Employee Health Safety

Western Hemisphere > Mexico; Western Hemisphere > Mexico > Hermosillo; Western Hemisphere > Mexico > Mazatlan

5/10/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo Consular District covers only the southern two-thirds of the state of Sonora and the whole state of Sinaloa. Although Hermosillo is the main focus of this report, Sinaloa state is included in the U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo Consular District. Please see the OSAC Crime and Safety Report for Nogales Mexico for information about the security and safety situation in northern Sonora.

Hermosillo, in Sonora state, is approximately 220 miles south of Tucson, Arizona. Sonora is a relatively prosperous state with strong cross-border economic and social ties. Hermosillo is the economic and political capital of Sonora and the state's academic and research center, hosting a number of universities. Hermosillo is also the county seat (or municipio), Municipio de Hermosillo. According to the 2010 census, the population of the city was 715,061 inhabitants, with 784,322 inhabitants for the municipio as a whole.

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Mazatlan has a well-established American expatriate population. Many tourists stay for more than two months to a year. A large contingent of tourists visit Mazatlan primarily via cruise ships, for varying amounts of time. Major cruise lines have resumed ports of call to Mazatlan as of November 2012. The peak tourist season is October-March. Mazatlan experiences economic crimes like many Mexican resort destinations.

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Violent crime in Sinaloa, particularly the illegal drug trade, continues to be much higher than that of Sonora in recent years. Armed robbery, drug-related homicide, rape, burglary, vehicle theft, theft from vehicles, credit card fraud, and petty crime occur. While Mexico employs strict gun-control laws, thieves and robbers are usually armed with knives or handguns. But, the overall crime and safety situation in Hermosillo varies depending upon location.

There is no evidence to indicate that criminals are specifically targeting U.S. citizens or the U.S. private sector. Criminals select victims based on an appearance of vulnerability, prosperity, or inattentiveness. Within the Consulate community, Mexican employees fall victim to crime far more frequently than their American colleagues do because American staff are constantly trained and reminded to remain alert and aware of their surroundings when working and living in an overseas environment and to not display signs of wealth, American staff live in alarmed housing in gated upper-class residential areas with gate attendants on duty, etc.

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Based on surveys and research conducted into law enforcement, approximately 75 percent of crimes in Mexico go unreported (some reports suggest percentages as high as 90 percent). Therefore, reported national crimes statistics should be used more as trend analyses and not as statistically representational. Official crime statistics for 2015 have not yet been released, but links are provided below to what is available for 2015 and previous years. Below are several significant crime events in Sonora and Sinaloa and maps of significant crime events. (see map)

Burglaries occur at different levels throughout various areas of the city and district. Do some research prior to buying or leasing a residence. Burglars usually attempt break-ins when no one is home, avoiding confrontation and violence if possible.

Hermosillo is not spared from the narco-related violence seen throughout Mexico. In general, this violence is targeted at those involved in the illegal drug trade or at those opposing it. In 2015, Hermosillo experienced several narco-related acts of violence or other violent incidents related to organized crime. Moreover, these incidents demonstrate that organized criminal groups continue to operate in Hermosillo.

In 2015, Hermosillo experienced several instances of criminal violence in which shootings on public streets, at commercial establishments, and in residential areas led to deaths. While those affected most by this type of violence are normally in some way associated with the illegal drug trade, or in fighting it, there is the potential for innocent bystanders to be injured or killed.

Sinaloa witnessed a slight increase in violent crime in 2015 (but vehicle theft saw a significant decrease). Criminal groups loyal to Beltran Leyva's organization continue to control parts of

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northern Sinaloa, including an alliance with Los Zetas and the Carillo Fuentes group. Around Mazatlan, different groups (Beltran Leyva, Los Zetas, groups moving north from Nayarit) are in conflict with the Sinaloa Cartel. Sinaloa remains among the top states in Mexico for Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) violence. Some analysts have argued that the January 2016 capture of “El Chapo” in Los Mochis (Sinaloa) may destabilize the region and lead to more violence.

Organized crime occurs on virtually a daily basis involving drug trafficking organizations, but there is no evidence to indicate that U.S. citizens or the U.S. private sector are specifically targeted for violence.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cloning or counterfeiting debit/credit cards occurs in Mexico. Travelers are encouraged to plan their cash needs in advance, using only reputable ATMs in secure areas. Fraud consists of either running a double charge when payment is made or skimming (digitally copying the information) the card to create a cloned card for use at a later time. Large stores have all had cloning cards problems. U.S.-based chain restaurants are also locations for these crimes.

