According to the current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory at the date of this report’s publication, Colombia has been assessed as Level 2: exercise increased caution.

**Overall Crime and Safety Situation**

U.S. Embassy Bogotá does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizens’ Services unit (ACS) 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 Bogotá as being a HIGH-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. Please review OSAC’s Colombia-specific page for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

**Crime Threats**

Bogotá and other large cities in Colombia share many of the same crime problems that plague large cities around the world. The perception of wealth is a primary reason why criminals target Americans and other foreign nationals. The most prevalent threat to Americans is street crime. The most common types of crime include, but are not limited to, muggings, assaults, cell phone theft, credit card fraud, and burglaries. Criminals commonly use knives and
firearms. Crime can turn violent quickly, and it is not uncommon for a victim to be injured seriously or killed when resisting a robbery.

Thefts and assaults occur frequently on public buses in urban and rural areas. In rural areas, public and private buses have been attacked by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) terrorist groups and other armed criminal groups. Buses are sometimes burned by terrorists, criminals, and demonstrators. Following the November 2016 peace accord with the FARC, attacks committed by this group as an organization stopped almost entirely. The FARC remains a Foreign Terrorist Organization under the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Colombian government classifies so-called FARC “dissidents” not participating in the peace accord as criminals. While the ideological motivations of such groups and ongoing connections with demobilized FARC are unclear, we have included acts of violence by FARC dissidents in this report.

Extortion is a significant security concern. FARC dissidents not participating in the peace process, the ELN, and criminal groups have extorted all types of commercial entities in their areas of operation. Violence, including bombings, may be used if extortion demands are not met.

Throughout Colombia in 2017, five private U.S. citizens were killed in homicides. Taxi-related crimes commonly involve a cab hailed from the street by a lone passenger. After the passenger enters, the driver will stop, and armed robbers will enter the vehicle, sometimes taking the victim to ATMs over several hours to take out as much cash as possible. In 2013, a DEA agent was killed in Bogota during this type of robbery. There have been multiple reports of taxis traveling from Jose Maria Cordova International Airport (Medellin) into Medellin being robbed by armed assailants. A U.S. private citizen in Medellin was killed in 2015 in a similar robbery.

Vehicle break-ins, thefts, and carjackings are a risk. Criminals carry out a variety of street scams to rob people. Individuals may pose as police officers by presenting false police identification. They will ask to inspect a victim’s money to verify that it is not counterfeit. They will issue the victim an “official receipt” for their “counterfeit” money and instruct the victim to proceed to a police station to reclaim legitimate currency. When they submit the “official receipt” to the police, they find out that their money was not counterfeit and that they were scammed.

Gambling games on the street are also used by criminals to set up victims. Be wary of people who approach you asking for directions, handing out fliers, selling you things, etc. They may be trying to distract you while you are pickpocketed.
In 2017, at least three U.S. citizen scam victims traveled to Colombia after being contacted in the U.S. and promised money, fame, or love. When they arrived, they were tricked into carrying suitcases containing cocaine back to the U.S. and are now facing trial and potentially long prison sentences.

Colombian criminals often use drugs to rob their victims. The most common drug used has been scopolamine, which can render a victim unconscious for 24+ hours, and in large doses can cause brain damage and death. Unofficial estimates put the number of annual scopolamine incidents in Colombia at approximately 50,000. It is often administered by liquid or powder in foods and beverages. Incidents frequently occur in night clubs and bars where men perceived to be wealthy are targeted by young, attractive women. To avoid becoming a victim of scopolamine, one should never accept food/beverages offered by strangers or new acquaintances, nor leave food/beverages unattended. Victims of scopolamine or other drugs should seek immediate medical attention. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report “Shaken: The Don'ts of Alcohol Abroad.”

Cybersecurity Issues
Cyber threats remain a significant security concern in Colombia. Politically-motivated incidents have included a breach of President Juan Manual Santos’ email account and the illegal monitoring of Colombia’s peace negotiations with the FARC, both revealed in February 2014. Authorities also report an increasing number of financially-motivated attacks as Colombia extends internet access and Colombians increasingly depend on the internet. Total cybercrime complaints have increased annually each of the previous few years. According to an Intel security study, 15% of crime against companies in Colombia is associated with cybercrime, generating losses of approximately US$600 million. In order to further develop its institutional framework and capacity to address cyber threats, Colombia prepared an updated cybersecurity policy (CONPES 3701) in consultation with the Organization of American States, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and other partners. This policy includes a national strategy and a set of priority goals to minimize risk levels.

