



## Timor-Leste 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Rape/Sexual Violence; Aviation; Maritime; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > Timor-Leste; East Asia & Pacific > Timor-Leste > Dili

5/16/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The security environment has remained relatively stable since the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) peacekeepers and the Australia/New Zealand International Stabilization Force (ISF) departed the country in December 2012. Ongoing challenges for the security sector include large numbers of unemployed youth, Martial Arts Groups, institutional weaknesses within the security services, and a lack of clarity about their respective roles.

Post Crime Rating: High

### Crime Threats

Due to extreme poverty and high unemployment, crimes of opportunity occur frequently in Dili. Most crimes occur at night. These crimes include: pickpocketing, car invasions/thefts, and assaults.

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Empirical data shows most violent crime to be Timorese-on-Timorese violence. Expatriate violence does occur, but it appears to be extremely low despite the significant socio-economic disparity within the country. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes list of countries by intentional homicide rate ranks Timor-Leste 127 of 218 countries.

Sexual harassment and groping against females is reported regularly.

Martial Arts Groups (MAGs) are present, but the government banned most of their activities, and gang violence only flares up occasionally, primarily between rival MAGs. The government and the NGO community continue to monitor them closely.

### Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber crime is not common. The World Economic Forum 2015-Davos reported Timor-Leste was ranked as the second lowest percentage of Internet users in the world. This is in contrast to the strong 4G data network available. However, as the utilization of technology increases, so too will the threat of cyber crime.

### Other Areas of Concern

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The Baucau District, approximately three hours from Dili, saw an up-tick in youth violence and violent events connected to a political dissident group in the first half of 2015. An Emergency Message and Security Messages were issued to the American community to re-consider visits to Baucau during that time. Persons and groups transiting the Baucau District since have not reported any incidents.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Roads in Dili are in fairly good condition. The further out from Dili one is, the more hazardous the route is likely to be. The roads outside of the Dili district are especially perilous, given mountainous terrain and poor road maintenance. During the rainy season (October-March), driving can be very hazardous, as flash flooding occurs.

The combination of poor road conditions, increased numbers of vehicles, and poor driver competency increases the possibility of traffic accidents.

Outside of Dili, Timor-Leste's rudimentary infrastructure means that it can take a significant amount of time to transport people from the scene of an accident to a medical facility.

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## Public Transportation Conditions

Travelers using local taxis should always negotiate the fare before getting in the vehicle. Travelers are advised not to allow taxis to pick up other passengers while en route and not to enter an occupied taxi. There have been reported incidents of taxi drivers robbing or sexually groping passengers. Travelers should avoid using shared-ride “microlet” buses, as they are often over-crowded and are frequently involved in accidents. Microlets, moto taxis, and taxis have been known to drive recklessly and often do not adhere to traffic laws.

## Aviation/Airport Conditions

The Nicolau Lobato International Airport is 6.2 km outside of Dili in the city’s corner, known as the Comoro neighborhood. It is west of the Comoro River that runs south-north and out to sea. A single, narrow two-lane bridge connects the main part of the city to this area and the airport. The airport is relatively small. The runway is only 1,850 meters (approximately 6,000 feet) by 30 meters. There is no radar capability or runway lights, allowing only daylight operations. Planes as large as a Boeing 757 have landed but not on a regular basis due to weight and hard braking considerations. The airport includes facilities to service and fuel helicopters.

The passenger terminal is a single, one-story building in the center of the south side of the airport and includes a Distinguished Visitor's lounge directly east of the general passenger terminal. Timor-Leste Customs and Immigration checkpoints are in the main passenger

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terminal.

## Other Travel Conditions

Ferries are a common method of travel to the western enclave of Oecussi and to the nearby island of Atauro. Ferries are generally overcrowded beyond recommended capacity, according to U.S. Coast Guard standards. Travelers are encouraged, whenever possible, to avoid ferries and explore other means of travel via water taxi, car, or air.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

No indigenous terrorist organizations operate in Timor-Leste. There are no known transnational terrorist groups operating in Timor-Leste. Local police and security service have increased their vigilance in monitoring the border with Indonesia and are proactively cooperating with Indonesian police to share information to prevent terrorism from spreading into Timor-Leste.