Other Areas of Concern

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City updates its travel policy and the Travel Warning periodically in response to the security situation throughout the district. The current Travel Warning for

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Mexico can be found here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html>

Because of the high level of crime and drug-related violence in Sinaloa, it is the Consulate's policy that all official vehicle travel to/in Sinaloa be performed in armored vehicles (with the exception of Mazatlan). Due to extreme threats of violence along Highway 15 between Estacion Don and Guamuchil, all official travel through this area is prohibited without specific approval from the Regional Security Office. The one exception to this policy is official travel within the city limits of Mazatlan. U.S. government personnel are permitted to use taxis and non-armored vehicles (vehicle rental, transportation provided by local contacts) within the city limits of Mazatlan. The Consulate does not allow personal travel for U.S. government personnel to/in Sinaloa with the exception of Mazatlan. U.S. government personnel are permitted to fly in/out of Mazatlan and are advised to limit movement to the tourist areas of the Zona Dorada and the Historic Central Downtown.

Due to increased security concerns in southern Sonora, all official U.S. government travel in Ciudad Obregon is performed using armored vehicles. All official travel by personnel from Consulate General Hermosillo to/in the Nogales Consular District must also be in an armored vehicle. There is one exception – travel along the Highway 15 toll way (cuota). Official and personal travel between Hermosillo and the international border on Highway 15 and travel from Highway 15 to/from U.S. Consulate General Nogales in non-armored vehicles is permitted during daylight hours only. Personal vehicular travel south of Ciudad Obregon by U.S. government personnel is limited to daylight hour travel to Alamos on the Highway 15 toll way (cuota) and State Road Sonora 162. No personal travel of any kind is allowed south of Navojoa. Travel to the mountainous areas in eastern Sonora is prohibited. In general terms, this applies to all travel east of the north-south line from Nacozeni de Garcia through Moctezuma through Arivechi through Rosario and ending in Alamos.

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Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving in Hermosillo requires vigilance and a defensive attitude. Local drivers are not uniformly well experienced and often have cars that are poorly maintained or in bad repair. Be alert for vehicles moving slower than the rest of the traffic flow and for vehicles speeding through traffic signals at the last minute. Minor steering mistakes that can normally be corrected on a road with wide and level shoulders often cause drivers to lose control and flip their vehicles. Additionally, be aware of vehicles without lights at night. Road signage and traffic lights are improving but are not always clear, contributing to hazardous driving conditions. Road damage is not always quickly repaired, leaving potholes that can damage your car or cause drivers to swerve into your lane or brake unexpectedly. Drivers should give a wide berth to public buses, which are not known for their safety. U.S. citizens are commonly involved in fatal traffic accidents on the highways in Sonora and Sinaloa. Speed, nighttime travel, unfamiliarity with the road, and other factors contribute to this. Animals, slow moving trucks/buses, and inexperienced local drivers contribute to the number of vehicle accidents as well.

During the rainy summer months, localized flash flooding may occur on many of the main and side streets in Hermosillo, leaving many vehicles stalled in the middle of the streets and intersections. Drivers should avoid driving if possible during heavy rain storms.

Travelers should avoid nighttime travel and use inter-city toll highways. Toll roads are called cuotas and are indicated by the capital letter "D" printed below the highway route number on

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area maps. Plan your route ahead of time and try to purchase fuel at gas stations in cities you travel through. Carry enough local currency for tolls and emergency needs. There have been incidents of road-side robberies in Sinaloa and Sonora. These predominately occur after dark, especially in Sinaloa between Los Mochis and Guasave.

In 2015, there were numerous reported incidences of road-side robberies in Sonora and Sinaloa. These occur throughout the year, with a seasonal increase just before and around major holidays (Christmas, Easter) when “paisanos” visit their families, bringing money and merchandise from the U.S. Reports from Sinaloa are that road-side robberies are taking the form of carjackings to acquire vehicles. Victims have also reported having their license and registration information recorded by the carjackers with threats to track the victims down if they file reports with the police. These robberies and carjackings have occurred on main roads (including the Federal Highway 15 toll road) and secondary roads. Northern Sinaloa, especially between Los Mochis and Guasave, is an area where high concentrations of criminal activity have occurred with the majority taking place after dark. One individual reported having his full-size pick-up truck carjacked on the state highway between Los Mochis and El Fuerte in Sinaloa. The vehicle was equipped with a tracking device, but police refused to retrieve the vehicle due to the remoteness and insecurity of the location. This incident is typical in northern Sinaloa, where carjackings seem commonplace with either few reports to the police or police inability to pursue the criminals. Targeted vehicles tend to be large SUVs and pick-up trucks.