Other Areas of Concern
Embassy officials and their families must get permission to travel throughout much of Colombia. They are required to fly to most major cities, and all U.S. citizens in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions.

Transportation-Safety Situation
Road Safety and Road Conditions
The general information provided below concerning Colombian road conditions is for reference only and may vary by location or circumstances. In general, road conditions in the major cities are adequate, but not good, for vehicle travel. Traffic in Bogotá is exceptionally congested, and road conditions are often poor, contributing to traffic accidents and creating opportunities for criminals to rob vehicles. Criminals, sometime masquerading as vendors, may reach into cars at intersections to steal items and may tear off car parts such as side mirrors, antennas and windshield wipers. Briefcases, bags, and other belongings should always be placed in the vehicle’s locked trunk. Due to the possibility of being caught in a traffic jam, gasoline tanks should always be kept above half full. In rural areas, roads can be substandard and dangerous (i.e., no emergency lanes, poor lighting), and landslides frequently close roads. Accident response in rural areas is slow. In Bogotá, the Colombian National Police (CNP) and military may have a large presence on the major roads, especially during rush hour traffic. The government deploys extra security to promote road travel throughout the country during holidays. Outside of these periods and in rural areas, terrorists and criminals can make road travel dangerous. In areas where the government does not have a strong presence, terrorist and criminal groups have set up roadblocks to rob and kidnap travelers. Traffic laws, including speed limits, are often not obeyed/enforced, creating chaotic and dangerous conditions for drivers and pedestrians. The penalties for drunk driving are severe and very expensive. Police will deploy sobriety checkpoints, especially in urban areas, and can require sobriety tests during traffic stops. Texting and driving is illegal. Seat belts are mandatory for front-seat passengers in a private vehicle. In case of a vehicle accident, Colombian law requires that the vehicles remain in place and all parties remain at the scene until the police arrive and complete their preliminary investigation. In addition, traffic accidents can be staged by criminals and may attract a crowd that could turn hostile. Drivers who feel threatened and leave the scene should immediately contact their insurance company and the police. In an accident involving an injury, the police will require a sobriety or blood-alcohol test and the driver may be taken to the police station and the vehicle(s) will be impounded.

For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

Embassy official Americans and their families are not permitted to travel by road outside of urban areas at night.

Public Transportation Conditions
Taxis are available, but passengers need to exercise caution. Do not flag down taxis on the street or accept rides from strangers. Taxis should be called via phone or web app or taken from a taxi stand. Airports, hotels, and some restaurants/shopping centers have taxi stands or will call taxis for customers. When a taxi is called by phone or app, the passenger will be given the number of the taxi and a two digit code to give the driver. Smart phone applications such as Uber, Tappsi or EasyTaxi are popular and provide the passenger with information to verify the taxi that is sent. Embassy official Americans may not hail cabs from the street. For more information on ride-sharing, please review OSAC’s Annual Briefing Report “Safety and Security in the Share Economy.”

Major accidents involving inter-city buses are common, sometimes resulting in death and serious injury. Embassy official Americans and their families may not use inter- or intra-city bus transportation.

Aviation/Airport Conditions
The Federal Aviation Authority’s International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program rates Colombia as Category 1, meets International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.

Terrorism Threat
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bogotá as being a HIGH-threat location for terrorist activity directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns
Colombia has endured a decades-long conflict that had pitted the government against two leftist terrorist organizations, the FARC and the ELN, and armed criminal groups that evolved from demobilized right-wing paramilitary organizations. The Colombian government signed a final accord with the FARC on November 12, 2016 following over four years of negotiations. The accord was submitted to the Colombian Congress, which approved it November 30, 2016 paving the way for accord implementation. In 2016 and 2017, FARC members moved to demilitarization zones to begin the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process. The Colombian government now recognizes FARC dissidents who are not partaking in the peace process as criminals.

In addition, President Juan Manuel Santos aspires to definitively end the conflict with all guerrillas by reaching a separate peace accord with the ELN before the end of his term in August 2018. The two sides agreed to a 101-day, bilateral ceasefire from October 1, 2017, to January 9, 2018 – the first-ever such agreement during the 50-year conflict with the ELN.
Despite one confirmed violation by the ELN, the ceasefire largely held for its duration and dramatically reduced attacks on the military and civilians. While the government and ELN were unable to reach an agreement on a ceasefire extension, informal talks to reestablish the ceasefire continue.

