



## Cabo Verde 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Murder; Employee Health Safety; Floods; Volcanoes; Drug Trafficking

Africa > Cabo Verde; Africa > Cabo Verde > Praia

5/26/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Cabo Verde is an archipelago nation of nine inhabited islands that lies about 300 miles west of Dakar, Senegal.

Post Crime Rating: Critical

### Crime Threats

The majority of crimes tends to be those for financial gain (pickpocketing, burglary, armed robbery) that are fueled in part by high unemployment and the growing drug trade throughout the islands. Most crimes are perpetrated by groups of youths, who by national law are immune from prosecution until they reach 16.

---

*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.*



Crime has been rising over the last decade in Cabo Verde. According to source data provided by local authorities in 2013, there was a significant increase in crimes between 2011 and 2012 (10.35 percent). This trend continued to rise as the 2014 crime statistics compared to 2013 showed the continued upward trend of another 1.74 percent to the already increased rate of crime (which equates to 401 additional crimes). The local police are compiling statistics but will not have 2015 data available until March 2016. Although the statistics for 2015 show a minimal increase in crime from 2014, this pattern shows that crime is rising. Moreover, the Embassy was elevated to “critical” threat for crime based on the increase of crime on Santiago island. This increase occurred in less than two years due to reporting of crimes and incidents.

Armed attacks have been occurring with some regularity in Praia and around the other islands, particularly on Sao Vicente.

Residential break-ins typically happen during the day and/or while occupants are away from their homes. Several residential break-ins occurred in Embassy neighborhoods in 2013, along with other crimes of opportunity. In 2014, an Embassy intern was assaulted for her purse. There were no reported crimes in 2015 against Embassy employees, perhaps due to the use of residential guards during nighttime hours only. However, crime reporting of armed robberies on diplomats in the luxury neighborhoods where U.S. Embassy staff are located have increased. In most instances, robbers have been armed with cutting instruments and occasionally with a gun or a handmade gun. Residential burglaries also occur in the affluent neighborhoods. Purse snatchings and pickpocketing by groups have become violent. Vehicle break-ins occur frequently when the assailant feels there is something of value in the vehicle. Most crimes in/around Praia are muggings and robberies that occur after dark or in isolated areas.

---

*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.*



Firearms used to be rare, and special permission is required to possess handguns and rifles. However, homicides where the assailants used firearms increased significantly in 2014. Cabo Verde saw an increase in deaths (54 homicides) related to violent crimes, especially in Praia. In 2013, there were 41 homicides in Praia. The criminal statistics for 2015 are projected to surpass the trend from 2014.

On April, 25, 2016, Cabo Verde witnessed a shocking and tragic event at the Monte Tchota army barracks. The barracks housed a nine-man detachment assigned with protecting a hilltop communications hub. In the middle of the night, a rouge soldier killed all eight of his fellow soldiers while they slept. In the morning, he killed three technicians (two Spaniards, one local Cabo Verdean), who showed up to the military facility. The rouge soldier gathered additional weapons and ammunition and fled in the technicians' vehicle. After the discovery of the killings, an intense manhunt ensued. A joint effort between the military, the National Police, and the Judicial Police led to his capture. An investigation is underway to determine the facts and motives of the massacre. This incident highlights the challenges Cabo Verde faces with regards to increasing levels of violent crime. An increasing availability of firearms, as well as their use in committing crimes, is a concern for the country.

#### Other Areas of Concern

In Praia, the Sucupira (outdoor market) and Fazenda areas are especially prone to pickpocketing, muggings, and purse snatchings. Both should be traversed with great care in daylight and avoided at night, especially by women alone.

Similar precautions should be taken to beach resort areas on Maio, Boa Vista, and Sal.

---

*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

Roads in Praia are typically in good condition. Half of the roads in Praia are paved and are between the cities or are in the more affluent areas; cobblestones pave most urban streets. Streets are narrow in downtown areas, and caution should be used while driving or crossing streets. Motorists are typically courteous, but caution should be exercised. Taxis, buses, and private vehicles will regularly stop in the middle of a road without warning. Traffic collisions also pose the greatest risk to residents and visitors.

In the outer areas, roads may not be as developed, and the ability to provide aid if broken down is diminished significantly. Excessive speeds on narrow, curving roads outside the cities pose a great danger to motorists. Most of the national highways are in good repair; however, other routes are cobblestone and can be extremely dangerous during rain. In rural areas, livestock have free rein, making driving hazardous.

Roads throughout Cabo Verde are poorly illuminated during night, and the electricity may go out at anytime.