An additional concern while traveling Highway 15, in both states, is the prevalence of livestock on the highway. Livestock has been identified by the transport industry and public authorities as a significant problem especially at night. On several occasions authorities of the Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT) have built fences, which have been dismantled by criminals who sell the scrap metals and materials.

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The military has increased its presence in many regions as part of a nationwide effort to deal with the drug-related violence plaguing certain parts of the country. Military checkpoints are likely to be encountered more frequently when traveling by road. Police set up various administrative checkpoints in the cities (speed control, drunk driver checks), and along the highways (vehicle registration checks). These are in addition to checkpoints to control for criminal activity. On Christmas and holidays, the alcohol checkpoints increase. The following general guidelines are recommended when encountering a military or police checkpoint:

If approaching the checkpoint at night, dim your headlights and only keep your parking lights on. This will make it easier for the soldiers/police officers to observe and identify you as a non-threat without being blinded by the headlights. Slowly turn on the vehicle's interior light.

Do not attempt to make a U-turn or other vehicle maneuvers to avoid the checkpoint.

Maintain a safe speed and be aware of possible pedestrians near the checkpoint.

Follow the soldier's/police officers instructions regarding if/where you should stop.

Be prepared to present identification.

Be courteous. The soldiers/police are just doing their job.

If it becomes necessary, you can request to speak to their superior.

Leaving items of value in a car can trigger a break-in, even when left for only a few minutes and in public view. If possible, leave valuables (especially laptops and other small high value electronics) at home or when possible lock them in the trunk prior to pulling over to park. Do this to prevent someone from observing you hiding items once you stop. If your spare tire is mounted on the outside of the vehicle, secure it with chain/padlock or similar device. Replace one lug nut on each wheel with a specially-keyed bolt that locks or can only be removed with a special attachment to the tire iron. One might consider purchasing and using a steering wheel locking device. The installation of a car alarm is strongly recommended to protect the

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contents of a vehicle from theft. Theft of the vehicle's operating computer and car sound systems is a common crime. If you purchase a car radio, look for models that can be removed from the dash and locked in the trunk. "Sterilize" your vehicle by not keeping valuable items in your vehicle or storing anything that would entice a thief out of plain view.

It is common for people to approach your vehicle asking for directions or change, giving out flyers, or selling flowers/goods. You should be suspicious of them and ensure your doors are locked and windows up far enough in case they are not well-intentioned. When stopped in traffic, leave enough distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you, so you can pull away quickly if necessary. Be alert when using drive-up ATMs, never pick up a hitchhiker, and do not stop to assist strangers whose vehicles appear to be broken down. Instead, help by calling the police to assist. Travel on the highways between cities only during daylight hours.

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 the location of your visit. When parking in a lot of a shopping facility, be sure to park as close as possible to the store entrance but away from dumpsters, bushes, or large vehicles. Be sure to lock doors, close windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.

Public Transportation Conditions

Avoid using public buses. These are typically very crowded and pickpockets are common. Wearing expensive jewelry/watches or displaying large amounts of cash can draw unwanted attention. When using inter-city buses, avoid losing sight of your bags. It is not uncommon for thieves to wait at roadside gas stations and bus stations and look for an opportunity to steal

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luggage. Travel on inter-city buses should only be done during daylight hours. Bus lines have been the targets of hijacking during the night.

Tour buses operated by private bus line companies have also been targeted for road-side robberies in Sonora and Sinaloa.

Taxis in Hermosillo are safer and more reliable. Taxis from the airport are paid in advance in the terminal and are well regulated. Travelers should use taxis from designated taxi stands or call for a taxi from an established taxi company.

Other Areas of Concern

During 2015, in Vicam (Sonora) a local indigenous group regularly blocked highway 15 to protest the various local matters (water allocation, taxes, politics). For more than three years, this political protest has continued at varying times of the day but has not led to any violence.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

While there do not appear to be any international terrorist groups active in Mexico, lax immigration controls, the ease with which fake Mexican travel documents can be obtained, and Mexico's geographic location make the country an attractive transit point for potential transnational terrorists. These vulnerabilities make cross border transit of people and goods a key area of concern. Private sector businesses conducting cross border trade should be aware of this vulnerability, as terrorist and criminal organizations could use legitimate business transport to smuggle people or items across borders. To mitigate this risk, U.S. Customs and Border Protection operates the C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism) program in Mexico. The program is focused on improving the security of private companies' supply chains with respect to terrorism. Additional information on the program can be found at: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/trade/cargo_security/ctpat/

Regional indigenous terrorism is generally confined to the southern parts of Mexico. See the OSAC Crime and Safety Report for Mexico City for more information.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Anti-American sentiment is seldom expressed toward U.S. citizens (either official or non-official) in Sonora or Sinaloa. U.S. interests are generally not targets of political violence. Northern Mexico is not historically anti-American but rather, well-integrated with the U.S. by family and commercial ties. Many Mexican citizens living in Sonora and Sinaloa have visas for entry into the U.S. and frequently travel to the U.S. for both business and pleasure.