Illegal armed groups in Colombia are well organized criminal enterprises that have carried out kidnappings, extortion, assassinations, bombings and other terrorist activities throughout the country. Throughout the conflict, over 225,000 Colombians have lost their lives, and 6 million have been forcibly displaced from their homes. U.S.-Colombian counterterrorism cooperation remains strong. In terms of military pressure, the Colombian government continued significant military operations against ELN insurgents, particularly after a series of violent ELN attacks in February and December 2016. The military and police have also intensified operations against major organized crime groups around the country. As 2018 begins, the government of Colombia must deal with the end of the ceasefire with the ELN and a recent uptick in attacks.

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

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bogotá as being a **HIGH**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

**Civil Unrest**

In 2017, there were numerous demonstrations, several focusing on agricultural reform and various union concerns, throughout the country. Universities have active leftist student organizations that sometimes stage protests with an anti-American message. Protests center on social and economic reforms and are usually led by unions or student groups. Protestors sometimes march on major roads, disrupting traffic. These protests have turned violent, and protestors have used Molotov cocktails and homemade improvised explosive devices, called “papas explosivas,” against the police. In 2017, nationwide levels of violence dropped dramatically due to the peace accord with the FARC.

**Post-specific Concerns**

**Environmental Hazards**

Natural disasters include earthquakes and volcanic activity. Many parts of Colombia periodically suffer from severe drought conditions, and large scale fires are common. In other areas, heavy rainfall causes landslides that block roads, damage infrastructure, and can leave travelers stranded for 24+ hours.
Good emergency preparation includes setting aside emergency supplies and having a plan for what to do during and after a disaster. Your planning should take into account that help may not be available for 72+ hours. Stockpiling supplies is useful for any situation in which municipal services (power, water) are temporarily interrupted.

Critical Infrastructure
The Colombian government continues to advance its ambitious Fourth Generation (4G) program, a US$17 billion effort to modernize the country’s outdated primary road infrastructure. The aging primary road network means that travel between large cities, such as Bogotá and Barranquilla, a key port city, can take up to two days. The ELN frequently attack oil pipelines and have been known to attack power stations and roads with explosives.

In January 2018, after the government ceasefire with the ELN expired, the ELN conducted several attacks on oil pipelines and military bases.

Economic Concerns
Colombia’s institutional Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) framework was established in April 2010, creating the National Intellectual Property Administrative System. While the government of Colombia has made progress on some dimensions of IPR in recent years, key challenges remain. As online piracy, particularly via mobile devices, continues to grow, law enforcement authorities with relevant jurisdiction, including the National Police and the Attorney General, have yet to conduct meaningful and sustained investigations and prosecutions against the operators of significant large pirate websites and mobile applications based in Colombia. Colombia has also not been able to reduce significantly the large number of pirated and counterfeit hard goods crossing the border or being sold at Bogota’s San Andresitos market, on the street, and at other distribution hubs around the country. A number of bus companies are also reportedly playing copyrighted works without a license. The U.S. encourages Colombia to increase efforts to address online and mobile piracy and to focus on disrupting organized trafficking in illicit goods, including at the border and in free trade zone areas.

Personal Identity Concerns
The antidiscrimination law specifically prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, or social status. The Attorney...
General's Office and NGOs report some attacks, including homicides, in which prejudice regarding race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity was a factor. Ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict.

Drug-related Crimes
Approximately 75% of the U.S. citizen prisoners in Colombia are incarcerated for narcotics-related offenses. U.S. citizens should not agree to carry packages for anyone without knowing the person well and being certain of the contents of the package.

Kidnapping Threat
Although Colombian government efforts have dramatically reduced the number of kidnappings over the last 10 years, the threat of kidnapping remains a concern. Between 2002-2016, official statistics report that the number of kidnappings dropped more than 90%. Kidnappings can be spontaneous, and criminals/insurgents have kidnapped persons at roadblocks on the outskirts of major cities. Foreigners are potential targets for kidnappers due to their perceived wealth. Americans may also be targeted because of their potential political significance for terrorist groups. However, most kidnappings now fall into the category of “express” or “paseo millonario,” in which victims are robbed of their belongings and taken to ATMs until they can no longer withdraw cash. Victims are often abducted after hailing taxis on the street. Express kidnappings may last up to 48 hours.

The embassy is aware of four kidnappings of U.S. citizens by criminal elements and FARC dissidents, in two separate incidents, in 2017.

The police and army have effective anti-kidnapping/anti-extortion units called GAULAs around the country. Anyone who has been the victim of kidnapping/extortion or knows of a victim should immediately call the police at 165.

