



## Equatorial Guinea 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Extortion; Burglary; Piracy; Aviation; Surveillance; Floods; Drug Trafficking; Kidnapping; Fraud; Maritime

Africa > Equatorial Guinea; Africa > Equatorial Guinea > Malabo

5/25/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Critical

### Crime Threats

Criminals consider Malabo and Bata prime grounds for operations due to the number of people, businesses, and affluent areas. Congested urban areas can be dangerous at night, but daytime incidents are also a possibility. The presence of other pedestrians on the street should not be taken as an indication of security. Victims report being robbed in broad daylight in the presence of witnesses. Crime increases during the Christmas holiday season.

Crime affects urban and rural areas due to limited police assets. In fact, the most common crime reported by Americans and the expatriate community is extortion by corrupt police officers.

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Theft of unattended items is the second most common crime reported by American expatriates. The items stolen most frequently tend to be cash and cell phones. Residential burglary is also commonly reported, especially among those who do not invest in a robust residential security posture. Among the local population, burglaries and home invasions occur frequently. Criminals have completely emptied a person's home while they were away during the day. Burglars have also entered residences while the occupants were home asleep. In 2015, a Western Ambassador took refuge in his residential safe haven as burglars broke through window grilles of his upscale, official residence. The thieves made off with the Ambassador's briefcase and electronics.

Criminals will resort to force if necessary to accomplish their goals. Gangs are not deterred by confrontations with their intended victims. Violent crime directed toward expatriates or foreign tourists is unusual, but there are reports of expatriates who have been attacked violently.

### Cybersecurity Issues

A very small percentage of the local population has access to the Internet, and cyber criminals are not known to operate from Equatorial Guinea. There have been no recent reports of cyber crimes with an Equatoguinean nexus.

### Other Areas of Concern

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Although piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is common, ships in littoral waters have had few reported piracy incidents. One locally-owned small cargo ship was hijacked in EG or Cameroonian waters in early 2014. The crewmembers were rescued by Nigerian Special Forces from a basecamp in the Nigerian Delta region.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic accidents are one of the greatest dangers in Equatorial Guinea. Use extreme caution when on the road, as drivers are prone to excessive speeding and reckless behavior. A large percentage of drivers are unlicensed, and a similar percentage of drivers are drunk, during the day and night. Other road hazards include: poor lighting, failure to obey traffic signals, presence of pedestrians, livestock, and other animals on roadways, slow moving vehicles, large trucks delivering heavy cargo, and erratic stopping by taxis and other vehicles. However, all main thoroughfares and most secondary roads are paved and in good to excellent condition in Malabo.

Avoid driving at night outside Malabo in deserted areas or those with low population density. Rural and suburban areas are poorly illuminated and pose additional safety hazards due to pedestrians and animals crossing the roads. Large trucks sometimes park on the roadside or on the road without using emergency flashers or warning signs.

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Keep automobile doors locked, seat belts fastened, and windows rolled up. Do not roll down your window if someone approaches your vehicle. Ignore persons outside your vehicle and drive away if you feel uncomfortable. Keep belongings out of plain view. While idling at a light/stop sign, leave adequate maneuver room between your vehicle and the one in front so that you can expedite your departure should the need arise. While stopped in urban traffic, continue to scan rearview mirrors to identify potential trouble. Park only in well-illuminated areas, preferably in parking lots with a security guard. Do not stop your vehicle if you encounter rocks/logs in the road. This is a technique used in Africa for robbers to force vehicles to stop. Either drive around the barriers or turn around. Do not stop to assess the situation. Police and soldiers sometimes ask private vehicles to give them a ride. Refuse politely.

#### Public Transportation Conditions

Taxi drivers have a reputation for being drunk while working. There have been reports in both Malabo and Bata of expatriates boarding taxicabs and then driven to unfamiliar places against their will and robbed. It is strongly advised to completely avoid the use of taxicabs. If it is absolutely necessary to take a taxicab, you should only do so if you are in groups of two or more so you have the ability to physically dominate the driver; do not allow unknown passengers in the vehicle with you.

Arrange for a private driver for transportation needs.

