



## Philippines 2011 OSAC Crime and Safety Report: Manila

Bombing; Burglary; Riots/Civil Unrest; Crime; Insurgencies; Kidnapping; Natural Disasters; Narcoterrorism; Political Violence; Religious Violence; Terrorism; Theft; Threats

East Asia & Pacific > Philippines > Manila

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Threats

As with any major metropolis, crime is problematic in metro Manila. The preponderance of criminal acts perpetrated are pick pocketing, confidence schemes, and, to a lesser degree, credit card fraud. Kidnappings and violent assaults sporadically occur throughout metro Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines. Americans in the Philippines exercise good judgment and basic security habits while remaining aware of their surroundings.

Road Safety

Traffic in the Philippines, especially Manila, is dense, chaotic, and unpredictable. Motorists must be particularly cognizant of other drivers, who may not obey traffic signals/signs or stay in their respective lanes. The traffic infrastructure in the Philippines is less developed than in the U.S., and signage or warnings of ongoing road works are rare. Huge numbers of buses, Jeepsneys, taxis, motorbikes, and private vehicles clog roadways not designed to handle the volume of traffic on them, add to this a steady stream of pedicabs plying the same roadways, and the mix is conducive to regular accidents. Travel at night outside of Manila is not recommended due to the risk of robbery, kidnapping, and accidents.

Political Violence

Historical Perspective

The potential for political violence in the Philippines has been high, especially during election periods. On November 23, 2009, a politically-motivated massacre took place in the province

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of Maguindanao, claiming 57 victims, including 30 journalists, making it one of the worst election-related acts of violence in recent history. As a result, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) instituted a gun ban prior to all future election cycles in an attempt to both curb violence among political rivals and to curtail the politically-related activities of Armed Partisan Groups.

Subsequently, the election cycle of 2010 that included the Presidential race proved to be the most peaceful and least violent electoral process in the history of the Philippines since democracy was established.

Crime data gathered by the Philippine National Police (PNP) based on reports from the Police Regional Offices showed a 38.33 % drop in total crime volume (205,604) during the 8-month period from January to August of 2010, from the (333,416) crime incidents recorded during the same period in 2009. The significant improvement in the overall crime statistics is attributed largely to the 150-day election gun ban instituted by the COMELEC that took effect from January to June 2010.

#### Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Terrorist groups and criminal gangs continue to operate in most regions of the Philippines, and extrajudicial killings continue to be a problem. The communist New People's Army (NPA) has not targeted foreigners in recent years, but could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities. The NPA frequently demands "revolutionary taxes" from local and, at times, foreign businesses and business people, and sometimes the NPA attacks infrastructure such as power facilities, telecommunication towers, and bridges to enforce its demands. Since 2008, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have sporadically clashed in the Mindanao provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and Sulu Archipelago.

In North Cotabato, family feuds, referred as "Rido," continue between warring groups of the MILF and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). In 2010, 19 people were confirmed killed in clashes between these groups.

U.S. Government employees must continue to seek authorization to travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. Travelers to these regions should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas. Some foreigners who reside in or visit Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago hire

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their own personal security. Embassy Manila continues to receive reports of ongoing activities by known terrorist groups in these areas.

On August 5, 2010, a bomb was detonated at the Zamboanga International Airport. There were two casualties, including the individual who was carrying the bomb, and 22 bystanders were wounded with non life threatening injuries. Investigators believe the individual carrying the bomb was an unwitting accomplice. Philippine law enforcement officials surmise that this was an attempt to murder the Sulu governor who was arriving at the airport at the time of the detonation but was unharmed.

#### International or Transnational Terrorism

In 2010, there were no reports of international or transnational terrorism in the Philippines.

#### Civil Unrest

There were 21 non-violent demonstrations held near the U.S. Embassy in 2010. Most of the protest groups were intercepted by the PNP before reaching the Embassy.

#### Post-Specific Concerns

#### Environmental Hazards

The Philippines is vulnerable to almost all types of environmental hazards due to its proximity to the circum-Pacific belt of fire and along the typhoon path in the region. The country experiences an average of 20 typhoons per year that result in numerous floods, flashfloods, landslides, and even tsunamis. It is also host to 300 volcanoes, 22 of which are active. In 2010, the country experienced six typhoons, two tropical storms, and three severe tropical storms that resulted in four cases of flashfloods in the Bicol Region and Mindanao (i.e. South Cotabato, Zamboanga and Agusan Del Norte) and floods in other areas in Mindanao and Isabela. Typhoon Juan, which struck the country in October 2010, killed 35 people and caused a total of \$275 million in damages, by far one of the worst, ranking sixth in the top ten natural disasters in the Philippines (for the period 1900 to 2011) in terms of economic damage costs. Also during October, Typhoon Basyang struck the Luzon region and killed 146 people.

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In December 2010, volcanic activities from Mt. Bulusan in Sorsogon caused the evacuation of nearby municipalities.

#### Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Transportation safety involving maritime ferries and passenger buses tends to be substandard, and Embassy staff are prohibited from using such modes of transportation. On average, over 200 sea mishaps happen yearly. In 2009, within two days, two aging ferries sank, resulting in significant loss of life and property.

In February 2010, the Philippine government signed into law the Philippine Coast Guard Act, which gives the Philippine Coast Guard the core functions of enforcing maritime laws, protecting the marine environment, and conducting search and rescue operations during sea emergencies

In 2010, no major industrial or transportation incidents were reported.

