United States Department of State
Bureau of Diplomatic Security

Countering Terrorism

Security Suggestions for U.S. Business Representatives Abroad

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The likelihood of terrorist incidents occurring varies from country to country depending, at least in part, upon the stability of the local government and the degree of frustration felt by indigenous groups or individuals. Alert individuals, prepared for possible terrorist acts, can minimize the likelihood that these acts will be successfully carried out against them.

American businesses and their employees living and traveling abroad often have been singled out as targets of terrorists. In fact, recent statistics show that American business interests have been targeted more frequently than those of the Federal government.

While there is no absolute protection against terrorism, there are a number of reasonable and commonsense precautions that can provide some degree of individual protection and can serve as psychological and practical deterrents to would-be terrorists.

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Precautionary Measures

The Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), as well as American embassies and consulates, can assist business representatives with information on possible terrorist threats in foreign countries. The analytical staff of OSAC's Research and Information Support Center can provide timely information on existing and potential terrorist threats prior to business travel. The security officer or other designated officer at the American embassy or consulate can provide on-the-ground information on the following:

- The nature, if any, of the general terrorist threat in a particular country;
- Whether private American citizens or companies have been the target of terrorist threats or attacks in the recent past;
- Specific areas of the cities or countryside that are considered dangerous for foreigners;
- Recommended host government contacts, including police officials and local employment requirements for private security services;
- Methods and agencies available for security and background checks on local employees;
- Local laws and regulations concerning ownership, possession, and registration of weapons;
- U.S. Government policy on ransom and blackmail;
- Steps to take in case of a terrorist threat or act.

In the case of a terrorist action against an American citizen or company, the embassy or consulate can:

- Facilitate communication with the home office and the family of the victim if normal channels are not adequate;
- Help establish useful liaison with local authorities;
- Provide information and suggest possible alternatives open to the family or company of the victim. The U.S. Government, however, cannot decide whether or not to accede to terrorist demands. Such a decision can be made only by the family or company of the

victim, but it should be in consonance with local law. (U.S. policy, as publicly stated, is not to make any concessions to terrorist demands.)

In addition to the aid that U.S. embassies or consulates can provide to business representatives abroad, the following general security suggestions should be considered when traveling or residing in areas where terrorists are believed to be active.

Business representatives should also check with the local U.S. embassy or consulate to determine if these actions are appropriate for local conditions.

- To the extent possible, avoid establishing a pattern in the routes and times of your movements to and from work and around town. Past kidnaping incidents indicate that kidnapers generally keep victims under surveillance for substantial periods of time (several days to several months) to discover travel patterns and arrange a suitable time and place for the kidnaping. Unpredictability is one of your best weapons.
- When going out for any reason, avoid going alone. Try to travel with a group of people; there is safety in numbers.

- If possible, travel in a convoy, particularly while traveling long distances.
- Insofar as possible, travel only on busy, well-traveled thoroughfares staying away from isolated back-country roads. Avoid dangerous areas of the city.
- On multiple-lane highways, drive toward the center of the road to make it more difficult for your car to be forced to the curb.
- When traveling in a car, keep all doors locked. Keep windows closed or opened only a crack.
- Avoid types of cars or actions that might identify you as an American or as someone rich or important.
- Park cars off the streets at night. Lock cars, no matter how short a time they may be unattended.
- If it is necessary to leave car keys with a parking attendant, leave the ignition key only.
- Before entering your car, ascertain that there are no suspicious objects or unexplained wires or strings inside or underneath.

- If you find suspicious wires or packages in your car, office, or residence, report them immediately to the proper authorities. Do not attempt to remove any such objects yourself.
- Be sensitive to the possibility of surveillance. Before leaving your home or office, check up and down the street for suspicious cars. Try to note whether you are being followed to or from work or other places you frequent; if so, notify police promptly.

Security Measures for Home and Family

- Identify the best housing available. An apartment house offers the benefit of close neighbors but also offers semi-public access to the lobby and service areas, which is a disadvantage. If a separate dwelling is selected, attempt to locate one with high walls around it.
- Make your residence as burglar proof as possible by installing a burglar alarm system and using exterior lighting or even an exterior floodlight system activated by intrusion-detection devices. Other safeguards include deadbolt locks on doors, key locks, iron grilles or heavy screens for ground-floor windows, and care in securing both upper story windows accessible by trees, low roofs, balconies, etc., and unusual doors such as sliding glass, French, etc.
- Members of the household should be instructed not to admit strangers without proper identification. A peephole or small window aperture in a door where visitors can be observed prior to entry is recommended. Never leave the garage door unlocked.
- Consider having a watchdog inside or outside your house, or both.
- Give careful consideration to a request to be photographed or interviewed in your home. Be selective in what you permit to be photographed and what you say in any interview.
- If local police protection is available and protection appears needed, request a patrol through your neighborhood as frequently as possible. Where

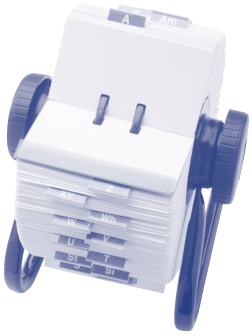
police patrols are infrequent or nonexistent, employ a private security patrol, perhaps in cooperation with neighbors.

