Overall Crime and Safety Situation
U.S. Embassy Yaoundé does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The ASC Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED YAOUNDE AS BEING A CRITICAL-THREAT COUNTRY FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Please review OSAC’s Cameroon-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

High unemployment and an under-equipped police force continue to fuel criminality in Yaoundé, Douala, and other towns. An influx of refugees fleeing conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Nigeria has strained Cameroon’s economy and added to already crowded urban areas.

Crime Threats
Criminal activity is a major concern for the official and private American communities in Cameroon. Street crime is endemic in major metropolitan areas. Wealthy Cameroonians, expatriates, and members of the diplomatic community continue to be targeted. Persons have been robbed inside and outside their residences, on the street, in restaurants, and in shops. Victims are pickpocketed at virtually all large gatherings and soccer matches. A thief may move in close and place the tip of a knife or other sharp object in the victim’s side, while leading the victim to an isolated location or crowd before taking or demanding money. Thieves often attempt to distract a victim by asking questions or bumping/jostling the victim, and while the victim is distracted, an accomplice may snatch a necklace, purse, or wallet. Often, the thieves use knives or razor blades to cut valuables out of pockets or handbags. Thieves routinely use motorcycles as a platform to snatch purses. Theft by intimidation or extortion is another popular street crime.

Generally, November and December witness increased street crime, thefts from vehicles (occupied, unoccupied), residential break-ins, highway banditry, and armed robberies. These crimes are economically-motivated and often involve violence, especially when victims resist or fight back. Many crimes involve an “inside man” and target individuals or locations involved with payrolls, money transfer, or other activities involving large sums of cash.

Home invasions by gangs are reported in upper-class neighborhoods, especially at locations without 24-hour guards and residential security enhancements (perimeter walls, window grilles, solid-core/metal doors).

Carjacking is less frequent than in other regional countries but is a concern and has led to deadly confrontations.

Commercial scams targeting foreigners, including U.S. citizens, continue to be a problem. The scams generally involve phony offers of lucrative sales and repeated requests for additional funds to pay for unforeseen airport and/or customs fees.
Cybersecurity Issues

The Embassy and members of federal law enforcement have identified a wide range of Internet scams based in Cameroon. These schemes cover a broad spectrum of bogus activities, including child adoptions, insurance claims, dating scams, real estate, and the provision of domestic services (nannies, household help), agricultural products, antiques, and exotic/domesticated animals. Often, these are “advance fee” scams, in which the victim pays money to someone in anticipation of receiving something of greater value but ends up receiving little or nothing in return.

Other Areas of Concern

The U.S. Embassy restricts U.S. official personnel travel to the North, Far North, and East regions of Cameroon and any travel to the north or east of Ngaoundere in the Adamawa region. Travel to the Far North, North, Adamawa, and East regions are restricted and require advance coordination with host-nation security forces due to threats of terrorist attacks, kidnappings, and other violence by extremist groups. The State Department warns U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the North and Far North Regions and parts of the East and Adamawa Regions of Cameroon because of terrorist threats, kidnapping threat posed by the Nigerian extremist group Boko Haram, and the risk of violent crime. The Boko Haram terrorist group has actively targeted foreign residents, tourists, and government leaders in the North and Far North Region. 37 foreigners have been reported kidnapped since 2013. Since July 2015, the group has carried out dozens of suicide bombings in the North and Far North regions, including Maroua.

There has been an increase in unrest in the Northwest and Southwest regions. U.S. citizens should exercise caution when travelling to these regions and avoid all demonstrations.
Disruptions in communication services may limit the U.S. Embassy’s ability to provide consular or emergency services in these regions.

U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution if traveling within 60 miles of the border with Nigeria’s Adamawa State in the North and Adamawa regions of Cameroon, the border area with Chad, and the border areas with the CAR due to violence, criminal activity, and military operations that sometimes cross into Cameroon. There are Travel Warnings for Nigeria, Chad, and CAR.

Travel after dark is strongly discouraged anywhere due to the heightened risk for traffic accidents and increased criminality during the night.

The U.S. Embassy’s ability to provide consular services in remote and rural areas of Cameroon is extremely limited.

**Transportation-Safety Situation**

**Road Safety and Road Conditions**

Cameroon’s road networks (paved, unpaved) are poorly maintained and unsafe. During the rainy season, many roads are barely passable with four-wheel drive vehicles. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards (especially at night), and road safety rules are frequently ignored. There are few road and traffic signs.

