

TRAVEL SECURITY GUIDELINES

We want you to feel safe and have a positive experience while on assignment through ACDI/VOCA, so we have developed some basic security guidelines to keep in mind. Use precaution just as you would while undertaking any other travel. **Please be aware that ACDI/VOCA cannot cover any personal property loss, including money, while you are on this assignment.** You may be able to claim such a loss on your homeowner's insurance.

- Be sure to carry on your person the emergency brochure provided to you by ACDI/VOCA.
- US nationals and citizens should register with the Department of State's STEP Program for your destination. Nationals of other countries should check with their government's foreign service for travel registration options.
- Blend in as much as possible, especially in your dress and appearance. Avoid an obvious tourist appearance.
- Leave all expensive and heirloom jewelry and valuables at home. Keep your camera with you. Do not take anything with you that you cannot afford to lose.
- From the time you pack your luggage maintain positive control of all items, both hand carried and checked. Never leave your luggage or briefcase unattended, even while checking in or once in the secure zone.

AT YOUR HOTEL

- Identify the location of the nearest emergency exit from your room, and a backup, if possible. Form a mental map of the escape route, and count the number of doors between your room and the nearest exit in the event you need to escape in a darkened or smoke-filled environment.
- Do not discuss personal matters with strangers, including your itinerary, place of lodging or mode of transportation.
- Lock hotel room, connecting room and balcony doors, and all windows.
- Consider carrying a door stop as an easy backup to faulty or flimsy door locks.
- Know the local emergency assistance phone number and how to use the local phone system.
- Store all unneeded personal documents and excess cash in the hotel or room safe.
- Meet people, especially strangers, only in the hotel lobby and not in your room.
- Note how hotel staff are uniformed and identified. Many "pretext" crimes occur by persons misrepresenting themselves as hotel employees on house telephones to gain access to guestrooms. Avoid permitting a person into the guestroom unless you have confirmed that the person is authorized to enter. This can be verified by using the optical viewer and by calling the front desk.

GETTING AROUND

- Always be aware of where you are in relation to where you are going. If an incident occurs, you need to know how to avoid it and get out of the area.
- Avoid all demonstrations or other civil disturbances; leave the area immediately if caught in an impromptu assembly.
- Seek immediate shelter from violent situations; hotels, large restaurants, museums and police stations are good places to take refuge.
- Be knowledgeable of any restricted areas requiring entry permits, and attain these documents before traveling to such locations.
- Do not photograph police stations, military installations, government buildings, airports, ports, or train stations without first determining whether photography is permitted. If in doubt, ask permission from someone in authority before taking any photographs.

ON THE STREET

- Avoid viewing maps in plain view; thieves prey on travelers who seem lost or disoriented.
- Never pull your money out and leaf through it in public. You may want to keep a small amount of currency for purchasing inexpensive items separate to avoid “flashing” your entire bankroll and attracting attention.
- Avoid walking alone at night.
- Stay on well-lit main streets when possible.
- If disoriented, ask for directions only from uniformed officers or individuals of obvious authority.
- Do not accept rides from strangers or new acquaintances.
- Withdraw money from ATMs only during daylight hours and preferably only in banks or hotels.
- Do not linger or wander unnecessarily in parking lots, indoor garages or public spaces. Be alert for suspicious persons and behavior. Watch for distractions that are intentionally staged setups for pickpockets, luggage thieves and purse-snatchers.

FRIENDLY STRANGERS

Be suspicious of an encounter with an unknown local national who strikes up a conversation and wants to:

- Practice English or other language.
- Talk about your country of origin or your employment.
- Buy you a drink because they have taken a liking to you.
- Talk to you about politics.
- Use a myriad of other excuses to begin a "friendly" relationship.

If anything strikes you as odd, BE SUSPICIOUS. It may be innocent, but you should always exercise prudence and good judgment.

PASSPORT

Make a copy of your passport and keep a copy in your luggage and have someone back home keep a copy. This will help your embassy if you lose your passport or if it is stolen. Keep your passport with you at all times. The only time that you should relinquish it is:

A. To the hotel if required by law when registering.

B. If you are required to identify yourself to local authorities for any reason. However, try to persuade them not to take the passport from you especially if they are not in uniform. *DO NOT* engage in "Black Market" activities such as the illegal exchange of currency on the streets. Thieves use this tactic to either sell you discontinued currency or to try and figure out how much cash you have on you.

ARREST

Foreign police and intelligence agencies detain persons for a myriad of reasons or for no other reason than suspicion or curiosity. The best advice is to exercise good judgment and be professional in your demeanor. If you are detained or arrested for some reason, here are some points to remember:

- *DO* ask to contact the nearest embassy or consulate representing your country. As a citizen of another country, you have this right; *but that does not mean that you will be allowed to exercise that right*. If you are refused or just ignored, continue to make the request periodically until they accede and let you contact your embassy or consulate.
- *DO* ask to contact the in country ACDI/VOCA staff that is listed on your contact sheet.
- *DO* stay calm, maintain your dignity and do not do anything to provoke the arresting officer(s).
- *DO NOT* admit anything or volunteer any information.
- *DO NOT* sign anything. Often, part of the detention procedure is to ask or tell the detainee to sign a written report. Decline politely until such time as the document is examined by an attorney or an embassy/consulate representative.
- *DO NOT* accept anyone at face value. When the representative from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate arrives, request official identification before discussing your situation.

TRAVEL RESOURCES FOR U.S. CITIZENS

Overseas Citizen Services

Bureau of Consular Affairs

U.S. Department of State

Routine and emergency services to Americans at embassies and consulates around the world.

Phone: (202) 501-4444 (24 hours)

Operations Center

U.S. Department of State

Primary point of contact between U.S. citizens residing in the United States and American Embassies and Consulates overseas.

Phone: (202) 647-1512 (24 hours)

Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC)

U.S. Department of State

Departmental point of contact for interface between the U.S. Government and the private sector.

Phone: (202) 663-0533 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST)

Overseas Resources: U.S. Embassy/Consulate Personnel:

The Chief of Mission (with the title of Ambassador, Minister, or Charge d'Affaires) and the Deputy Chief of Mission head each U.S. diplomatic mission overseas. These officers are responsible for all components of the U.S. Mission within a country, including consular posts.

Commercial Officers, at larger posts, represent U.S. commercial interests within their country of assignment. They specialize in U.S. export promotion and will provide assistance to American business in furtherance of that effort. Economic/Commercial Officers fulfill these functions at smaller posts.

Consular Officers extend the protection of the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens and their property abroad. They maintain lists of local attorneys, act as liaison with police and other officials, and have the authority to notarize documents. *Business representatives residing overseas should register with the Consular Officer. In troubled areas, all travelers are advised to register.* Regional Security Officers are responsible for providing physical, procedural, and personal security services to U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel. Their responsibilities extend to providing in-country security briefings and threat assessments to business executives.