



## Djibouti 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Disease Outbreak; Stolen items; Burglary; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Elections; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Floods; Religious Terrorism; Employee Health Safety; Fraud

Africa > Djibouti; Africa > Djibouti > Djibouti

5/17/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

#### Crime Threats

Most reported incidents are crimes of opportunity (pickpocketing, petty theft) for immediate gain. Unreported crimes also commonly occur within the local community. Panhandlers and street children target foreigners for petty theft by creating distractions. The large number of illegal immigrants, refugees, and unemployed Djiboutians loitering downtown and in other areas frequented by expatriates may allow criminals to roam undetected. People in congested areas (port, market areas, city center) are considered at greatest risk for street crime.

There were burglaries and attempted burglaries against expatriate residences in proximity to embassy housing in 2014. In 2015, crime levels decreased with only one reported incident of an attempted theft in an U.S. Embassy residential compound. No other crimes against U.S.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



Embassy personnel occurred in 2015. Generally, perpetrators lack the sophistication to overcome robust residential security measures. Crimes have occurred at residences where windows and doors were not locked.

Criminals have shown a willingness to break into vehicles to gain access to high-value items such as electronics.

Criminal activity may be exacerbated by the abuse of khat, a legal and socially acceptable drug that tends to increase aggressiveness among users during the first 30-40 minutes it is consumed.

#### Other Areas of Concern

An unsolved border dispute with Eritrea has led to restrictions on travel to many areas in the north of Djibouti. In many instances, approval from the host government is required to travel north of Obock.

Protests and clashes with local Djiboutian security have increased in areas outside Djibouti City. Protests are attributed to the presidential elections in April 2016, while others have occurred due to a recent presidential security decree (implemented after the Paris 2015 terrorist attacks) prohibiting mass public gatherings.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving conditions are hazardous.

Road surfaces outside the capital have greatly improved, but roads are precarious in many parts of the country. The government, with assistance from the EU, has constructed a paved road linking Tadjoura and Obock, significantly increasing the level of safety and ease of travel on the north coast. The primary truck route from Djibouti to Galafi, the main border crossing into Ethiopia, is also paved. This highway has reduced the amount of time it takes to travel between the two cities and has significantly improved driving conditions. At the same time, the improved road resulted in increased speeds and, therefore, increases the likelihood of serious accidents.

Hazards include poorly constructed roads, lack of safety rails, poor vehicle conditions, and wayward pedestrians/animals. Drivers should be aware of unsafe road surfaces, unskilled drivers, and the presence of non-roadworthy vehicles. Many drivers consume khat, which can lead to erratic, unpredictable, and unsafe driving behavior. Drivers should be especially alert between 3-5PM. Drivers frequently change lanes into oncoming traffic without looking and expect oncoming vehicles to get out of their way even though they are in violation of standard, worldwide, recognized traffic rules. It is recommended to obey posted speed limits and drive defensively. Roads outside Djibouti City lack proper lighting. Travel is only recommended during daylight hours. Very few areas in the country feature roadside assistance. Driving at night is not advisable, as street lighting is limited and frequently non-existent. Pedestrians do

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



not look when crossing the road and frequently walk out into traffic. Animals often wander into traffic. Nomads in rural areas sometimes place rocks on the roads to stop vehicles and demand water and/or transportation, providing an opportunity for theft of high-value items from stopped vehicles.

Vehicle collisions remain the RSO's number one safety concern. Visitors who are involved in traffic accidents should attempt to exchange insurance information with the other party and summon police assistance if possible. It is inadvisable to make restitution at the scene, especially if livestock or pedestrians are involved. Drivers should be wary of crowds gathering at an accident and should depart immediately if they perceive of a threat to their safety. The number of serious vehicle accidents has steadily grown over the past five years, as the number of vehicles on the road has increased, especially truck traffic between Djibouti and Ethiopia.