Speed limits are minimally enforced, with the exception of the major routes between Yaoundé, Douala, and Bamenda. Speed traps and checkpoints on highways catch unsuspecting
motorists and result in fines of approximately U.S.$50. The maximum national speed limit is 110 km/hour. Gruesome speed-related accidents are common on the major highways.

Vehicles are poorly maintained, and there is no mechanism or requirement to inspect for roadworthiness. In 2013, the government passed a law requiring that a basic safety kit (reflective triangle, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, etc.) should be in all vehicles, and roadside checkpoints will stop and conduct vehicle inspections for these items. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report, “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

Cameroon has experienced resurgence in road banditry in the East, Adamoua, North, and Far North regions. Road bandits (coupers de route) have targeted public buses and have resorted to violence to control passengers.

In December 2014, bandits, possibly affiliated with Boko Haram, attacked a bus on the Mora-Waza highway and executed 11 males before stealing passengers’ valuables.

In April 2014, bandits stopped a bus en route from Ngaoundere to Maroua and shot and killed a military officer.

More recent attacks have also been attributed to Boko Haram-affiliated groups in these regions.

Public Transportation Conditions

Other modes of transportation are considerably more dangerous.
Bus accidents are frequent and result in thousands of fatalities every year. Buses are always overcrowded, often poorly maintained, and are driven in an unsafe manner at dangerous speeds.

The last and most recent major train derailment occurred in October 2016, in which more than 70 people were killed and over 500 injured.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Cameroon has experienced three air transport-related accidents in the past two decades. For several weeks in 2013, Nsimalen International Airport suspended nighttime flights due to a malfunctioning guidance system that was eventually replaced. Other temporary closures have occurred due to poor illumination and/or lack of electricity. The U.S. Embassy recommends avoiding flights to Cameroon that transit Bangui M'Poko Airport in the CAR due to unrest.

Terrorism Threat

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED YAOUNDE AS BEING A MEDIUM-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Boko Haram (BH) and the Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) are active in the North and Far North regions. Since 2015, there have been over 100 documented and reported improvised explosive device (IED) detonations along roadways, in villages, and in local markets. There are no Embassy personnel assigned to or posted in these regions, but there are U.S. military
and implementing partners for NGOs who are.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There have been no reports of any widespread anti-American or anti-Western incidents or sentiment over the past two years.

In December 2016, a Cameroonian male approached the U.S. Embassy and requested to speak with the Ambassador. The individual became agitated when told that the Ambassador was not available and brandished a long knife, stating that he was there to kill Americans. Ultimately, the situation was resolved by the local Gendarmes, with no injury to any Embassy personnel.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED YAOUNDE AS BEING A MEDIUM-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Civil Unrest

Monitor the Embassy’s Security Messages for updates on protests and communication restrictions.
Religious/Ethnic Violence

For the past several years, there has been an ongoing secessionist movement in Northwest and Southwest regions. This movement is associated with the Anglophone/Francophone divide within the country. In November 2016, the area experienced widespread civil unrest that included lawyers and teachers staging walkouts and work stoppages that shuttered schools for several weeks. Owners of stores and markets staged organized closures of storefronts, making it very difficult for the public. These groups have staged large-scale demonstrations and clashed with local police and the government. In isolated cases, these demonstrations have ended in bloodshed and several deaths.

Post-specific Concerns

Critical Infrastructure

There is a serious lack of infrastructure in most of the country, even in parts of major cities. The power grid is unreliable, and wide-scale blackouts are common. Many neighborhoods lack dedicated, running, or even potable water. Large portions of public roadways are in disrepair. There are few street lights to illuminate the roadways, making travel dangerous.

There is a noticeable lack of Western-branded, service industry-oriented businesses. Within the major cities, there are only a handful of hotels that would be considered acceptable by Western standards.

Personal Identity Concerns

The rate of enforcement of anti-homosexual laws is among the highest in the world. Over the past few years, charges have been brought against scores of people under
the Cameroon Criminal Code. Society is characterized by a strongly homophobic climate; homosexuality is not only condemned by the media, but is also strongly opposed by religious figures. Police officers and civilians are instigated to oppress the LGBT community on the misconception that, as homosexuals are not recognized, they do not hold legal rights.

