

Security Message: Holiday Season Security Awareness

December 1, 2015

The U.S. Embassy in Nassau strongly advises U.S. citizens in The Bahamas to be aware of their surroundings and remain on heightened alert to avoid being a victim of crime. The holiday season is upon us and along with the many celebrations, there is often, unfortunately, an increase in criminal activity. During each year's holiday season, the Embassy receives increased reports of crime, particularly armed robberies and burglaries, such as the carjacking of U.S. citizens at Jaws Beach in western New Providence on Thursday, November 26.

U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to The Bahamas should review their personal security plans. Remain aware of your surroundings, including local events; and monitor local news stations for updates. Maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance your personal security.

Robbers and burglars will often conduct pre-attack surveillance by watching the intended property and victim(s). This underscores the need for an increased awareness of common activities which can directly impact personal security. Please take a moment to consider the following security tips:

- **If confronted by armed criminals, remember your vehicle or valuables are not worth your life or anyone else's life. If confronted, try to remain calm, clearly display your hands, and do not make any sudden moves that could be interpreted as resistance.**
- Always be vigilant – look for possible threats or what looks out of the norm in your surroundings.
- Secure your home. Close and lock all windows and doors. Don't forget to lock garage or gate doors.
- At night, park in lighted areas observable by shops, passersbys, or attendants when possible. Avoid unlit areas where persons could hide and ambush.
- Avoid walking alone in dark, isolated areas (including parking lots).
- Keep your wallet or purse close to your body; never leave your purse or wallet unattended in a shopping cart or restaurant.

- Pay close attention to any unusual activity that may have occurred since leaving home and while getting in and out of vehicles. Things like an open gate, unfamiliar vehicles parked nearby, house doors forced open, or shattered windows can be a sign of criminal interest or activity.
- Do not leave belongings unsecured outside your residence. Vehicles, bicycles, generators, and other property will attract criminals. If the items cannot be placed inside, then visibly secure them with a chain and lock as a deterrent.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash – use an ATM/credit card when possible and check your credit card statements regularly for potential fraud or unauthorized charges.
- Avoid using ATM machines located in isolated areas and consider using ATM machines located in shopping centers that have security coverage. Use the buddy system when using ATM machines.
- Secure valuables at home in a locked safe that is not easily removed.
- Check outside lighting, replace light bulbs if necessary, and use exterior lighting at night.
- Unplug appliances such as televisions, stereos, and personal computers.
- Arrange to have your lawn mowed periodically if you will be gone for an extended period of time. Arrange to have a friend or colleague check your home and pick up newspapers or other deliveries daily.
- Most crimes occur at night so think prudently about night-time travel. Inform someone of your travel plans and when to expect you.
- Keep your car doors locked and your windows rolled up, as you drive. Keep valuables out of sight in your vehicles when parked (including cell phones, laptops, cash, GPS, or other valuables). Utilize a car alarm or steering wheel locking device.

- Do not display or wear expensive jewelry that may make you a target for criminals. Avoid wearing gold necklaces, bracelets, expensive watches, or other flashy jewelry.
- In crawling traffic or in a stopped line of cars, leave at least a half a car length between your vehicle and the car in front of you so that you do not get boxed in.

If you are the victim of a crime abroad (including the loss or theft of a U.S. passport), you should immediately contact the local police (dial “911”). Contact with the Embassy should be made as soon as possible thereafter.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in The Bahamas enroll in the [Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don’t have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department’s [website](#), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the [Country Specific Information for The Bahamas](#). For additional information, refer to [“A Safe Trip Abroad”](#) on the State Department’s website.

Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to have the latest travel information.

In The Bahamas, the Embassy is located at 42 Queen Street in downtown Nassau, and can be reached at 242-322-1181. The Turks & Caicos Consular Agency is located at 2 Venture Ct., Grace Bay Suite 102E, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands. The Consular Agent can be reached at 649-232-5713 or by email at talishajsimons@gmail.com and SimonsTJ@state.gov