Other modes of public transportation, such as railways, are also subject to overcrowding and lax maintenance and are subject to petty criminal activity and accidents. American travelers should avoid using such modes of transportation.

#### Kidnappings

The PNP Police Anti Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) is primarily responsible for kidnap investigations. PACER officials report that kidnapping incidents in Mindanao are mostly perpetrated by Muslim individuals/groups that are members or allies of terrorist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Lawless MILF Group (LMG). Kidnappings are most prevalent in Western Mindanao particularly in the Autonomous Region Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) area/provinces, the Zamboanga Peninsula, and in Cotabato-Central Mindanao Region, specifically in the provinces of South and North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, and in the Chartered Cities of Zamboanga, General Santos City, Cotabato, Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. Notably, since numerous arrests of most of the members of the kidnap for ransom (KFR) groups, specifically the Pepin group in Manila, by the PNP, there have been no KFR incidents in the areas of Surigao, Butuan, Agusan, and Davao provinces. The Pepino KFR Group had been responsible in the kidnapping of several businessmen in these areas in the past years.

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For now, there is no known organized criminal KFR group that operates in Mindanao aside from the terrorist organizations. Travelers are still advised to avoid Mindanao if possible.

On August 23, 2010, a former PNP officer hijacked a bus transporting tourists and Philippine nationals through metropolitan Manila. Eight tourist were killed by the hijacker before police commandeered the bus and killed the hijacker.

### Drug and Narco-Terrorism

Production, trafficking, and consumption of illegal drugs is a problem in the Philippines. The trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine is the primary drug problem. Marijuana is the second most abused drug followed by ecstasy and, to a lesser extent, cocaine. Transnational organized crime groups both exploit under-staffed and under-resourced Philippine law enforcement and a weak judicial system to establish clandestine drug laboratories and import wholesale quantities of methamphetamine to supply the Philippine domestic market. Significant clandestine methamphetamine laboratories have been raided in Metro Manila and Luzon. The trend in 2010 was toward fewer drug labs and more importation of methamphetamine. Regionally, the Philippines has been identified as a methamphetamine source for Guam and, to a lesser extent, Hawaii. However, the Philippines appeared to be a transit location and does not have a significant cocaine domestic market. In December 2009, a ship carrying approximately two metric tons of cocaine dumped its cargo off the coast of Samar (eastern Visayas). To date, only approximately 550 kilograms of the cocaine has been recovered by Philippine authorities. Drug enforcement experts believe most of the remainder of the cargo has been recovered and trafficked or otherwise distributed.

### Police Response

The PNP is capable, but is limited in its capacity to respond and assist victims of crime and traffic accidents due to a lack of response vehicles, radios, and other essential equipment. All incidents of crime should be reported to the PNP, and it is important that foreigners remain calm and polite when interacting with the PNP to avoid misunderstandings and to get a more desired response. Reports of corruption and bribery are widespread throughout the Philippines, to include within the PNP; it is U.S. Government policy not to pay or condone bribes to officials. Should an American feel he is being extorted by the police, he should

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contact that officer's commander and report it to the Embassy. In the event of arrest or detention by the police, call the American Embassy at 301-2000. There is a duty officer available 24 hours a day.

Emergency numbers:

Police:

Manila-523-3378

Makati City-843-7971

Pasay City-831-1359 and 831-8059

Quezon City-924-1018

Fire:

Manila-527-3627 and 527-3653

Makati City-818-5150

Pasay City-843-6523

Quezon City-924-1922

Medical Emergencies

Adequate medical care is available in major cities, but even the best hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and facilities provided by hospitals in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and remote areas. There are many U.S.- and western-trained Filipino doctors, who, in general, provide good, quality medical care even with substandard medical facilities.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost several thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees at the time of admission and full payment prior to discharge. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatment for non-payment. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is on the webpage of the U.S. Embassy Manila at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

Emergency number: 117

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Makati Medical Center: 815-9911  
St. Luke's Global Hospital: 789-7700  
Manila Doctors Hospital: 524-3011  
Asian Hospital: 771-9000/9001/9002  
International SOS-Philippines (Air Ambulance) 687-0909

### Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Common sense and good situational awareness will keep most people out of harm's way. Criminals in the Philippines prey on people who do not pay attention to their surroundings or do not take basic personal security precautions. Never show large amounts of cash, don't wear a lot of jewelry, and always use reliable transportation. Credit card and ATM fraud can occur, so it is best to use credit cards at major retail facilities and banks and always check bills or statements for suspicious charges. Date-rape drug use has occurred; never leave a drink unattended or accept drinks from a stranger. There are many guard companies who provide armed residential and facilities security, if needed. Travel to Mindanao should be avoided.

### Contact Information

The Embassy operator is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week and can connect callers with the duty officer or the duty RSO. The Embassy operator can be reached at 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizen's Services website is <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

### OSAC Country Council Contact Information

The OSAC points of contact are:  
Simoun Ung 011-63-0917-526-2475, [simoun.ung@osac.ph](mailto:simoun.ung@osac.ph)  
Serge Grynkewich 011 -63-2-687-0999, [serge.grynkewich@internationalsos.com](mailto:serge.grynkewich@internationalsos.com)

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