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Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

There have been numerous peaceful demonstrations in the surrounding area. With the Consulate General building located between the University of Sonora, the Governor's Palace, and other city/state administrative buildings, protestors use the surrounding area to stage their demonstrations, which have generally been peaceful and well policed. None of the protests in 2015 were against the U.S. (or U.S. policy).

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Although there are several indigenous communities living in Sonora and Sinaloa (Seris, Yaquis, Mayos, etc.), there is no ethnic violence between these groups or any of these groups and public authorities. Some communities have disputes and legal cases involving land, water, and other issues, but nothing has sparked violent episodes or the formation of groups responding with violence.

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Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Hurricanes off the west coast make landfall in Sinaloa and Sonora during the hurricane season. Many U.S. citizens in affected regions have been forced to delay their return to the U.S. due to infrastructure damage to airports and limited flight availability. In many cases, flights were suspended, and passengers faced long delays due to the need to repair a damaged airport. Driving during and after rainstorms should be avoided since improper drainage creates street flooding and large, submerged potholes. Heavy rains may leave sections of roads washed out completely. Roads were also washed out or obstructed by debris, adversely affecting access to airports and land routes out of affected areas. In the event of a hurricane, travelers should be aware that they may not be able to depart the area for 24-48 hours or more. Minor tropical storms can develop into hurricanes very quickly, limiting the time available for a safe evacuation. Travelers should apprise family and friends in the United States of their whereabouts and keep in close contact with their tour operator, hotel staff, and local officials for evacuation instructions in the event of a weather emergency.

In the aftermath of a storm, U.S. citizens have encountered uncomfortable and often dangerous conditions that have lasted for several days while awaiting transportation back to the U.S. Reports of looting and sporadic violence are not uncommon. Security personnel may not be readily available to assist.

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Should a situation require an evacuation from an overseas location, the State Department will work with commercial airlines to ensure the safest and most efficient repatriation of U.S. citizens possible. The Department of State will not provide no-cost transportation but does have the authority to provide repatriation loans to those in financial need. Commercial airlines are the Department's primary source of transportation in an evacuation. Other means of transport are utilized only as a last resort. U.S. citizens should obtain travel insurance to cover unexpected expenses during an emergency. U.S. citizens living in or traveling to storm-prone regions overseas should prepare for hurricanes and tropical storms by organizing a kit containing a supply of bottled water, non-perishable food items, a battery-powered or hand crank radio, and vital documents (especially passport and identification) in a waterproof container. Emergency shelters often have access only to basic resources and limited medical and food supplies.

U.S. citizens should monitor local radio, the National Weather Service at: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov> and <http://smn.cna.gob.mx/>.

Additional information on hurricanes and storm preparedness may be found in the "Hurricane Season-Know Before You Go" pamphlet at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_2915.html and on the "Natural Disasters" page of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' website at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1207.html.

Although not common, the possibility of earthquakes does exist. On October 19, 2013, the State of Sonora Emergency Response Center (C4) reported a 6.3 earthquake. The epicenter was 82 kilometers southwest from Huatabampo. There were no injuries.

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Critical Infrastructure Concerns

In Sonora, highway 15 toll way (cuota) is often under construction and has limited or no shoulders.

Drug-related Crimes

Mexico is well known for its illegal drug trade and the violence/corruption that the industry fosters. Mexico is the primary route for bringing illegal drugs into the U.S. Sonora and Sinaloa are coveted transshipment routes for drugs heading north and money/weapons heading south. Drug-related violence in Mexico is mostly confined to those involved in the drug trade or those fighting it. There have been numerous press reports of police and military personnel being executed. Along Mexico's northern border cities, the violence is far greater and has injured/killed innocent bystanders.

Another effect of the drug violence has been its impact on news reporting as it relates to reporting on organized crime. In January 2013, the newspaper El Universal released a study showing that 76.7 percent of open source reporting in Sinaloa excludes information regarding organized crime activity. The figure for Sonora was 59.5 percent. Criminal groups have attacked news outlets, kidnapped, and killed journalists in an effort to intimidate the press.

Kidnapping Threat

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Kidnapping-for-ransom is an established criminal activity in Mexico. Most incidents go unreported. In many cases, the ransom is paid, and victim is set free. The usual practice is not to notify police authorities, as the popular belief is that the police may be involved in the crime or are unable to resolve the situation. Affluent residents often have bodyguards and armored vehicles for their families to protect them against kidnapping.

