



Suriname 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Murder; Burglary; Carjacking; Hotels; Cyber; Other; Floods; Surveillance

Western Hemisphere > Suriname; Western Hemisphere > Suriname > Paramaribo

5/10/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Inadequate resources, limited law enforcement training, the absence of a law enforcement presence in the interior, and lack of government aircraft or sufficient numbers of patrol boats limit the capacity of the government to control its territory or its borders.

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Crime is a major concern. The police and press report that overall crime levels remain constant, but violent crimes are increasing. Murders, residential/business robberies, carjackings, burglaries, and muggings occurred regularly in 2015. Street crime (thefts of backpacks, purses, jewelry (especially necklaces), cell phones) are regular occurrences. Tourist areas are common targets for thieves and muggers who often work at night. There is a steep increase in these types of crimes during the December/January holidays.

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While some areas of Paramaribo are safer than others, there are no areas that can be considered completely safe. Criminals move without restriction through neighborhoods where expatriates live, often utilizing scooters/motorcycles to evade police.

Among the home burglaries in 2015, several high-level host-nation government officials and expatriates were victims, seeming to indicate the brazen determination of the burglars breaking into residences. Armed robberies and armed home invasions occurred within one block of Embassy residences. There are also reports of guard dogs being poisoned as a tactic to commit burglary. However, there were no reports of burglary at homes where official Americans reside or at homes that deployed 24-hour residential security guards.

Criminals often carry firearms or other weapons and will use them, especially if victims resist. Handgun permits are very difficult to obtain, but many criminals have them regardless. Many criminals use shotguns, which are the only firearm that is normally owned by civilians. Although illegal, gun traps are used for hunting purposes in the interior. A U.S. citizen died as a result of a gun trap accident in 2007.

There have been reports of criminal incidents in the vicinities of the major hotels. Guests at major hotels have reported thefts of personal items from their rooms and from common areas (restaurants, bars, gyms, pools).

Organized crime does exist in Paramaribo but is on a smaller scale than other cities in the

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region.

Cybersecurity Issues

Journalists have had their websites hacked.

Other Areas of Concern

It is recommended that visitors avoid walking in the Paramaribo downtown area and the Palmentuin (Palm Garden) area after dark, as these areas are often used by criminals targeting foreigners.

Anyone venturing into the interior is advised to have a seasoned guide and some form of communication. Services offered through major hotels and tourist agencies are usually safer and more reliable. Travel to the interior requires caution. There have been reports of tourists and foreigners being robbed while traveling in the countryside and occasional reports of bandits on rural roads.

There have been several incidents in the past few years of violence/crime directed toward illegal immigrants and especially illegal Brazilian gold miners. Police regularly conduct raids in outlying areas to thwart illegal gold mining; however, Brazilian miners often return and resume

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operations once the police leave.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Vehicle accidents are a very real safety threat. In general, roads and driving conditions, particularly outside Paramaribo, are well below U.S. standards. Drivers should be very cognizant of mopeds, scooters, and motorcycles, especially when making turns. These vehicles are common and always have the right-of-way (local law considers them pedestrians).

Police sporadically enforce local traffic laws, so locals drive recklessly. Traffic cameras are in place but are often broken or unutilized. Driving while talking on a cell phone is illegal and is one of the few traffic offenses that is occasionally enforced.

If involved in an accident, drivers are expected to leave the vehicle exactly where the accident occurred and stay at the scene until the police arrive to take a report, even though the wait may be hours. If the driver leaves before the police arrive, s/he will be found at fault and could be charged with leaving the scene of an accident. It is not uncommon for roads to be blocked by a minor accident while waiting for the police to arrive. Most international companies outside of Paramaribo provide medical support, including medevac, to employees in case of accidents.

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While in a vehicle, make sure your doors are locked and windows are rolled up. Check the interior/exterior of your vehicle prior to getting in. Look for things that are irregular or abnormal. In traffic, always leave space in which to maneuver. Be prepared to take evasive action. If you are being followed/harassed, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility to call the police. Never lead the person to your home or get out of your vehicle.