In the summer of 2016, the RSO was notified that an American citizen was being blackmailed by an individual that he had met via social media. During a number of video chat sessions, the American participated in consensual, sexually explicit activity. Unbeknownst to the American, the person on the other end had recorded the activity and was threatening to turn the video over to the police as part of a criminal complaint unless the American met the individual’s demand for money.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnapping and kidnapping for ransom are a serious security concern in Cameroon, especially in areas bordering northern Nigeria and the CAR. Boko Haram (BH) and the Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) have several years of history engaging in this tactic to raise money for their causes.

Police Response

Local law enforcement and security personnel continue to face significant difficulties stemming from crime. Suspects are rarely caught, and police response, if at all, is often delayed. The police and security forces lack training and equipment. In some cases, police forces have perpetrated criminal acts, or they have been complicit with criminal elements. Security roadblocks serve mostly as a venue for police and military gendarmes to extort bribes.
How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If U.S. citizens encounter difficulties, they should contact the local authorities and the U.S. Embassy. Any American detained by local authorities should remain calm, be non-confrontational, and request to contact the U.S. Embassy immediately.

Crime Victim Assistance

Embassy Yaoundé switchboard: +237 22220-1500

American Citizen Services: Ext. 4341
Regional Security Office: Ext. 4014 / 4185 / 4017
Police: Dial 17 on landlines or 117 on cell phones.
Fire: Dial 18 on landlines or 118 on cell phones

Medical Emergencies
Medical and life safety services are limited.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

Cameroon Assistance Sanitaire (Tel: + 237 23342-7037, Fax: + 237 23342-0079), in Douala, response time is 3½-4 hours. It has planes and ambulances and will service Yaoundé if time permits.

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Yaoundé (CHUY) (Tel: + 237 22 31-2566/ 22 31-2103) has several fully stocked ambulances available.
Yaoundé General Hospital (Tel: + 237 22221-2018) has two ambulances.
SAMU (Emergency Ambulance Service), at Yaoundé Central Hospital (Tel: +237 22223-4020) will transport patients to any desired facility.

Yaoundé General Hospital (Tel: + 237 22221-2018 or + 237 22221-2019) has about 100 in-patient beds. This hospital is the most advanced available locally and is kept generally clean. There are seven operating rooms if personnel and equipment are available. Nursing care is fair on the general wards and in the intensive care/surgical recovery areas. The emergency ward is open 24-hours daily. Some physicians are excellent, but medical care is somewhat unpredictable. A physician should be contacted when a patient is taken here:

Dr. Njuimo Georges: direct line: + 237 22221-2018, mobile: + 237 67771-0913

Dr. Nouedoui Christophe: direct line: +237 22221-2018, mobile: +237 67759-4351

Yaoundé Central Hospital (Tel: + 237 22223-4020) has several very competent physicians with at least 20 in-patient beds and a surgical suite.

Dr. Pierre Fouda - Director Central Hospital Yaoundé mobile phone: +237 69984-8823

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Yaoundé (CHUY) (Tel: +237 22231-2566, +237 22231-2103) is the University teaching facility. Most specialties are available and the Center has a good, up-to-date, ambulance service. CHUY has a 24-hour emergency department but is not to U.S. standards.

Available Air Ambulance Services
Cameroon Assistance Sanitaire, Douala Tel: +237 23342-4891, +237 23342-7037 Fax: +237 23342-0079. Contact: Mr. Soussie + 237 23330-9020

Missionary Medevac Helicopter in Bamenda (Northwest Region) Tel: + 237 23336-1285 Contact: Pilot David Carmen or Baptist Mission
SOS Assistance SA of Geneva Tel: +41 22 785-6464
Telex medical evacuation from Cameroon to Europe Tel: + 41 22 785-6424

Insurance Guidance
Anyone should ensure that their health insurance covers medical evacuation via air ambulance.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Cameroon.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Yaoundé Country Council currently meets twice a month and has approximately 20 members. Please contact OSAC’s Africa team with any questions or to join.

U.S. Embassy Location & Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The United States Embassy

Avenue Rosa Parks (in the Mbankolo Quartier, adjacent to the Mount Febe Golf Club)

Yaoundé, Cameroon
Normal Business Hours: Mon-Thurs 0730-1700; Fri 0730-1230
Embassy Contact Numbers
Embassy Yaoundé switchboard: +237 22220-1500

American Citizen Services: Ext. 4341
Regional Security Office: Ext. 4014 / 4185 / 4017
Marine Post 1: Ext. 4040
Email: YaoundeACS@state.gov
Fax: +237 22220-1572
Website: https://cm.usembassy.gov/
Embassy Guidance

All American citizens living in or traveling to Cameroon are encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

Additional Resources

Cameroon Information Sheet