Express kidnappings are a common type of abduction in Mexico and are based on the 24-hour withdrawal limit placed on ATM cards industry-wide. The victim is generally held for 24-48 hours and is forced to withdraw funds from ATMs.

There have been reports of kidnappings (both for ransom and "express") in Sonora and Sinaloa; however, obtaining accurate numbers are impossible. The state police in both Sonora and Sinaloa have special anti-kidnapping units that have had some success in locating victims and arresting kidnappers. The Sonoran anti-kidnapping group successfully disrupted a group of extortionists and kidnappers that had been operating in southern Sonora. In one operation, four arrests were made. The Regional Security Officer met with businessmen from Sinaloa in 2015 who praised the efforts of the anti-kidnapping unit in Sinaloa for resolving several cases.

Virtual kidnapping is another form of kidnapping that is commonplace in Mexico and is a form of telephonic extortion. The purported kidnapper calls the victim and claims to have kidnapped a loved one who will be held or harmed unless a payment is made. In fact, the caller is using this as a ruse and will try to engage the victim in an extended dialogue through which the caller elicits additional information to use against the victim. For example, the caller will call and say "We have your son" and the victim might reply, "What? You have Antonio?" At which

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point, the caller then says, “Yes, we have Antonio,” and the conversation will continue with the caller trying to keep the victim confused, scared, and concerned for the loved one. The best advice is to remain calm in situations like this, do not volunteer information to a caller, and make independent efforts to reach the alleged victim. In one case, a mother stayed on the phone with the caller but was able to communicate to a co-worker to call her daughter to confirm her whereabouts. As it turned out, the daughter was out shopping. There have been many reports from across Mexico of virtual kidnapping calls being made to family members in the U.S. claiming that a loved one traveling in Mexico has been kidnapped. Again, the best defense is to communicate travel plans to family and co-workers, provide detailed contact information and if possible, multiple means of communication.

Police Response

First and foremost among the challenges facing police forces in Mexico is the crisis of public confidence where an extensive majority of the population displays extreme distrust of those on the front lines of public service. This negative impression of the police stems from the deep rooted problems of corruption, lack of professionalism, and lack of capacity in addressing today’s most pressing crime issues (the ever increasing presence of drug cartel violence throughout large portions of the country). Mexican security forces and police have generally been ineffective in maintaining security in border areas and other parts of Mexico. Many police have been corrupted and are working as enforcers, informants, and facilitators. On the other hand, police and security forces have been targeted by criminal groups and many times are outmanned and outgunned by criminals.

Police corruption and police involvement in criminal activity is common. Consequently, citizens are often indifferent to police authority, and the general perception is that crime victims do not report crimes against them due to fear of reprisals by the police, the belief that the police are corrupt, or the feeling that nothing would come from such reports. The net result

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is that most crimes go unreported. The police are widely considered to be underpaid, poorly trained, and corrupt. From senior police in league with narco-traffickers/organized crime elements down to the routine bribes paid daily by motorists, police enjoy little respect from the general population. Reporting crime is an archaic, exhausting process, and is widely perceived to be a waste of time except for the most serious crimes or where a police report is required for insurance purposes.

Across Mexico there has been a concerted effort to create more professional and vetted police forces. Sonoran and Sinaloan state authorities initiated a process known as "C-3" testing, which refers to exams conducted by the Centro de Evaluacion de Control y Confianza (Center of Evaluation for Control and Trust). The exams consist of physical, psychological, drug, and polygraph tests in addition to a background investigation. Authorities have reported difficulties with the clearance process. In November 2012, the State Secretary of Public Security for Sonora reported that 40 percent of police failed these exams. This account tracks with other information from public authorities in Sonora and Sinaloa that indicate a wide range of failure rates for state and municipal police forces.

In addition to greater vetting of police forces, public authorities in Sonora and Sinaloa have shown a willingness to provide increased pay and training to police. The average police officer salary in Mexico ranges from \$400-\$500 a month. The hope is that increased pay and benefits will prevent officers from being corrupted by organized crime groups. Increased training is also a means to provide officers and the public a better sense of police capabilities. Police response times can vary, as does police action once on the scene. The Regional Security Officer met with businessmen from Sinaloa in the fall of 2012. At this meeting, the businessmen indicated that these reforms are improving the public image of police in Sinaloa. Although a small group, these businessmen represent a significant economic sector of the state. They expressed greater trust in the police due to better training and higher salaries. They also noticed higher recruiting standards with higher educational qualifications of new recruits. Helping Mexico develop more professional police forces has been an important part of U.S./Mexico bilateral relations, across Mexico and in Hermosillo's consular district. Through

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the Merida Initiative, the U.S. government has provided equipment and training to state police in Sonora, with plans to expand this bilateral cooperation to Sinaloa in 2014 and 2015.