Rainfalls in 2015 damaged some of the paved roads heading to the north of Santiago island. During heavy rains, streets will often flood; fast moving water can sweep away vehicles,

---

*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.*



destroy sections of the road, and wash out bridges.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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

Given the proximity to continental West Africa, regional terrorism is of some concern. There are no known indigenous terrorist or dissident groups in Cabo Verde; however, the islands' nautical location and small coast guard with limited resources does make terrorist transit a great risk. There have been no recorded or reported international terrorists incidents in Cabo Verde; however, the police have monitored groups they believe to have connections or influence with non-friendly organizations. There is a concern that extremism may be growing in the prison systems in Santiago and Sao Vicente islands.

In 2013, seven Syrian nationals were detained at the international airport and refused entry into Cabo Verde since they claimed to be transiting to Europe from Dakar. Cabo Verdean immigration officials are very active in monitoring entry/exit at the ports of entry.

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

---

*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.*



Cabo Verde has been a very stable democracy. The democratic system and processes are well-established and stable. Portuguese influence, legacy, and political/judicial framework is strong, and a stable system of government is in place. Political violence is virtually unknown.

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Civil unrest and civil disorder are not common. There are occasional demonstrations that take place as a result of economic issues, but all have been peaceful. In 2015, there was a slight increase in strikes and work stoppages, largely because of high unemployment numbers, but they still remain infrequent.

## **Post-specific Concerns**

Environmental Hazards

Natural disasters are of some concern.

---

*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.*



Flooding from heavy rains tends to cause the majority of problems that can adversely affect roads and some low-lying coastal areas (São Nicolau flooding in 2009, Hurricane Fred in 2015).

A volcano, located on Fogo erupted in 1995 and on November 23, 2014, but it did not affect Embassy operations or personnel. Air traffic was diverted for international flights for two weeks. The government was not prepared for an evacuation if the volcano eruption had required a complete evacuation of the island. The Embassy provided aid via the Office of Foreign Assistance in the form of funding to assist families who were displaced.

Given the austere and arid climate, water is a resource in short supply, and conservation is a key priority for the archipelago.

### Critical Infrastructure Concerns

There is some question regarding the government's ability to react to large-scale natural disaster. Both air and sea transportation of civil relief workers and the evacuation of residents proved challenging for the November 2014 volcano eruption due to limited resources. Request for assistance was made to foreign countries for aid and support, including air/sea support as provided by the Portuguese during the November 2014 volcano eruption. Similar concerns were raised during Hurricane Fred, which hit Cabo Verde in August 2015 and whose after-effects proved to be difficult for the government to respond to in the northern islands. As a result, managing or responding to disasters are inadequate. Additionally, while there is a

---

*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.*



coast guard, its resources are limited, and rescue or assistance of vessels or aircraft at sea would be challenging.

The ability of the government to respond to a major industrial or transportation accident is jeopardized because there are limited resources for managing or containing such an event. While emergency services do exist, a large-scale accident would require international coordination, depending on event's nature/severity. Resources on the main island and around Praia are limited, and there are even fewer services available on other islands.

## Drug-related Crimes

Drug trafficking has increased. Drug use and abuse is also on the rise, and an uptick in street crimes (pickpocketing, petty theft, robbery) is directly linked to the increase in drug abuse. However, drug abuse is not pervasive enough to cause serious socio-economic problems, and authorities are actively trying to combat and counter the drug trade and its negative social effects.

Cabo Verde continues to be a gateway for drug cartels to pass illegal drugs from South and Central America to Africa and Europe. Narco-violence is growing in the islands, resulting in the murder of the mother of a federal officer and the attempted murder of the son of the family of a high government official.

## Kidnapping Threat

---

*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.*



Kidnappings, for ransom or political gain, are rare or even non-existent; however, there were at least two children kidnapped in 2013. Both were released unharmed. The use or threat of kidnappings has been very low, and there is no information to suggest any change.

## Police Response

Police authorities are generally strong-willed, but their responsiveness is somewhat questionable. In most cases of larceny, the stolen items are never recovered. Police capacity to assist and responsiveness to crimes are affected by limited resources or by the prioritizing of more serious cases. Even though law enforcement is working as best they can with limited resources, drug interdiction continues to be a problem for the country. There are only 100 maritime police officers to patrol all the islands. Even though a police presence is visible, pro-active policing is not as prevalent as in other countries. Generally, police services are reactive. Language abilities beyond Portuguese and Creole are also very limited (some may know some French and Spanish), making it difficult for tourists and others to report crimes.