As Djibouti is the primary port for goods going into Ethiopia, there are numerous large trucks transporting goods at all hours of the day. These trucks vary from well- to poorly-maintained/operated. Truck accidents along the Djibouti-Galafi road are common, and drivers will attempt to pass slow-moving trucks on inclines where there is limited visibility of oncoming traffic. This greatly increases the likelihood of head-on collisions.

Drivers should keep their windows up, doors locked, and should be especially vigilant at intersections. Individuals should not leave high-value items visible in a car.

## Public Transportation Conditions

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



Public transportation is unreliable and considerably risky due to unsafe driving practices and crimes of opportunity. Hotel and airport shuttle services are a safe alternative.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Several airlines fly through the airport. Caution should be taken in transporting any items in checked bags that resemble weapons.

### Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

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

Djibouti lies at the crossroads between the Middle East and the Horn of Africa and hosts a substantial population of refugees. Djibouti's proximity to a number of conflict-torn states and the government's limited capacity to monitor border controls raises concern over illegal immigration and the possibility of cross-border terrorism.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



On May 24, 2014, two suicide bombers attacked a restaurant popular with Westerners in Djibouti's city center. One person was killed, and others were severely injured. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility and renewed its intent to conduct similar attacks against Djiboutian and Western targets. These threats have been regularly repeated since 2011.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Djibouti. There is a Travel Warning for Djibouti. U.S. citizens in Djibouti should evaluate their personal security situation in light of specific threats from terrorism. The U.S. government continues to receive information about potential terrorist threats aimed at Western (including U.S.) and Djiboutian interests. Terrorist acts can include: suicide operations, bombings (car bombings), kidnappings, attacks on civil aviation, and attacks on maritime vessels in/near Djiboutian ports. Attacks may target official government facilities, Embassies, and military installations, as well as soft targets (restaurants, clubs, hotels, other commercial entities). While Djiboutian officials continue the pursuit of those responsible for previous terrorist attacks, many remain at large and operate in the region. Travelers should consult the Worldwide Caution for further information and details. The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to review their personal crisis response plans, remain vigilant, and exercise caution in areas frequented by Westerners. U.S. citizens are also advised to maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance their personal security.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



## Civil Unrest

Large-scale planned demonstrations are rare except during the presidential elections. Both the Djiboutian National Police and the Gendarmerie have effective riot control squads and take proactive steps to stage personnel in areas of potential unrest. Demonstrations have been mostly peaceful; however, participants sometimes have blocked the roads with rocks and burning tires and engaged in indiscriminate rock throwing. Visitors are advised to avoid political gatherings and large crowds.

On December 21, a clash between Djibouti security forces and local Djiboutians in the Balbala district (outside Djibouti City) resulted in several injuries and some fatalities to Djiboutian civilians and security personnel. The incident was very rare.

## Religious/Ethnic Violence

Approximately 60 percent of Djiboutians are ethnic Somalis. The remainder is of Afar descent with a small minority of Yemeni origin. Relations between Somali and Afar ethnic groups remain a sensitive issue. Since the May 2001 signing of a final peace accord, many former rebels have been integrated into the National Police and Defense Forces; however, rebel groups have carried out attacks against government entities, mostly in remote locations.

## Post-specific Concerns

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



## Environmental Hazards

Djibouti is assessed to be in Seismic Zone 4 (Very High). In 2012, earthquakes registered as high as 4.4 on the Richter scale and prompted the U.S. Embassy to request a seismic team assessment of all government-owned and -leased properties in Djibouti. As a result, several rental properties were deemed unsafe.

Although hot conditions prevail year-round, brief periods of moderate to heavy rains can cause severe flooding due to poor infrastructure. Flooding is exacerbated during high tide. In recent years, flooding has led to several fatalities, especially when unpredicted rain leads to flash flooding.

## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Power outages and spikes are common and especially affect the lower income population.

## Personnel-Background Concerns

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



Djibouti lacks public and reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

Djibouti is a tolerant Islamic country, but visitors should dress conservatively and observe local customs to the extent possible.

