Guinea 2013 Crime and Safety Report

Transportation Security; Carjacking; Elections; Assassinations; Riots/Civil Unrest; Travel Health and Safety; Bribery; Fraud; Information Security; Financial Security; Cyber; Stolen items; Theft

Africa > Guinea > Conakry

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

American citizens are well received in Guinea. Americans and foreign visitors are not regular criminal targets; however, criminals, thieves, beggars, and corrupt officials perceive U.S. and foreign visitors as lucrative targets. Criminals particularly target foreign visitors at the airport, in the markets, and near hotels and restaurants frequented by foreigners. Residential and street crime is common and at times confrontational.

Security at Gbessia International Airport was nearly non-existent, but the creation of a new, modern terminal, professionally made access badges, and heightened security have improved the situation. Visitors who arrange to be met at the airport by hotel personnel or business contacts can still reduce vulnerability to scam artists.

Overall Road Safety Situation
Guinea’s road networks, both paved and unpaved, are underdeveloped and unsafe. Roads and vehicles are poorly maintained, and there are few traffic signs. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards. Drivers are poorly trained, and road safety rules are routinely ignored. Defensive driving is crucial, as drivers commonly pull in front of other vehicles or stop abruptly without warning. Equipment, such as turn signals, mirrors, headlights, tail lights, on many local vehicles and taxis do not function. Be alert to motorcycles when changing lanes or when you are stopped in traffic. Drivers should pay attention to side streets and honk the horn when approaching intersections during the day to avoid being hit from the side. Beware of taxis and mini-buses pulled over to the side of a road. Drivers often re-enter the roadway without looking. When making cross-lane turns, always check rearview mirrors. It is not uncommon for traffic to pass on the side you are turning, even when you are using turn signals.

Nighttime travel is not advisable because of the large number of animals and people on the roads. Further, most roadways have no street lights, and vehicles frequently operate without headlights.

Public transportation vehicles are both unsafe and overcrowded. There are reports of passengers being attacked and robbed.

It is essential to keep car doors locked at all times. Failure to do so has resulted in carjacking and vehicle intrusion while stopped. It is also advisable to keep windows up and only to roll them down enough to communicate when necessary. Soldiers manning checkpoints at night and police at intersections during the day will often solicit bribes. Display requested documents, but do not surrender them, as officials may take them if bribes are not paid.
Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Following the assassination attempt and subsequent medical evacuation of then-President Captain Moussa Dadis Camara on December 3, 2009, Guinea entered a period of calm for the next six months as Interim President Sekouba Konate insisted on elections taking place absent his candidacy. Though much political violence was anticipated in the run-up to elections on June 27, 2010, Guinea completed its first round of elections without incident, and Conakry enjoyed a very quiet summer.

In September 2010, however, tensions began to rise, and the second round (run-off) of elections kept being delayed by the national electoral commission, and campaign rhetoric from the two run-off candidates became increasingly ethnically hostile. Late September and early October saw sporadic demonstrations in Conakry, but ones that were effectively controlled by the local police, who had clearly benefited from Use of Force training given to them during the summer by police officers from the U.S. and EU. The run-off elections went without incident in late October, but the announcement by the electoral commission declaring Alpha Conde the president in early November led to widespread demonstrations throughout the country by supporters of losing candidate, Celou Dallein Diallo. On two occasions, Embassy personnel had to be brought to and from work in armored vehicles, as gunfire could be heard throughout the city during the day and through the night. At no time did it appear Americans or other foreigners were directed blamed or targeted by these demonstrations, but the demonstrations did take place at major Conakry traffic centers so the potential for danger remained high. The certification of the election by the Guinean Supreme Court in late November, along with a public concession by Diallo in early December, saw Conakry return to
normal, and no further incidents were reported during the remainder of the year.

The year 2011 was a bit calmer politically. In July, there was an assassination attempt against President Conde at his personal residence. Disgruntled members of the military and several former bodyguards of ex-President Konate were implicated. President Conde survived the attack. In September, there were mass protests against the lack of legislative elections and the second anniversary of the 2009 stadium massacre. The protests turned violent and resulted in several deaths and many injuries.

