



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Staying Safe While Abroad

Travelers to far-flung places around the globe face multiple threats. Here's how to cope when crisis strikes.

From Indonesia to Iraq, developing countries can mean new adventures and learning opportunities. But foreign locales can also be risky - as in physical danger. Whether it's a mugging, flu outbreak, anti-American backlash, or military coup, business travelers tend to be unprepared when a sudden crisis hits. The reason: They're so busy jetting from country to country and class to class that they don't pay enough attention to their immediate surroundings.

So what to do in the face of an unforeseen threat? At right are suggestions from the experts on handling situations from dozens of security experts, consultants, and travelers who've persevered through the unexpected.

Muggers and Pick Pockets

Anticipate Petty Crime

Terrorism gets the headlines, but petty crime is still the No. 1 travel risk facing foreigners—especially jewelry-wearing visitors from other countries. Since hotel room safes are easy to crack, lock your valuables in the main hotel safe instead. You should carry minimal cash, a copy of your ID, and a USB fob containing key documents. Leave the obtrusive laptop behind if possible.

Don't be an Easy Mark

You're choice prey if you're out in public tapping on your BlackBerry or reading a map, so answer e-mail and memorize your route before heading out. Be alert and confident, and keep your hands free to protect yourself.

Outsmart the Baddies

Robert Young Pelton, author of *The World's Most Dangerous Places*, keeps a decoy wallet with small bills and old credit cards in a back pocket, and a slim billfold with spending money in his front pocket. He then stores additional cash and other valuables in a hidden pocket sewn into his clothing. Pelton hopes the thief falls for the first, feels brilliant for finding the second, and never considers the third.

should do everything you can to escape your attackers. But keep in mind that most kidnappings are about money and that nine out of 10 abductees eventually go free. Once you're nabbed, it's best to just stay put.



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Military Coup and Civil Unrest

Get Inside

This threat isn't about you as an American; it's about being at the wrong place at the wrong time. When a revolt starts, head for cover in the nearest Western hotel.

Reach Out

It's always a good idea to contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in a crisis; just don't waste your time dialing the main switchboard. You can get direct numbers for its 24-hour security office and regional security officer.

Sit Tight

Whether it's a coup or civil unrest, you're probably not going anywhere anytime soon. Landline phone service may be cut and airports closed. Cell phones should work; if not, try to find a Western journalist with a satellite phone so you can call home and the embassy. Always keep an extra \$100 and a cheap watch to trade with in case the food supply runs short or you need to catch a ride once the airport reopens.

Disease Outbreak or Pandemic

Protect Yourself

The SARS and avian flu scares are chilling reminders that the threat of a fatal pandemic is real. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests stocking a kit with a digital thermometer and an alcohol-based sanitizer to kill germs. Add to that a small bottle of bleach: One drop in 8 ounces of water makes it potable. Stock up on antiviral meds before you leave home, and wash your hands obsessively.

Get Help

If you have suspicious symptoms, get to a hospital immediately. Firms like Accenture and Archer Daniels Midland use  [iJet](#), one of a handful of services that recommend specific hospitals or ambulance companies and provide critical updates to traveling workers caught in a health scare.

Get Out

If you're healthy, it's time to split. On the way to the airport, call your airline to secure a seat. Brace yourself for delays as travelers are screened for signs of illness. If you can't get a flight out, try calling the U.S. embassy for help with arrangements. Just don't expect to share its supply of Tamiflu.



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Anti-Americanism and Kidnapping

Keep a Low Profile

Kidnappings worldwide have tripled in the past 20 years, with Americans as prime targets, and anti-American sentiment is rampant. Dining at the local McDonald's is obviously a big no-no—but so is wearing a polo shirt or carrying a laptop case emblazoned with your company's or university name on it. Katherine Parramore, a travel security consultant, always sits in the passenger seat of hired cars: "If you sit in the back, you look like what you are—somebody important enough to be driven."

Mix it Up

If you're staying for more than a few days, assume that somebody has noticed and is watching. Keep your anonymity by doing business away from your hotel, leave at a different time each day, and vary your route to and from meetings. Dan Mulvenna, a security consultant in Washington, D.C., changes hotels at least once every five or six days.

Know the Risks

The nature of kidnappings varies by country. Some are politically motivated, some purely financial. In places like Iraq or the southern Philippines, where jihadists are active and your life is at risk, you