#### Aviation/Airport Conditions

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The Malabo airport (SSG) receives all international flights. Outbound passenger screening should be considered non-existent by U.S. standards, as passengers and non-passengers alike may proceed to the airside waiting room without undergoing security screening. Some airlines have instituted hand/visual screening at the boarding jetway that is of minimal deterrence value and should not be considered passenger security screening equal to ICAO, U.S., or European standards.

## **Terrorism Threat**

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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

Equatorial Guinea does not have a history of terrorism. Since 2015, there is growing concern within security forces over the potential for terrorism due to the increase in terrorism in the region, especially from neighboring Cameroon.

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

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Equatorial Guinea's septuagenarian president is Africa's longest-serving head of state. While there is no political unrest, the country lacks democratic experience and institutional capacity to guarantee an orderly change of leadership. The regime has thwarted two armed attacks: one in 2004 and another in 2009. Over the past few years, there have been no reports of political violence.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

#### Civil Unrest

Civil unrest is not common. Demonstrations are not allowed and are rare. If you run into one, stay away, as it is likely an illegal demonstration that the police will disperse.

In early 2015, a large body of taxi drivers protested proposed toll hikes. The government met the taxi drivers' demand and substantially reduced the toll hike that taxis would pay under the new law.

In March 2015, several rock throwing university students were arrested after an illegal protest over not receiving their scholarship funds. Security forces used tear gas to help disperse the more than 200 student protestors.

Police also released tear gas and arrested nine youths who protested the closing of the Rebola Cultural Center.

#### Post-specific Concerns

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## Environmental Hazards

During the summer season, torrential downpours can cause severe damage to villages and bridges. Most major cities are coastal. The lack of infrastructure could complicate any rescue or response operation.

## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

There have been no major problems or concerns in the recent past involving critical infrastructures (electricity, telecommunication, water supplies, public health) or the transportation system. Larger foreign companies have the capability to supply their compounds' power needs from generators and water needs from onsite wells. Some reliance on fuel for both transportation and electricity is a potential vulnerability for compounds that do not produce their own.

## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is a small black market in Malabo that sells counterfeit, stolen, and IPR violation goods. In downtown areas frequented by expatriates, street hawks will approach potential customers trying to sell questionable electronics. Do not accept or handle this merchandise.

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## Privacy Concerns

Visitors should have no expectation of privacy in hotel rooms or in publically accessible areas. Hotel rooms should be considered to be monitored or subject to being monitored and/or searched by local police/security entities.

## Personnel-Background Concerns

Equatorial Guinea is a conservative country where public displays of affection are not normally practiced.

## Drug-related Crimes

Drugs, especially marijuana, are present. Care should be taken to avoid being involved in any form of narcotics activity. There have been no reports of narco-terrorist events in Malabo since at least 2009.

## Kidnapping Threat

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There have been occasional kidnappings-for-ransom, but it is not known to be prevalent. A Chinese expatriate was kidnapped and died after he was bound and gagged in Bata. Chinese expatriates have also been targeted in Malabo due to the (mostly true) perception that Chinese carry large sums of cash with them (the Chinese Embassy in Malabo recommends to their citizens that they not leave cash at their residence, leaving few options).

## **Police Response**

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

Often, police will stop expatriates in traffic and will levy a fine to be paid on the spot, while threatening the driver with vehicle impoundment if they do not pay. Usually, the officer will explain that the driver failed to stop before the appropriate line marker or the tires may be too far away from the crosswalk, etc. This corruption tends to be the most prevalent crime that expatriates face. There were no reports of violence by police during the extortion events; however, a 2013 report involved an armed officer asking an American expatriate for the payment of a relatively small fine while unslinging his shotgun and bringing it to a 'port arms' position. The victim felt deeply threatened and paid the 'fine,' although the officer never stated what the violation was.

If an American citizen is harassed or detained by the police or other security personnel, s/he should immediately call U.S. Embassy Malabo. The Embassy's main telephone number is

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+(240) 333-095-741. The after-hours duty cell phone number is +(240) 222-516-008.

### Crime Victim Assistance

U.S. citizens are advised to call the American Citizen Services unit at the U.S. Embassy. The after-hours duty cell phone number is +(240) 222-516-008.