Civil Unrest

Conakry saw a series of public demonstrations that led to confrontations with riot police in 2012 centered around disagreements with government plans for the legislative elections scheduled for May 2013. As elections grow near, many expect an increase in labor strikes and protests.

Guinea’s forest region also experienced regional turmoil brought on by labor disputes between local communities and mining companies.

Post-specific Concerns
Operating costs are incredibly high due to the installation of private telecommunication, transportation, and electricity infrastructure necessary for competitive production.

Electricity and water are irregular in Conakry and largely unavailable throughout the interior.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

The transportation infrastructure is incomplete and badly deteriorating, including the road, railroad, and port systems. Despite the opening in 2005 of a new road connecting Guinea and Mali, most major roadways connecting the country’s trade centers remain in poor repair, slowing the delivery of goods to local markets.

Regional Travel Concerns and Restricted Travel Areas/Zones

For travel outside Conakry, prior planning is essential to ensure fuel points, lodging, and food/water availability. U.S. citizens can check with American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy prior to departing for up-to-date information.

Police Response
Local authorities are poorly equipped and trained. Local authorities have little or no emergency response capabilities and usually require the victim to drive them from the police station to the accident or crime scene.

Many officials solicit bribes and are often involved as co-conspirators in criminal activities. Therefore, Embassy Conakry does hold confidence in the Chief of the National Gendarmerie to helm the security forces during Guinea’s immediate future. He has, however, implemented Use of Force principles that were agreed upon in 2010.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

There are no telephones numbers listed for public use in case of an emergency.

Victims of crime should immediately notify the U.S. Embassy in Conakry. The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to local authorities and to the U.S. Embassy.

Medical Emergencies

Guinea does not have hospital care comparable to U.S. standards.
Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

There are several private clinics and services available to address many types of emergencies. There are four hospitals and clinics in the Conakry area. These numbers include the country code. In Guinea, use only the last eight digits.

Clinique Pasteur, Dr. Ben Baba + 224 64 28 91 21
Clinique Ambroise Pare, Dr. Saad, Director, + 224 64 25 13 44
Cabinet Medical, Dr. Maria G. Doumbouya, + 224 64 25 13 44
International Medical Center, Dr. Rodingher, + 224 60 29 71 17

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Serious medical problems may be stabilized in Conakry while awaiting medical evacuation. There is no private air ambulance service in Guinea. Medical evacuation insurance is highly recommended. If medical evacuation is necessary, arrangements can be made with the following international private air ambulance service:

S.O.S. Air Ambulance www.internationalsos.com

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Diseases such as malaria, including cerebral malaria, hepatitis, and intestinal disorders, are endemic. Proper use of anti-malarial medication in Guinea is required.

For additional health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/guinea.htm.
Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Crimes/Scams

Travelers should avoid unsolicited offers of assistance at the airport or hotels, as these individuals may be seeking opportunities to rob visitors of their bags, purses, or wallets.

Commercial scams and disputes with local business partners have created legal difficulties for U.S. citizens. The ability of the U.S. Embassy to extricate U.S. citizens from unlawful business deals is extremely limited.

Computer scams are on the rise usually by email solicitation or fax. These scams target private business personnel and non-governmental organization employees. Stay away from these scams; many business personnel have lost large quantities of money and have put themselves in danger by engaging in such deals.

Areas to be Avoided and Best Security Practices

Personal awareness is your best defense. By being aware and taking a few basic security measures, travelers can reduce their vulnerability significantly. If someone bumps into you, immediately check your pockets. If walking down a crowded street, stay to one far side or the
other. It is easier to pay attention to 180 degrees, and any potential threats must cross traffic to intercept you. Travelers should pay attention their surroundings. Visitors should make eye contact and acknowledge those who may be observing their movements. Along walking and driving routes, identify safe havens where one could seek refuge or help if followed. Avoid poorly lit streets, alleyways, and side streets.