### Drug-related Crimes

A significant percentage of Djiboutian males are under the influence of khat on a daily basis. Khat is a leafy green plant that is typically chewed. The distribution of khat occurs in the afternoon hours, with sales kiosks set up across the capital city. The drug's effects, which can increase aggressiveness, may escalate what would otherwise be a casual interaction into a confrontation.

### Police Response

Police response is slow to non-existent.

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



Notify the Consular American Citizen Services office at the U.S. Embassy if you are detained/harassed.

## **Medical Emergencies**

The emergency response system is below Western standards. Embassy personnel have witnessed first-hand that response time for accidents outside the capital city is usually several hours. Ambulances are under-equipped and suffer from lack of maintenance. The training of ambulance staff is poor.

Local medical facilities do not generally offer the standard of care available as more developed countries, although there are a few doctors who cater to the expatriate community.

## **Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics**

Visitors with medical problems are advised to contact the French military hospital, Bouffard (Le Groupement médico-chirurgical Bouffard) at 253-21-35-2435 or 253-21-35-1351 ext. 4086 (ext. 297 for emergencies). Ambulance services also run out of Bouffard Hospital at 253-21-35-1351 extension 9333. Prior to admittance, patients have to make a deposit of 20,000 Djiboutian Francs (\$113.00) at intake. Bouffard will be closing in the summer of 2016. Once closed, no facilities capable of providing a high standard of care will exist.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



## Recommended Insurance Posture

Medical evacuation insurance is strongly advised.

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 2.9 percent nationally, but is 17 percent among female sex workers.

Djibouti has the second highest tuberculosis infection rate in the world, with a high rate of MDR infection.

The risk of the reintroduction of wild poliovirus is high, as are infections that are generally routinely immunized (measles) due to poor immunization coverage.

Falciparum-type malaria (chloroquine-resistant) is present; and the State Department recommends anti-malarial prophylaxis for official personnel.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
[http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/djibouti?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-sing-le-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/djibouti?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-sing-le-001).

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

There is no OSAC Country Council in Djibouti. To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov).

## **U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located in the Haramous neighborhood of Djibouti at Lot 350B.

Business hours are 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Sun-Thurs

### Embassy Contact Numbers

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



Telephone: (253) 21-45-3000.

Americans are welcome to visit the Consular section any time during business hours.

The Embassy has a duty officer on call 24 hours a day at 77877229.

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

## Embassy Guidance

U.S. citizens are encouraged to register with the Embassy by either appearing in person at the Consular section or registering online at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

Several scams have been reported to the Embassy in recent years. One involves locals approaching Americans and falsely claiming to work for the U.S. military or as local employees of the U.S. Embassy. They claim to have car problems and ask either to be driven somewhere or to borrow money. Such individuals are most likely not associated with the U.S.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*



military or the U.S. Embassy and are exploiting unsuspecting Americans.

Another scam involves someone who waits behind your vehicle as you back out of a parking space and purposely runs into or drives his bicycle/motorcycle into the back of your vehicle. The impact and noise frightens most people who look back to see what happened. Upon seeing someone lying on the ground and writhing in pain, most assume that this person was in their blind spot and that they have hit and hurt them. Most of these scammers will ask for money for medical bills, etc. This is a scam, and if you believe that this has happened to you, get the local police involved immediately and explain to them that you believe it to be a scam.

#### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors should remain vigilant and maintain high security awareness while on the streets. Additional caution should be exercised in congested areas (central market, city center, downtown neighborhoods (referred to as “Quartiers”)), especially after dark. Visitors should avoid isolated areas, particularly along the urban coastline.

It is strongly advised not to give money to people who wash your cars without permission or who watch your car while parked. Americans are generally the only people who give money, and this leads to further targeting.

Americans are also strongly discouraged from giving money to peddlers and street children, as this can easily lead to being swarmed by additional individuals who can become aggressive.

---

*The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.*