Before traveling to Mexico, photocopy the following documents for each person on one or two sheets of paper and keep them with you: U.S. passport ID page, Mexican Visa/Tourist Permit/Resident Permit, U.S. Driver's License, Vehicle Registration (Tarjeta de Circulacion), Proof of Insurance, and Temporary or Free Entry Permit for Vehicle.

Persons traveling to Mexico should leave all weapons in the U.S. Bringing any firearm or ammunition into Mexico is an offense punishable with jail time unless you obtain proper permits. Small weapons (pocket knives) can result in concealed weapons charges if you are caught. Contact a local Mexican Consulate in the U.S. for information regarding bringing hunting weapons into the country.

How To Handle Incidents Of Police Detention Or Harassment

Travelers may contact the Consulate's American Citizen Services section for assistance in dealing with the police (numbers listed below). U.S. citizens are advised to cooperate with the police if stopped or questioned. If you are stopped by police authorities and do not believe that you have done anything wrong, it may be preferable to give the police officer the photocopies rather than your actual documents. If the officer continues to question you or if your knowledge of Spanish makes it impossible to know what is being said, the following statement in Spanish should be given to the officer:

"No hablo ni entiendo bien el español. Si usted considera que he cometido una infracción [de transito], expida el recibo de multa que la ampara. Si existe algún otro problema, por favor

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solicite la presencia de un elemento de policia que hable ingles. Gracias." ("I do not speak or understand Spanish. If you believe I have committed a [traffic] violation, then give me a ticket. If there is some other problem, please request the assistance of another policeman who can speak English. Thank you.")

This suggested course of action is not intended to obviate your responsibility for legitimate traffic violations or infractions of Mexican law.

U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged not to offer "tips" or bribes in any form to police officers after a traffic stop. In the event that the officer should suggest anything other than a normal solution to a traffic violation, note his/her badge number, name tag or police vehicle number, and provide it to the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo (number listed below) as soon as possible.

Crime Victim Assistance

The emergency number is 066 (911 is reported to work as well) for police, fire, and emergency medical response. Operators may not speak English, and a Spanish speaker should be enlisted to assist if possible. In Hermosillo and Mazatlan, emergency response centers have made efforts to staff emergency phone lines with English-speaking operators, but this should not be expected. Victims may also contact the American Citizen Services section at the U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo (number listed below) for assistance in dealing with the police or if there are issues in the handling of your case. If involved in a traffic accident or victimized by crime, one may be required to accompany the investigating 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 may be charged.

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Police/Security Agencies

The structure of police forces would appear to be rather comprehensive, being organized along the same federal lines as the political system with police forces at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Police authority is formally divided into two primary functional areas: protective/preventative policing and investigative policing. In other words, the organization of police is based on two parallel systems, making it distinctly different from police authority in the U.S. At the federal and state levels, police forces are divided into Judicial Police forces (whose primary duty is to perform investigations on behalf of the federal or state prosecutor's office) and Preventative Police forces (whose primary task is to patrol and prevent acts of crime through their deterrent presence). In practice, Preventative Police will respond to acts of crime in commission and can arrest suspects in the act of committing a crime. However, for crimes after the fact, the Judicial Police have sole authority to investigate and arrest subjects, involving the Preventative Police only as needed.

In an effort to combat corruption within police ranks, the government eliminated several federal police agencies and replaced them with new ones in the hopes that new standards will prevent corruption and co-opting by organized crime. One instance of this was the creation of the Federal Investigative Police (AFI) in 2001 that replaced the notoriously corrupt Federal Judicial Police (PJF). AFI was replaced in 2009 with the Federal Ministerial Police (Policía Federal Ministerial, PFM). Recent administrations have instituted changes to augment the federal government's capacity to fight crime on a national scale. Mando Unico de Policia (one hand of the police – or one operational commander) began on January 10, 2014, in Sonora with just seven municipalities included (Altar, Atil, Oquitoa, Pitiquito, Saric, Trincheras and Tubutama).

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Similar to the federal police forces, the state police forces replicate the same functional division between preventative and judicial police duties. Below the federal and state levels are the municipal police forces. A municipality may consist of many smaller cities and towns, equivalent to a county in the U.S. Police Chiefs in the municipalities are appointed, and municipal police forces are only allowed to have preventative police forces. Thus, all investigative duties fall to either state or federal judicial police depending on the law involved.