- Arrange for your children to be escorted to and from school. Instruct school authorities that under no circumstances are they to be picked up by persons other than family members or specifically authorized people.
- Do not permit unaccompanied children to use taxis and public transportation.
- Have a security or background check of all household help.
- Do not discuss sensitive information, such as detailed travel plans for business dealings, within the hearing of servants. Instruct servants and members of the household about their security responsibilities. Emphasize that they are to admit no one without positive identification, to refuse information to strangers inquiring about your activities or whereabouts, and to accept no packages or other items unless they are certain of the source.
- Maintain a current list of emergency telephone numbers, and ensure that it is easily available at all times.

- Recognize that your telephone will possibly be tapped. Be most discreet on the telephone in discussing information concerning travel.
- Do not hand out business or home telephone numbers indiscriminately.
- Be alert to persons disguised as public utility crew members, road repair workers, etc., who might station themselves near your house to observe your activities. (In one case, a kidnaper disguised as a fruit peddler set up a fruit stand near the victim's house.) Report such incidents to the police for investigation.
- Locate a neighbor's or public telephone near your home and advise your household workers and family of its location for emergency use. Maintain friendly relationships with your neighbors.
- Avoid crowds and civil disturbances. Stay away from areas in which you have no business.
- Do not become involved in disputes with local citizens. If others initiate troublesome incidents, leave the scene as quickly as possible and report the matter to the appropriate authorites.

- At an appropriate time, discuss with your family what you want them to do in case you are kidnaped. Have your family affairs (i.e., insurance policies, vital documents, etc.) in order. Keep your passports, visas, medical and shot records current and in a secure place.
- Make all necessary emergency financial arrangements for dependents and designate an individual or office to contact in the event these plans must be implemented.

Security Measures for the Office



- Do not stand or place desks near windows.
- Avoid routine trips to the office during hours when no one else is there.
- Be alert to anyone loitering near the office.
- Come and go at different times and use varying routes and entrances to the building when possible.
- Establish a package control area for incoming mail and parcels; this should be a room away from work areas.
- Consider ensuring that public entrances are controlled at all times.
- Have a police security check or background check on all local employees.
- Provide your office staff and family members with a written record of any medical conditions. This record should be readily available in the event of an emergency. Include information such as ailment, type of medicine, where to obtain medicine, doctor's name and address, blood type, allergies, etc.
- Establish notification instructions in the event of emergencies, kidnaping, etc. Make sure that someone knows the name and address of next of kin.

Suggested Behavior in Case of Kidnaping

Although it is recognized that hard-and-fast rules cannot be applied inincidents of kidnaping, the following points are worthy of special consideration:

- Under all circumstances attempt to stay calm and be alert

to situations that you can exploit to your advantage. Remember that the primary objective of your family and law enforcement officials will be to secure your safe return as quickly as possible.

- Do not attempt to fight back or to struggle physically. No matter how reasonable your captors may appear on the surface, they cannot be trusted to behave normally and their actions may be unpredictable.
- Comply with the instructions of your abductors as well as you can.
- Do not discuss what action may be taken by your family, friends, or company.
- Make a mental note of all movements, including time in transit, direction, distances, speeds, landmarks along the way, special odors, and distinctive sounds like bells, construction, voices, etc.
- Whenever possible, take mental note of the characteristics of your abductors, their habits, surroundings, speech, mannerisms, and what contacts they make.

- Generally, you cannot expect to have a good opportunity to escape. No attempt to escape should be made unless it has been carefully calculated to ensure the best possible odds for success.
- Avoid making provocative remarks to your abductors. As noted, they may be unstable individuals who react irrationally.
- Request special medicines or medical attention immediately if you have a disease or physical condition that requires treatment.
- Try to establish some kind of rapport with your captors.

For more information, please contact the security officer or other designated officer at American embassies or consulates worldwide—or contact the Overseas Security Advisory Council at (202) 663–0869 or visit the OSAC website at ds.state.gov.