In the event of an emergency, the local police are typically the first point of contact. However, police response is sometimes slow, and investigations are often never opened. Prosecutions are very slow, if they are even initiated. GREG National Security emergency services can be reached 24 hours a day at 666 555 532.

### Medical Emergencies

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Malabo

La Paz Medical Center

Banades 3C Al S

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Sipopo, Bioko Norte

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Mobile: +(240) 555 500 300

Mobile : +(240) 222 091780

Phone: +(240) 556 666 154

Bata/Mainland

La Paz Medical Center-Bata

Bata, Equatorial Guinea (no address)

+(240) 222 633 344

Other local clinics in that are available:

Virgin Guadalupe Clinic (Clinica Virgen de Guadalupe)

Calle Rey Malabo, 5th block

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Phone: +(240) 333 096 956

Clinica Santa Isabel

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## CLINICA STA ISABEL I

Avenida Hassan II, near the Hotel Tropicana

## CLINICA STA ISABEL II

Parques de Africa, Caracolas

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Phone: +(240) 333 092 666

## Recommended Air Ambulance Services

### International SOS

Mobile: +(240) 222 217 327

24 hour Assistance Center

Tel: +(27) (0) 11 541 1300

### Air Rescue Africa

+(27) (11) 541 1100

[www.airrescueafrica.co.za](http://www.airrescueafrica.co.za)

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## Recommended Insurance Posture

Health insurance that covers you in Equatorial Guinea is strongly advised. Insurance for medical evacuation coverage is also strongly advised. Please double check with your insurance carrier prior to travel.

## 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/equatorial-guinea.htm>.

## OSAC Country Council Information

The OSAC Country Council is co-chaired by the U.S. Embassy Regional Security Officer (+240)-555-000-309) and a private sector partner. The Country Council meets on the last Friday of each month at 4pm. Approximately 20-40 members attend these monthly meetings. To contact the OSAC Africa Team, please email [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov).

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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## Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Embassy of the United States in Equatorial Guinea, New Airport Road, Malabo Dos

Business Hours: Mon-Thurs: 8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Fri: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. The Embassy is closed on both American and Equatoguinean holidays.

## Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator: +(240) 333-095-741

After-Hours Emergency Line: +(240) 555-516-008

This line is for emergencies involving American citizens only. Please do not use this line for visa inquiries.

Embassy Duty: Cell: +(240) 555-516-008

Post 1: +(240) 333-095-741 ext 4396

Post 2: (after hours) +(240) 333-095-741 ext 4170

Regional Security Officer: Phone: +(240) 333-095-741 ext 4377 and Cell: +(240) 555-000-309

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Consular Officer: Phone: +(240) 333-095-741 ext 4375 and Cell: +(240) 555-000-307

Email: [MalaboPublic@state.gov](mailto:MalaboPublic@state.gov)

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

## Embassy Guidance

The American Citizen Services (ACS) unit provides passport, notary, and other citizenship services by appointment only. ACS does not accept customers without an appointment except in cases of emergency. Appointment Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. To make an ACS appointment, contact [malaboconsular@state.gov](mailto:malaboconsular@state.gov).

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

When at a gas station, customers are often scammed by the pump attendant by not clearing the pump's meter back to zero, causing the victim to be shorted several liters of fuel. The distracted victim pays what is on the pump, only to realize after they drive away that they did not get what they paid for. Never allow the attendant to begin pumping fuel into your vehicle without seeing that the pump is reset to zero. Watch the meter climb to your requested

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amount and pay that amount.

## Situational Awareness Best Practices

Simple personal security measures -- holding your valuables, not wearing a lot of expensive jewelry, or flashing money -- will decrease the likelihood of being targeted by criminals for petty crimes of opportunity. Travelers are advised to be aware of their surroundings and to avoid unfamiliar areas with large crowds. Walking around late at night, either alone or in a group, is discouraged.

Most expatriate residents take residential security seriously and attempt to protect their homes accordingly. Those with more resources install perimeter walls topped with anti-climb fencing, window grilles and security lighting, and have 24-hour security guards. An effective deterrent to burglaries and home invasions is the presence of a watchdog, as the local population tends to be afraid of dogs.

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