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Personal Safety Guidelines for International Travel

Personal and business travel for employees and executives presents some security risks that are out of the ordinary. International travel, however, requires special preparation. All-hazards risk awareness is key to a safe and secure trip. The following is US-centric, but the general ideas can be used to help employees and staff prepare for any trip abroad.

Before you Travel Abroad

- Leave a copy of your complete itinerary and passport with hotel and host contacts, at your home and office. Restrict the knowledge of your travel plans to those people who have a need to know.
- Choose airlines that have good safety records. Select direct flights, avoiding intermediate stops.
- Make inquiries for credit, debit, traveler's checks, or cash security practices at your destination with your bank or card provider.
- Make photocopies of your passport or visa and the credit cards you plan to take with you. Pack two additional recent passport photos.
- Remove all the credit cards or identification you will not be using from your wallet.
- Check in advance about any vaccination requirements for the countries you plan to visit. Pack any medicine you plan to take in its original containers and keep it with you at all times. Talk to your pharmacist about the generic names for the medication to facilitate refills. Check with your doctor to ensure that your medication does not violate foreign laws.
- Make sure all passport and visa requirements are satisfied.
- If you are a US citizen, obtain a travel advisory for your destination from the US Department of State (DOS), Bureau of Consular Affairs in advance of your trip. Country risk assessments, security briefings and travel advisories are also available from the DOS Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC). Those outside the US should contact their

home country embassy or diplomatic service. Let your embassy know your itinerary in advance so they may advise you of evolving risks. US citizens can post their travel itineraries and receive alerts by registering with the DOS Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/> Others should check their equivalent country programs.

- Have all the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your hotels in hand before you go.
- Do not make hotel reservations without the advice of your hosts.
- Consider purchasing extra luggage or travel insurance. Claim settlements on international flights are known for covering less than the value of the luggage.
- Place your tickets in a safe place on your person or in carry-on luggage. Treat your tickets like money, since they are readily convertible to cash.
- Make sure to send messages to trusted associates or loved ones at the beginning and completion of travel legs.

When You Reach Your Location

When you reach your destination outside of the United States, it will be prudent to increase your personal awareness of your surroundings. Some countries have higher risks due to higher crime rates associated with economically depressed areas or actions from governments hostile to US polices, or terrorism, criminal extortion, and threat.

- Contact the US Embassy to inform them of your presence in the country. Request any updates to country risk information.
- It is prudent to heed all the warnings and advice provided by your host, employer, your trusted hotelier and government.
- Coordinate all your movements with your host.
- Use recommended transportation. Verify that a taxi or limo is the one you ordered before getting in. Avoid traveling alone. Avoid public transportation.
- Always avoid traveling in remote places and stay away from locations that have a history of trouble.
- Consider downloading an international GPS assisted travel app that will warn you for high risk conditions or helps you to alert “need to know” trusted persons or agencies that you need help. Know how to use the public telephones. Carry the necessary method of payment to make emergency calls. Rent or buy devices from reputable service providers or add international calling to your domestic phone plan.
- Learn key phrases of the local language or download a translator app. Know how to contact your embassy and local authorities or rely on your company Global Security Operations Center or Travel Assistance Service to contact them for you.
- Patronize only reputable hotels and restaurants.

Emerging Issues

The suggestions above are more traditional guidelines. Some emerging issues include:

- The use of temporary devices, such as an inexpensive laptop or prepaid "throw away" cell phone purchased specifically for travel.
- Organizations' "duty of care" to ensure employees who work or travel abroad are safe.
- Vaccines to protect travelers from serious diseases that are rare the United States.
- The emerging safeguarding role of Global Security Operations Centers.
- Identifying the best ways to establish an ever-evolving list of high-risk countries.
- Being better aware of potential safety issues during intra-country travel.
- Redefining travel corporate policies.

What do you think needs to be added? Send us a note at contact@securityleader.com

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About the Security Executive Council

The SEC is the leading research and advisory firm focused on corporate security risk mitigation solutions. Having worked with hundreds of companies and organizations we have witnessed the proven practices that produce the most positive transformation. Our subject matter experts have deep expertise in all aspects of security risk mitigation strategy; they collaborate with security leaders to transform security programs into more capable and valued centers of excellence. Watch our [3-minute video](#) to learn more.

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