



Singapore 2007 Crime & Safety Report

Other

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Available crime statistics for the first half of 2006 show a decrease in the following categories of crime in Singapore: housebreaking, theft offenses, and robbery. An increase in rape for the period was negligible. Murder cases reported for the first half of the year rose to fourteen, compared to five cases reported for the same period in 2005. These crime rates are low for a city-state of 4.5 million people. Complete crime statistics for 2006 will be published in the first quarter of 2007, and any significant changes will be reported after the information becomes available from Singapore Police authorities.

In May 2006, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) arrested six foreign nationals and seized more than SD \$370,000 (US \$240,000) in cash, believed to be proceeds from fraudulent ATM withdrawals. In September, the SPF arrested three additional foreign nationals for making unauthorized cash withdrawals with cloned ATM cards. Singaporean and American authorities continue to receive complaints from small businesses involving credit card fraud using Singapore as a transshipment point for criminal enterprises elsewhere in the region. The SPF Commercial Affairs Department investigates credit card fraud in Singapore.

Cellular telephones have been the primary target for robbers and petty thieves. Although the SPF reports a significant decrease in cell phone thefts for 2006, it was reported last year that one out of every five youths arrested during the first half of 2005 committed a cell phone crime. For the younger generation, cell phones have transcended from a want to a need, and the desire to be constantly seen with new and trendy high-end multimedia cell phones may have enticed more youths who could not otherwise afford such phones to turn to criminal means. The SPF believes the drop in cell phone crimes may be due to increased public education and stricter enforcement against errant second-hand cell phone dealers.

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Additionally, the SPF has implemented an online database of the IMEI numbers of stolen cell phones for easy screening by purchasers.

Trends in Singapore show that most cases of theft at residential units and hotels involve perpetrators who gain entry through unsecured windows or doors. The trend of targeting elderly citizens in elevators and public housing complexes continues. These crimes are primarily snatch and grab thefts, however, in some cases the victims have been injured after being pushed down.

A few incidents of serious crime involved attacks of Singaporeans by fellow Singaporeans with edged weapons. These attacks appear to be retribution linked to low-level criminal activities. One contract murder with a handgun occurred during 2006, but edged-weapons are the weapons of choice for serious attackers due to the unavailability of firearms. Comparatively speaking, the crime rate in Singapore remains much lower than in any other major metropolitan city, however, residents and visitors should be aware of their environment and exercise the same amount of caution they would in any other large city.

Political Violence

In general, Singapore remains relatively free from the civil unrest, political instability and terrorism threats that other countries in the immediate vicinity have experienced. The Government of Singapore (GOS) frequently cautions its citizens that while the Jemaah Islamiyah cell in Singapore has been severely disrupted, it has by no means been eradicated. Prudent measures should therefore continue to be taken by business establishments, schools, churches, and other soft targets where Americans assemble. Singaporean officials frequently emphasize the importance of community involvement and preparedness as critical elements in national security, as well as the importance of the private sector in effectively fighting terrorism. In 2005, the GOS provided counterterrorist briefings to over 40,000 registered taxi drivers, encouraging the drivers to report suspicious activities, passengers, and conversations in their cabs. In January 2006, the GOS conducted an unannounced civil emergency exercise based on the terrorist attacks on public transportation networks in London and Madrid. Police encourage and utilize neighborhood policing efforts such as neighborhood watches and business-based cooperatives to detect and report crime.

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Additionally, the SPF utilizes random tactical foot patrols from their Special Operations Command to deter, detect and prevent political violence.

Singapore does not issue permits for any potential demonstrations, regardless of nature, and it is against the law for five or more people to congregate for such purposes.

Post-Specific Concerns

Singapore has not recently experienced natural disasters such as typhoons, tsunamis and earthquakes. Visitors to Singapore should be knowledgeable with regard to the country's severe penalties for narcotics trafficking, which include sentences up to and including the death penalty. Despite these laws, drugs can be found in Singapore, and young people frequenting nightclubs should be particularly vigilant and remain aware of their surroundings. Incidents of individuals unknowingly ingesting a drug placed in a drink occasionally occur. Visitors should exercise the same amount of caution as they would in any major U.S. city.