Lastly, other security forces consist of the Army (SEDENA, Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional) and the Navy/Marines (SEMAR, Secretaría de Marina). Forces from SEDENA and SEMAR were used under the previous administration of President Calderon to combat drug operations across Mexico. The army operates checkpoints along key highway routes, including Highway 15 in Sonora and Sinaloa.

Medical Emergencies

Though increasing numbers of U.S. citizens obtain health care in Mexico, elective surgery facilities may lack access to sufficient emergency support. Many hospitals require payment upon discharge of a patient. Travelers should expect to pay upon leaving the hospital. In some instances, hospitals have refused to discharge patients until payment has been made.

Avoid purchasing prescription medications unless you have a prescription from a Mexican doctor. Prescription medicine is purchased at a pharmacy like in the U.S.

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Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, "Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad," available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The Consulate General does not recommend any particular health provider but lists the following for information purposes only. More information is listed on the website for the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate General:
<http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/service.html>

Centro Medico Del Noroeste

Av. Luis Donaldo Colosio 23 Oriente Esquina con Manuel González

Colonia Centro Hermosillo, Sonora

Tel. (662) 217-4521 or 213-6250

Hospital Cima

Paseo Rio San Miguel Hermosillo, Sonora

Tel. (662) 259-0900, 259-0959,

Emergency Ward (662) 259-0911

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Fax (662) 259-0999

E-Mail: cimahillo@terra.com.mx

Hospital San Jose Hermosillo

Blvd. Morelos No. 340 Entre Blvd. Lopez Portillo y Ave. 7

Colonia Bachoco 83148

Hermosillo, Sonora

Tel. (662) 109-0500

Website: www.grupomedicosanjose.com.mx

Hospital Licona

Luis Donaldo Colosio #42 Esquina con Jesus Garcia

Hermosillo, Sonora

Tel. (662) 217-4828

Fax 213-6616

E-Mail: slicona@prodigy.net.mx

Hospital General Del Estado

Blvd. Luis Encinas Hermosillo, Sonora

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Tel. (662) 259-2500, 213-2556 (Note - for people without insurance)

Hospital Infantil Dif (Children's Hospital)

Reforma 355 Norte, Hermosillo, Sonora

Tel. (662) 289-0600

Available Air Ambulance Services

The following information is listed for information purposes only. For international treatment and medical insurance: International SOS: <http://www.internationalsos.com/en/index.htm>.

Medical evacuation information can be found on the website for the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate General: <http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/service.html>.

Recommended Insurance Posture

Health insurance is an important consideration. Travelers should ensure that they have adequate health insurance while in Mexico.

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Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

You should take normal tourist precautions with regards to drinking water (For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "I'm Drinking What in My Water?."), and when eating fresh fruits, vegetables, and salads.

Some travelers have adverse reactions to pollution and the dusty environment in Hermosillo and other parts of Sonora. People with asthma might want to take extra precautions in dealing with adverse air quality.

Additionally, check with your health practitioner about required vaccines. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/clinician/none/mexico?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-002.

OSAC Country Council Information

There is not an active OSAC Country Council in Hermosillo. However, OSAC constituents with operational interests in Consulate General Hermosillo's area of responsibility may consider attending meetings of the Nogales OSAC Country Council. A joint-OSAC charter between Hermosillo and Nogales is under development. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

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U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo, Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col Esqueda

CP 83000 Hermosillo, Sonora, México

0800 - 1630 M-F

Consulate Contact Numbers

Telephone: 662-289-3500

(from the U.S., dial 011-52 first)

After hours emergency Duty Officer cellular phone - 044 662-256-0741

044 should be replaced by 045 if dialing from outside your local area on a Mexican cellular phone, if calling from the U.S., dial 011 52 1 662-256-0741

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Regional Security Office (0800-1700 M-F): x 3597

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

Nearby Posts

U.S. Consular Agency in Mazatlan

Playa Gravitass 202, Local 10. Zona Dorada, Mazatlan, Sinaloa

(day phone number) 669-916-5889

(evening cell phone number) 669-916-7531

Embassy Mexico City: <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Ciudad Juarez: <http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guadalajara: <http://guadalajara.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Matamoros: <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Merida: <http://merida.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Monterrey: <http://monterrey.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nogales: <http://nogales.usconsulate.gov/>

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Consulate Nuevo Laredo: <http://nuevolaredo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Tijuana: <http://tijuana.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the Department of State's travel registration website at: <https://step.state.gov>. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known. While Consular Officers will do their utmost to assist Americans in a crisis, travelers should always be aware that local authorities bear primary responsibility for the welfare of people living or traveling in their jurisdictions.