Local authorities stated that an upswing in crime for 2014 led the government to supplement their police forces with the military. This continued throughout 2015.

## 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.*



If detained or questioned by the police, cooperate fully with the authorities, as not doing so could prolong detention. Inform authorities of your status in the country, visiting purpose, and nationality, and request that they contact the U.S. Embassy. If needed, a detained U.S. citizen should contact American Citizen Services in the Embassy for assistance.

Incidents of corruption/bribery are not overt, nor are bribes typically solicited by police. If such an activity occurs, it should be reported immediately. Cabo Verdean officials remain committed to fighting official corruption and punishing abuse of power whenever reported.

#### Crime Victim Assistance

The few U.S. citizens who have been victims of crime did require the intervention of the RSO to get a response. The general police emergency number is 132. The language barrier is of some concern as the American tourist presence in Cabo Verde appears to be growing.

The following is a list of police contact numbers:

Santiago Island

Praia: 262-12-32

Cidade Velha: 267-11-32

Pedra Badejo: 269-13-32

---

*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.*



Santa Catarina: 265-11-32

Tarrafal: 265-11-32

Fogo Island

Mosteiros: 283-10-73

S.Filipe: 281-11-32

Brava Island: 285-11-32

Maio Island: 255-11-32

S. Nicolau Island

Ribeira Brava: 235-22-32

S.Vicente Island

Mindelo: 231-46-31

Sal Island

Espargos: 241-11-32

Santa Maria: 242-11-32

Santo Antao Island

Ribeira Grand: 221-11-32

Porto Novo: 222-11-32

---

*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.*



## Medical Emergencies

Medical facilities are rudimentary at best, especially outside of Praia. Medical service providers are often adequately trained, but lack equipment, supplies, and appropriate medical facilities for treating serious illnesses/injuries. Most medical staff speak Portuguese and French but are unlikely to speak or understand English.

General medical emergency number: 130

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Santiago island

Praia: hospital da Praia 261-24-62

Cidade velha: Posto Sanitario 267-11-20

Pedra Badejo: Hospital de Pedra Badejo 269-13-30

Santa Catarina: Hospital de Santa Catarina 265-11-30

Tarrafal: Hospital do Tarrafal 266-11-30

---

*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.*



Sal Rei: Hospital da Boa Vista 251-11-67

Brava island - Nova Sintra

Delegacia de Saude: 285-11-30

Fogo island

Mosteiros: hospital dos mosteiros 283-10-34

Sao Filipe: hospital de Sao Filipe 281-11-30 or 281-11-77

Maio island

Delegacia de saude: 255-11-30

São Nicolau island

Tarrafal: Hospital do Tarrafal 236-11-30

Ribelra Brava: Hospital da Ribelra Brava 235-11-30

São Vicente island

Mindelo: Hospital de Sao Vicente 232-73-55 or 31-18-79

Sal island

Delegacia de saude: 41-11-30 or 42-11-30

Santo Antão island

---

*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.*



Ribeira Grande: Hospital da Ribeira Grande 221-11-30

Porto Novo: Hospital do Porto Novo 222-11-30

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

Cabo Verde does not operate an air ambulance service. Any emergency service would take at the minimum, one hour to reach Praia from Dakar and would be extremely expensive.

#### Recommended Insurance Posture

For serious medical problems transportation to Europe is the best, and sometimes the only, viable option.

#### 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/traveler/none/cape-verde?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/cape-verde?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001).

---

*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.*



## **OSAC Country Council Information**

Embassy Praia does not have an OSAC Country Council. 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

Rua Abilio Macedo 6 Caixa Postal 201 Praia, Cape Verde

Hours of Operation are 0800-1700, M-F

### Embassy Contact Numbers

238 (country code)

---

*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.*



U.S. Embassy Switchboard 260-8900

Embassy Operator 260-8912

Embassy Duty Officer: 991-3325

Regional Security Officer: 260-8926

Commercial section: 238-260-8922

FSNI 991-7141/972-9956

Medical Unit 991-1236

Management Officer 260- 8923

Consular Affairs 260-8907/260-8995

Political/Economic Section 260-8925

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

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

Situational Awareness Best Practices

---

*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.*



Visitors and residents should observe the same kinds of security precautions one would exercise in unfamiliar and economically disadvantaged areas anywhere in the world. Local guard services are widely employed in Praia and are generally considered effective in protecting property and individuals within guarded areas and serving as a general deterrent to criminal activity.

---

*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.*