Police Response

Police support for crime victims is somewhat mixed. Follow-up investigative assistance in some cases of crimes against Americans may not be very rigorous. While minor crimes may not be designated high-priority for investigative follow-up, Singaporean police are professional, and any report involving a crime incident will be handled in accordance with the prescribed regulations.

Police harassment is not a problem in Singapore, and assistance can be readily obtained by dialing the standard emergency number, 999. Every district within Singapore has a dedicated neighborhood police center, and any neighborhood police center will accept the filing of a police report, not just the district where the crime took place.

Companies posting personnel in Singapore should conduct security and cultural awareness training for expatriate employees and families. Due to cultural differences, certain behaviors and comments are looked upon quite differently in Singapore. Rude and disorderly behavior,

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particularly directed against females, is prohibited. The offense for inappropriate behavior toward females is called Outrage of the Modesty.

Medical Emergencies

Medical services in Singapore are on par with those of the United States and other capitals of the developed world. Singapore is a U.S. Government regional Medevac destination. The CDC highly lauded Singapore's medical community during the SARS crisis for their honest reporting and heroic efforts in containing the virus. As a result, Singapore was removed relatively early from the CDC's list of countries to avoid. Singapore's plan for dealing with the current threat of Avian Influenza is considered among the best in the world by the World Health Organization. Singapore actively monitors the situation and has enacted a disease surveillance system to detect any human cases of Avian Influenza imported into Singapore. Additionally, Singapore has precautionary measures in place to ensure that no infected birds are imported into Singapore. A contingency plan has also been emplaced to deal with any outbreak of Avian Influenza in any of Singapore's poultry farms.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Visitors should take normal big city precautions for their personal safety and security. Avoid carrying excess cash and credit cards and use credit cards only at reputable establishments. After using a credit card, check your receipts to ensure that the proper charges have been made and compare those receipts with your monthly statement. Always remain alert in crowded public areas like hotel lobbies, subway stations, shopping centers and tourist areas where many pick pocket and other common petty crimes occur. When staying in hotels, always use the hotel safe deposit box in-room safe for your valuables and never leave personal and/or financial information unattended. Heed all warnings with regard to soft targets and potential terrorist threats. Know how to contact local emergency services for police, and medical. For fire safety, upon check in at a hotel, immediately learn the emergency escape routes and physically walk from your room out of the building. You should never wait until an actual emergency to try and put together a plan. Finally, if you become a victim of crime, file a police report. The police must know that a crime occurred in order to be more responsive to future problems.

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For Further Information

One of the best sources for overseas security information is the OSAC website linked below. Travel advisories, background notes, and links to other U.S. government travel security information sources are also available on the Internet homepage cited below. Also visit the U.S. Embassy website.

Sources of information

For Background Notes and other State Department information and services, use the Department of State homepage: <http://www.state.gov>

For travel advisories use the Bureau of Consular Affairs webpage:
<http://travel.state.gov/travel>

For Diplomatic Security Service information: <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/>

U.S. Embassy Singapore homepage: <http://singapore.usembassy.gov/>

OSAC website: <http://www.osac.gov/>

For information on Avian Influenza in Singapore consult the Ministry of Home Affairs, homepage: http://www.moh.gov.sg/corp/hottopics/avian_flu/info.do

Information from the Singapore Police Force pertaining to crime can be obtained at the SPF homepage: www.spf.gov.sg

Important Contact Numbers for Singapore

U.S. Embassy switchboard - (65) 6476- 9100

Singapore police emergency operator - 999

Singapore fire and medical emergency - 995

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Orchard Neighborhood Police Centre, 51 Killiney Singapore 239572:

-Orchard Road shopping district - 1-800-735-9999 (toll free)

Central Police Division Headquarters:

-Central business district - 1-800-224-0000 (toll free)

OSAC Country Council

U.S. Embassy Singapore maintains an OSAC country council that is administered by the American Chamber Commerce. For specific information contact the Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy:

Tel: (65) 6476-9453

Fax: (65) 6476-9040

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