Travelers to the region are encouraged to check the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General with consular responsibilities for the territory they will be visiting: <http://usembassy.state.gov>. For further information please consult the Consular Information Sheet for the country or territory in question, available via the Internet at: <http://travel.state.gov>

The following Internet sites may provide additional information regarding crime and safety in Sonora and Sinaloa:

<http://www.secretariadoejecutivosnsp.gob.mx/work/models/SecretariadoEjecutivo/Resource/131/1/images/publicacionCIEISPjul14.pdf>

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<http://secretariadoejecutivo.gob.mx/incidencia-delictiva/incidencia-delictiva.php>

www.eldebate.com

www.elimparcial.com

www.noroeste.com.mx

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Any visitor to Sinaloa should conduct research on the area and inform themselves on the current crime situation. In general, visitors need to protect themselves against street/petty crime. Do not leave valuables unsecured in any hotel room. It is best to use the hotel room safe or the safe at the front desk, when available. Maintain a low profile. Do not advertise that you are U.S. citizen, a tourist, or a visitor. Dress casually, keep valuables out of sight, and do not draw attention to yourself with your actions. Ostentatious displays of wealth can be magnets for thieves. Wearing expensive jewelry, watches, and displays of large amounts of cash can draw unwanted attention. Jewelry, expensive watches, and items like cell phones can be resold easily. You should “sterilize” your wallet/purse and carry the minimal essentials (ID, one credit card, small amount of cash, insurance card). This minimizes potential loss and makes it easier to replace/cancel items, credit cards, etc. Should you find yourself involved in an incident; the best advice is do not escalate the situation. Be cooperative – holding onto your wallet, your purse, or even your vehicle is not worth your life.

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Travel well-illuminated and well-traveled streets. If you realize that you are in an unfamiliar area, turn around and head back to roads and areas you know.

Do not become so intoxicated that you are unable to make rational decisions about your security and safety.

Potential residents should be concerned about residential crime. If possible, locate a residence in a gated neighborhood with a security attendant on duty. Investing in an alarm system, deadbolt locks, and adequate exterior security lighting can go a long way in preventing residential crime. Check with the landlord or community association about installing security grilles on windows and doors. Local household help should be vetted to the extent possible, and housekeepers should be instructed on proper telephone answering procedures and not to allow entry to persons not known or expected.

Vary your routine; do not have set schedules that you follow on a regular and predictable basis. Be unpredictable in your movements; vary your routes from home to the office as well as your departure/arrival times. Be alert to possible surveillance. Note any individual who appears out of place along your routes to regularly scheduled activities. Be alert to your surroundings. This advice applies even for instances of economic crimes, as being predictable and unobservant create vulnerabilities to your security.

In light of the current security situation in Mexico, always remember to carry a cell-phone with up to date contact information for emergencies. Remember to always be aware of your surroundings, and at the first sign of a disturbance leave the area, if it is safe to do so, and go to the nearest safe area (your residence, a friend's house, your place of employment). This is

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the best course of action when a violent situation occurs. However, if you are caught in the middle of gunfire or explosions in public:

Do not panic, remain calm – do not attempt to see what is happening.

Seek cover - when gunfire/explosions are heard, immediately move to a safe area with good cover. Look for something substantial to hide behind, seek cover in a room made of solid construction, stay away from doors/windows, and do not venture out to observe the conflict. Do not attempt to move to a vehicle, if you are in a safe area. Remain there until security officials tell you that it is safe to move.

Immediately convey the sense of danger/threat to those around you.

Report the incident as soon as possible. Do your best to describe what you hear, but do not attempt to verify anything yourself.

Here are some things that you can do to lessen the chances that you will become a victim of ATM or credit card fraud:

Travelers are advised to check their account activity online regularly while in Mexico to detect fraudulent charges early.

Closely monitor anyone who handles your card. To protect against skimming, closely watch anyone who you give your card to for processing (waiter, clerk, attendant). If possible, do not let them out of your sight. If a clerk makes a hard copy, retrieve the carbons.

Sign all credit cards. Sign all credit cards immediately upon your receipt of them. You can also write "Check ID" so that the clerk asks for ID for verification during a transaction.

Be aware of your surroundings. The first step to prevent skimming is in understanding what is going on around you. Prior to inserting your ATM card, check the card reader to make sure that it looks appropriate and is not altered. When at an ATM, cover the key pad when entering

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your PIN. Protect your PIN. Some people make it easy for criminals by writing their PIN on something that they keep in their wallet or on back of the card itself. Commit the PIN to memory.

Take your receipts. Do not leave receipts at ATMs, teller windows, gasoline pumps, or with a clerk.

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