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## Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Local citizens have a strong affinity for the U.S. American flags are common on apparel, motorcycles, cars, and stores. Some U.S. visitors and residents have found that identifying themselves as Americans during tense encounters (traffic accidents, disputes) has defused or de-escalated the situation.

In January 2015, a hand grenade was thrown over the wall of a U.S. Embassy housing compound. Indications are that this was an isolated incident, and it is not believed that U.S. Embassy housing was specifically targeted. There have been no other similar incidents.

## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Timor-Leste has experienced periodic domestic disturbances since independence from Indonesia in 1999. At no time, however, has there been political violence specifically directed against official U.S. government interests.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

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## Civil Unrest

As Timor-Leste continues to develop and address the challenges of constructing a nation, the possibility of civil disobedience and unrest remains a constant concern. The nation last experienced serious civil unrest related to fighting between the police (PNTL) and military (F-FDTL) from 2006- 2008. The Prime Minister brought both bodies under his control and oversaw their operations until 2015 when the government decided that the two were able to operate independently. Despite progress in addressing institutional tensions, militants who were part of the independence movement but not reconciled to the political situation represent a continuing source of potential conflict. Violence related to political actions by the militarist Maubere Revolutionary Council (KRM) in Baucau district did not target or directly affect foreigners, but the possibility of fighting that could harm foreigners or business interests highlights an area of concern. In recent years, when instances of civil unrest occur, they are usually quelled peacefully. Civil unrest has been known to spark when linked to occurrences of excessive force by the police/military.

## Post-specific Concerns

### Environmental Hazards

Timor-Leste's infrastructure is not built to withstand natural environmental hazards.

Timor-Leste has experienced earthquakes, but none have reached devastating proportions in

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recent years.

Flash flooding is a concern during the rainy season, especially in districts outside Dili where the mountainous terrain creates the potential for landslides.

### Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The loss of services (food, sanitation, utilities) in the event of a large-scale natural disaster could lead to a rapid deterioration of law and order. Any disaster that closed or significantly reduced the operations of the country's main port or fuel terminal would lead to immediate shortages of basic foodstuffs and fuel.

The government has made major investments in upgrading its infrastructure.

The new port scheduled to open in 2017 in Tibar Bay, 10km west of Dili, will increase cargo capacity and ease congestion in the country's only operational port, stimulating economic activity by easing the movement of goods.

The government is improving its road system, to include the route to Manatuto-Natarbora and Dili to the Indonesian border at Batugade. The road improvements are part of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-assisted Road Network Upgrading Sector Project, which aims to accelerate economic opportunities, promote private sector growth, increase agricultural productivity, and reduce poverty.

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## Drug-related Crimes

Timor-Leste is seen as a transit point for drugs but has experienced relatively limited distribution or production.

## Police Response

Law and order remains a top priority of the government, with primary responsibility falling to the National Police Timor-Leste (PNTL). The PNTL's capacity is limited but improving, with assistance from bilateral partners in the international community, including from the U.S. government. The PNTL has been developing its community policing capacity and is slowly beginning to build its capabilities in the areas of criminal investigation, personnel/facility protection, and traffic control.

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Foreigners should be aware that they could be detained for an extended period should they become involved with the legal system. While police detention and harassment is not a systemic problem, the nascent legal system can lead to prolonged delays with adverse effects on foreigners.

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## Crime Victim Assistance

The PNTL's emergency call center can be reached by dialing 112 from any phone in Dili. Police are slow to respond to calls for emergency assistance or initiate investigations into crimes against individuals. Nonetheless, victims of crime are encouraged to file police reports to help document the level of criminal activity.

## Medical Emergencies

Medical care remains substandard in Dili. Ambulances can be dispatched using the 112 emergency phone number but cannot be relied upon to come in a timely matter. There is no well-organized paramedic rescue and transportation service in Dili. Usual procedure is to transport to the hospital by private vehicle, if possible and safe.

## Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The Dili National Hospital and Stamford Medical can dispatch an ambulance, but it may not have a physician, nurse, and/or attendant/resuscitation equipment.

The Guido Valadares National Hospital in Dili can handle certain emergencies and is open

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24-hours a day, accessible to the public.