Travelers should wear little or no jewelry when shopping or in crowded areas. Be alert when carrying handbags and never flash money, no matter how little. Money should be divided into small amounts and secured in different pockets. Carry only the amount of money needed. Cellular telephones should be used cautiously in public. They are easily snatched and are a prime target for thieves. If confronted, do not resist. The assailant or assailants may be armed and have the advantage of surprise. It is better to lose money, jewelry, or other valuables than to risk serious injury.

Conakry offers several expensive hotels to travelers, though the accommodations do not compare to standards elsewhere. Do not discuss your business or travel plans in public areas where they can be overheard. Selecting a hotel room on the third to fifth floors generally will keep you out of reach of criminal activity from the street but still within reach of fire escape ladders in case of an emergency. Pay all bills in cash. Use the door viewer before opening the door to any visitor. Do not entertain strangers in your room. Never leave valuables exposed or unattended, even if locked in a suitcase. Place valuables—such as money, jewelry, airplane tickets, passports, and credit cards—in a hotel safe deposit box. Familiarize yourself with escape routes in case of fire or other catastrophe. Lock your doors and use the bolt lock when you are in your room. Report any suspicious activity to the hotel manager/security officer immediately.

Guinea does have ATMs and credit card terminals, but the Embassy does not hold much
confidence in the security measures in place with the Guinean banking system.

The Embassy strongly discourages Americans from using public transportation. Do not walk or ride bikes in Conakry after dark. The electricity service in Conakry is unreliable, and visitors could find themselves on a dark street at anytime. Drivers should always lock doors and close windows and should only open vehicle windows enough to converse, if necessary. Keep valuables out of sight or locked in the trunk. Thieves have been known to reach in open windows and open doors of stopped vehicles and grab items before passengers have time to respond. If driving, look for things that could stop you (cars, obstacles, etc). Always attempt to leave a car length distance between vehicles, especially while stopped in traffic. Always be attentive for signs of a potentially dangerous situation developing ahead, such as a large crowd or a large police presence in order to change routes to avoid risk. If the need arises, most vehicles can drive over any curb or barrier that is lower than the car bumper, if driven over at a slight angle.

Criminals and terrorists will look for established patterns. Vary the times and routes for all travel, and reduce predictable behaviors. When possible, travel during daylight hours and in the company of another person. Share travel plans with a friend or business associate.

All visitors should have a passport, visa, and inoculation card. It is best to have a copy of any original documents to present to officials, who may attempt to keep the document until a bribe is paid. Do not transport persons who have no identification on their person. Doing so will bring police suspicion upon the driver and increase the chance of an incident during a routine roadblock.
Restrict photography to private gatherings. Explicit permission from the government should be obtained before photographing military and transportation facilities, particularly airports, government buildings, or public works. Visitors who take photographs without permission in any public area may agitate security personnel or create offense among those being photographed.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Location and Contact Information

Embassy/Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located in Koloma, Conakry, east of Hamdallaye Circle at:

American Embassy Conakry
P.O. Box 603
Transversale No. 2
Centre Administratif de Koloma
Commune de Ratoma
Conakry, Republic of Guinea

Working hours: 7:30 a.m.-16:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 7:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Friday
Embassy/Consulate Contact Numbers

U.S. Embassy Conakry: 224 65 10 40 00
American Citizen Services Officer: 224 65 10 43 34
After Hours American Citizens Services Officer: 224 67 10 43 11

All Americans should register with American Citizen Services when they arrive in Guinea. The U.S. Embassy maintains a liaison with local law enforcement officials and is available to assist American citizens during their stay in Guinea.

OSAC Country Council Information

RSO Conakry established an OSAC Country Council that meets regularly to discuss security concerns. Meetings are well-attended and include members from mining companies, engineering support firms, non-governmental organizations, and other entities in Guinea. To get further information or become a member, please email ConakryRSO@state.gov.