Public Transportation Conditions

The use of public transportation (mini-buses) by visitors unfamiliar with the country is highly discouraged. Traveling by public transportation, especially outside of Paramaribo, can be very dangerous. The three highways leading out of Paramaribo are often the sites of horrendous accidents, usually due to speeding and often involve buses or vans.

The use of reputable taxis, however, is generally acceptable.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Political Violence Rating: Low

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious or ethnic violence is rare. Suriname takes pride in its inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony and regularly notes that a synagogue and a mosque sit side-by-side in downtown Paramaribo.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Flooding regularly occurs in Paramaribo during the “big” rainy seasons (May-August, November-February). Many roads flood, and driving can be extremely difficult and dangerous. Paramaribo has many canals and, during the worst of the flooding, one cannot see where roads end and canals begin. Due to poor drainage, flooding can last for a few days. In May 2006, Suriname experienced severe flooding in the interior. The crisis stretched the government’s resources beyond capacity and, in the ensuing state of emergency, the

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government relied heavily on international assistance.

Over 90 percent of the country is largely uninhabited rainforest, and there are natural dangers inherent to that.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The government would likely approach the UNDP, the U.S., French, and Dutch Embassies for guidance and assistance should a major emergency take place.

Privacy Concerns

There is concern among some media workers and others that their communications and movements may be monitored.

Drug-related Crimes

Suriname is a transit zone for cocaine en route to Europe, Africa, and to a lesser extent the U.S. There have been sporadic instances of narcotics-related violence between individuals

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associated with competing drug trafficking organizations. These have included assassinations and drive-by shootings.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnapping is rare. Of the kidnappings that have occurred, many are related to personal or business conflicts. There have been no kidnappings involving foreign victims reported to the U.S. Embassy.

Police Response

Police officials frequently cite lack of resources, staff, and basic equipment and low morale as reasons for widely varying response times and unresolved crimes. Police response, especially at night, is a rarity for all but the most serious crimes.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Visitors should report incidents to the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer as soon as possible. If arrested/detained, ensure that the police understand that you are a U.S. citizen and ask the police to contact the U.S. Embassy 472-900 during working hours or the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer (710-1112) after working hours. If calling from the U.S., dial 011-597-710-1112.

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Crime Victim Assistance

115 is a general emergency number for police and medical emergencies. Operators may not speak English. Victims of crimes can contact the “Bureau Slachtofferzorg” (Victim’s Assistance Office), Ministry of Justice and Police, Keizerstraat 155, Phone/Fax # (597) 424-016, opening hours: Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Crimes can be reported in person or over the phone during business hours to any of the below police stations:

Paramaribo

Keizerstraat Station (Central Paramaribo)

Keizerstraat 23

Tel: (011) 597 471-111 / 477-777

Nieuwe Haven Station (Paramaribo South)

Havenlaan

Tel: (011) 597 403-101 / 403-508 / 402-656 / 404-022 / 401-025 / 404-943

Geyersvlijt Station (Paramaribo North)

Basitostraat

Tel: (011) 597 451-677 / 453-570 / 451-222 / 453-748

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Latour Station

Indira Ghandiweg / Tamanoestraat

Tel: (011) 597 481-524 / 483-547

Livorno Station

Sir Winston Churchillweg

Tel: (011) 597 481-941 / 483-400

Uitvlugt Station

Kasabaholoweg

Tel: (011) 597 498-573 / 435-392

Outside of Paramaribo

Lelydorp Station: Tel: T(011) 597 366-785 / 366-116

Zanderij Station: Tel: (011) 597 325-222

Brokopondo Station: Tel: (011) 597 880-4611

Coronie Station: Tel: (011) 597 235-122 / 235-123

Nickerie Station: Tel: (011) 597 231-530 / 231-222

Moengo Station: Tel: (011) 597 341-321 / via Suralco 341-280

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Albina Station: Tel: (011) 597 342-080 / 342-077

Police/Security Agencies

There are three major law enforcement/security entities:

The largest in size is the Korps Politie Suriname (KPS). This is a traditional police department model and is responsible for all policing efforts. The KPS has three branches:

- 1) the city police handle all issues inside the city limits of Paramaribo;
- 2) the rural police handle everything outside of Paramaribo; and
- 3) the judicial police are specialized police units (i.e. forensics, fraud, homicide, etc.).