A new private medical facility, the Stamford clinic, has limited resources for dealing with medical emergencies, and provides a paid subscriber-based ambulance service. Stamford Medical ambulance service is limited to Dili and is for paid subscribers only. Tel: (regular hours) 331-0140, (after-hours emergency) 7772-1111

#### Singapore

Gleneagles Hospital, 6 Napier Rd., Singapore, (65) 6735 5000

Mt. Elizabeth Hospital, 3 Mt. Elizabeth Place, Singapore

Raffles Hospital, 585 North Bridge Road, Singapore, (65) 63111111 or 6311 5555

#### Australia

Royal Darwin Hospital, Rocklands Drive, Tiwi, NT 0810, Australia, (08) 8922 8888, rdh.ths@nt.gov.au

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

World Access (Asia) Pte. Ltd.

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#11-07 Ocean Building

10 Collyer Quay Singapore 0104

Tel: (65) 6535-5833 / 6535-5052

Asia Emergency Assistance

AEA International Clinic SOS Medika

Jl Puri Sakti 10

Cipete, Jakarta Selatan

Tel: (62-21) 750-5980

(62-21) 750-6001 (emergency)

(62-21) 750-6002 (fax)

SOS International SOS Assistance (Far East) Ltd.

Medikaloka Health Care Center

Graha Irama

Messanine and 2nd Floor

Jl. H.R. Rasuna Said Block X-1, Kav. 1-2 Jakarta

Tel: (62-21) 526-1118

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SOS Bali

SOS International SOS Assistance (Far East) Ltd.

Medikaloka

Bypass Ngurah Rai 505X, Kuta 80361

Tel: 0361-720-100, 710-544; 0361-710-515, 755-766 (fax); 0361-710-505 (24-hour)

SOS-International could supply fixed wing aircraft, but depending upon urgency of the problem, may recommend Medevac to Darwin, Australia for shorter flying time.

CareFlight International

Sydney - Darwin – Perth

Tel: (+61) 2 9893 7683

(+61) 2 9689 2744 (fax)

(+61) 1300 655 855 (24-hour)

+61 (0)427 264 888 (mobile)

Email: [international@careflight.org](mailto:international@careflight.org)

Estimated flying times: Dili-Darwin (Australia): 1.5 hours; Dili-Singapore: 3-4 hours. Service will depart four hours after contact and will bring doctor, ICU nurse, and/or paramedic.

Recommended Insurance Posture

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All travelers are advised to purchase insurance to cover medical evacuation in case of a serious accident, injury, or illness. Persons who plan to enjoy Timor-Leste's diving should purchase divers' insurance. Medical evacuation can be extremely costly depending on the severity of the situation, so all travelers should ensure their policies provide sufficient coverage.

#### CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Travelers are advised to see a physician prior to travelling to ensure that appropriate immunizations and precautions are taken, including medications for malaria prophylaxis if traveling outside of Dili. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:

[http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/east-timor?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/east-timor?s_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-double-001)

#### OSAC Country Council Information

An increasing number of U.S. private sector organizations have a presence in Timor-Leste. The Regional Security Officer is always available to address any security concerns from the American business community. To reach OSAC's East Asia Pacific team, please email [OSACEAP@state.gov](mailto:OSACEAP@state.gov).

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## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy in Dili

Avenida de Portugal

Praia dos Coqueiros, Dili

Hours: Mon-Fri, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Main Number: +670-332-4684

Regional Security Officer: +670-332-2056

Consular Officer: +670-332-4684

Duty Officer: +670-723-1328

If you are a U.S. citizen in need of urgent assistance outside of business hours, please call

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the emergency after-hours number for a duty officer.

Website: <http://timor-leste.usembassy.gov/>

## Embassy Guidance

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates and makes it easier for the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you do not have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's website, where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for Timor-Leste. For additional information, refer to the "Traveler's Checklist" on the State Department's website.

Contact the U.S. Embassy for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on Twitter and Facebook to have travel information at your fingertips.

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## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Please 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. Travelers are encouraged to maintain vigilant self-awareness to avoid becoming a crime victim. Travelers should use extreme caution when venturing out at night. Travel outside the Dili district warrants caution due to poor roads and sparse law enforcement personnel and medical facilities.

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