Police Response
The Colombian National Police (CNP) is a professional organization recognized around the world for its success. However, the force is often overworked and lacks resources to deter or investigate crime. Response to alarms or emergency calls to disrupt burglaries or crimes in progress can be 15 minutes or longer. Police patrol on foot and in vehicles and are posted at Centros de Atencion Inmediata (CAI), which are police substations manned by several officers. Police and military personnel are also posted at important facilities and along major routes. The Embassy’s American Citizen Services (ACS) section has documented some poor responses by CNP to crimes against private U.S. citizens, specifically failure to facilitate filing
of police reports.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment
The CNP is a professional force; however, corruption continues to exist. For example, an officer may request a bribe during a routine traffic stop. If you feel you are the victim of police harassment or corruption, report it immediately to the police emergency number and to the Embassy’s ACS. The police have a complaint line, called Transparencia Institucional, at 166.

Crime Victim Assistance
The emergency number for most of Colombia, including Bogotá, is 123. The loss/theft of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the Embassy in Bogotá. If you are a victim of a crime, in addition reporting it to the local police, you should contact the Embassy. For ACS assistance, call the Embassy at (1) 275-2000. ACS also monitors email messages sent to ACSBogota@state.gov from 0800 to 1700. In the event of emergency, ACS can verify a U.S. citizen’s previous passport issuance and issue emergency passports on the same day, in the vast majority of cases. Emergency passports are not issued after hours or on weekends or holidays.

Police/Security Agencies
The Colombian National Police is a nationwide service responsible for enforcing Colombian laws. In urban areas, police are posted at neighborhood substations known as Centros de Atencion Inmediata (CAI). The police can be contacted at the following numbers:
- General Emergencies: 123
- Anti-kidnapping/Anti-extortion (GAULA): 165
- Complaints about the police: 166
- Women’s issues: 155
- Road Safety and Transit: #767
- Anti-terrorism: 018000-919621

Medical Emergencies
Medical care is adequate in major cities but varies in quality elsewhere. Public hospitals are well below U.S. standards. Ambulance service in Bogota is frequently delayed due to traffic; travelers should consider other options in a medical emergency.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services
For medical assistance, please refer to the Embassy’s Medical Assistance page.

Available Air Ambulance Services
Europ Assistance
Global Response Center
+1-877-710-4082 or +1-240-330-1523
Email: logistics@eausa.com (Logistics Platform)
ops@eausa.com (Operations Platform)

International SOS Assistance, Inc. (ISOS)
Philadelphia Assistance Center
3600 Horizon Blvd., Suite 300
Trevose, PA 19053
+1-800-523-6586 or +1-215-942-8226
Fax: +1-215-354-2338
Email: phlopsmed@internationalsos.com

REVA
1745 NW 51st Pl, Hanger 73, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
POC: Brian Weisz, bweisz@flyreva.com, 954-730-9300 Ext. 201
24-hour response center: +1-800-752-4195 or +1-954-730-9300
Email: operations@flyreva.com
Web: flyreva.com

Insurance Guidance
It is important to confirm that your medical insurance provides coverage in Colombia, including treatment of complications from elective procedures or medical evacuation if necessary. It is recommended to purchase additional travel medical insurance, especially if your medical insurance does not provide coverage in Colombia or requires you to pay for foreign medical care out-of-pocket and seek reimbursement later. Uninsured travelers without financial resources may be relegated to seeking treatment in public hospitals where the standard of care is below U.S. standards.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
Colombia requires yellow fever vaccine for travelers arriving from Brazil, Uganda, Congo, and Angola. The vaccine must have been administered at least 10 days before entry to Colombia and must be documented on a yellow WHO immunization card.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Colombia.
OSAC Country Council Information
There is an active Country Council in Bogotá. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC’s Western Hemisphere Team with any questions.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information
Embassy Address and Hours of Operation
Calle 24 Bis No. 48-50 (main entrance, working hours only)
or
Carrera 45 No. 24B-27 (back entrance, 24 hrs)
Bogotá, D.C. Colombia
Mon-Fri, 0800-1700 (closed on American and Colombian holidays)
Embassy Contact Numbers
General: (57) (1) 275-2000 during working hours.
Marine Security Guard at Post 1: (57) (1) 275-4021.
Website: www.co.usembassy.gov

Nearby Posts
Consular Agency Barranquilla:
https://co.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-agency-barranquilla/

Embassy Guidance
U.S. citizen visitors should register with the Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at and should check Travel.State.Gov routinely for Travel Advisories, country advice, and alerts regarding travel or security issues.

Additional Resources
Colombia Country Information Sheet