



American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo
Warden Message



TO: Consular Wardens
FROM: ACS Unit
DATE: 06 June 2008
SUBJECT: Refresher on street crime and tips for good security practices

This warden message is to alert U.S. citizens residing and traveling in the Dominican Republic that the Embassy has become aware of incidents in which American citizens have been assaulted and robbed in Santo Domingo while walking or jogging on sidewalks and in public parks, including the popular park, Mirador del Sur. The attackers used similar tactics in their assaults. The information below may help you to avoid being a victim. Please circulate this to your constituents.

Criminal Tactics – There are three common tactics used in street robberies in Santo Domingo. First, many assailants have attacked their victims from motorcycles. In most of these cases, there is one person on a motorcycle riding on the street, or up on the sidewalk who reaches out and snatches a purse or cell phone. This person sometimes has an accomplice on a second motorcycle that acts as a lookout. The second form of motorcycle robbery involves two men on a motorcycle. The man who gets off the back of the motorcycle robs the victim and then makes his escape on the waiting motorcycle. The third type of robbery is by assailants on foot. Most assailants use a knife or weapon of convenience during the robbery, though guns are being used with more frequency. Another, less frequent robbery tactic is to abduct the victim at gun-point into a waiting car where all valuables are taken before the victim is dropped off a few blocks away.

Countermeasures:

Limit Time Out

Limit the amount of time you are exposed on the street, especially during evening hours.

Avoid walking alone when possible. Drive your personal car or take a taxi to get where you need to go, especially during the evening hours. The majority of street robberies occur during the evening hours.

Park in front of the establishment you are visiting, seeking well-lit areas next to a guard if possible. When walking to your car, have your keys ready in your hand. Get in your car quickly and lock the doors once inside. Leave the area as soon as possible.

Don't Be a Prized Target

When on the street, don't wear jewelry, watches, or carry expensive cameras. Cell phones should be hidden in a pocket. Try not to carry a purse. If running or walking on the street or in one of the parks, all electronic devices should be concealed or left at home. Such devices make you an attractive target and decrease your situational awareness. If you appear to have nothing of value, robbers will look for another target.

Be Aware of Surroundings – Be Prepared To Take Evasive Action

If you must walk on the street, be aware of your surroundings including sources of assistance and possible escape routes. Assailants tend to prey on people who appear preoccupied or confused, so stay alert and confident.

If you see a suspicious person, don't act scared, let him know you see him. Some criminals will immediately look for a softer target when they know the potential victim has spotted them and is prepared for action. But be prepared to take immediate evasive action. If the 'mean' look doesn't dissuade the suspicious individual(s), walk into the nearest store or restaurant and call for help. Don't give the bad-guys time to plan their attack, react immediately.

If you see one person on a motorcycle approaches from the front or rear, immediately cross the street or move for cover. If two men on a motorcycle approach, run to the nearest safe location. To avoid a possible neck injury from a purse-snatcher's yank, purses should be tucked into the crook of your arm and kept close to the body.

Try to walk facing traffic. It's more difficult for an assailant to track potential victims against traffic.

If Confronted by a Robber

Always carry 100 pesos in your front right pocket for the robbers.

If confronted by robbers, armed or not – DO NOT RESIST. In most cases, assailants want to leave the area immediately to avoid detection. If you give them the "100 Pesos" you've been keeping in your right front pocket, they might leave without delay.

If the assailant searches you – DO NOT RESIST. Let him take whatever valuables you're carrying.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date security information can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00am to 8:00pm EST, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

For any emergencies involving American citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Embassy. The Embassy's Consular Section is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue, Santo Domingo, D.R.; telephone 809-731-4294; after hours emergency telephone 809-221-2171; ACS unit fax 809-689-6142; e-mail acssantodom@state.gov; web page www.usemb.gov.do.