The second largest is the Military Police, a branch of the Surinamese Armed Forces that polices all members of the military and handles border control/immigration functions.

The third largest is the Surinamese Bureau of National Security, which is responsible for the Central Intelligence and Security Service (CIVD) and the presidential personal security unit.

Medical Emergencies

115 is the number for medical and police emergencies. Operators may not speak English.

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Travelers should be aware that medical standards are below what is expected in the U.S.

Traditional ambulance services are unreliable, difficult to contact, and often require upfront cash payments before transporting patients. They cannot be relied upon in case of emergency. For life threatening emergencies, private vehicles or taxis are the best option for transportation to the hospital.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The Academic Hospital (Tel: (011) 597 442-222) is the best equipped and most commonly used for responding to medical emergencies and trauma. The Academic Hospital is located less than one mile from the U.S. Embassy and has adequately trained staff and equipment to stabilize before medical evacuation can be arranged.

St. Vincentius Hospital (at Koninginne 4, Centrum, in the northern part of Paramaribo, Tel: (011) 597 471-212) has an emergency ward with limited hours and much more limited capabilities.

Diakonessenhuis Hospital (Zinniastraat, Flora, Tel: (011) 597 427-288) does not offer emergency services.

Available Air Ambulance Services

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Hi Jet Helicopters operates an air ambulance service from the Zorg En Hoop airport in Paramaribo. Hi Jet can retrieve patients from anywhere that a helicopter can land and transport them to one of the hospitals in Paramaribo. Companies wishing to use this service should have a guarantee letter on file with the company or expect to pay in cash before a patient is transported.

Tel: (011) 597 531-933, (011) 597 432-577

Emergency (011) 597 881-1230, (011) 597 718-0008

Fax: (011) 597 432-556

Recommended Insurance Posture

Medical evacuation insurance and plans should be organized in advance.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/suriname.htm>.

OSAC Country Council Information

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The Regional Security Office started an OSAC Country Council in 2015. The U.S. Embassy also maintains relations with the American business community through the Economic Office, Business and Educational Resource Center (BERC), the Surinamese Chapter of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), and the Rotary Clubs of Suriname. U.S. companies are encouraged to contact the Regional Security Officer at DS_RSOPARA@state.gov for specific inquiries concerning the local security situation. 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

Suriname 129 Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat Paramaribo, Suriname

Note: The U.S. Embassy will move to a new location in June 2016.

Business hours: Mon-Fri, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Embassy Contact Numbers

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U.S. Embassy Operator: (011) 597 472-900

VOIP: 202-609-9890 or 202-609-9765

U.S. Embassy Duty Officer (emergencies only, afterhours): (011) 597 710-1112

Fax (Admin/Primary): (597) 410-972

American Citizen Services (emergencies only): x2236

Regional Security Office: x2262, x2066, or x2065

Political/Economic Section: x 2205, x2208, or x2209

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

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Carry only what is necessary for your outing. It is not recommended to carry passports or other valuable documents, large quantities of cash, or anything else that you cannot afford to lose. Most foreigners are very visible in public and should take precautions to prevent becoming a victim. Visitors should avoid wearing expensive jewelry, displaying large sums of cash in public, or otherwise appearing ostentatious. If confronted by an armed criminal, do not argue or attempt to confront him/her. Quickly relinquish what you are asked to surrender.

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Visitors are advised to make every attempt to change currency at hotels, local banks, or official cambios. Visitors are strongly discouraged from exchanging currency on the street; it is dangerous and illegal.

Walking alone outside at night, even in the immediate vicinity of hotels, is highly discouraged.

Make your colleagues/family aware of your daily plans and how to reach you. Be unpredictable when possible in work/social schedules. Identify and report vehicles or persons possibly involved in surveillance of your activities.

Never give out your personal information in an open setting.

The Regional Security Office recommends that monitored security systems and residential guards are part of the residential security program for Americans in Suriname. For those residing in or having businesses in Suriname, the presence of a professional, 24-hour guard service serves as one of the best deterrents to criminals. Other security upgrades (alarms, grilles, lighting/perimeter barriers) are also highly recommended.

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