



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 66

July 2013

China Hostage Situations. More Common Than Most Think, But Not Really A Big Issue.

Leaving China?

Did you know that you can end your enrollment with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) by visiting the step.state.gov site? If you previously submitted a paper enrollment form to the U.S. consulate, you may end your enrollment by sending an email request to: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

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The Consulate is unable to intervene in civil cases and has little influence with the Public Security Bureau. If you are involved in a civil or business dispute we recommend that you contact an attorney immediately.

By [Dan Harris](#) on June 27th, 2013
Posted in [China Business](#), [Legal News](#)

The mainstream media has given massive coverage to workers in China holding Chip Starnes, the president of an American company, hostage for alleged non-payment of wages. Just as we usually do whenever a hostage taking hits the press, we ran our own blog post, [The Single Best Way To Avoid Being Taken Hostage In China](#), setting out how to avoid getting yourself into just such a situation. And just as we always do, we link back to all of our prior posts on the subject, to let everyone know that “we told you so.”

But how common are these foreigners being taken hostage situations and how worried should you be? I was called by three reporters yesterday asking me the commonality question. I told all of them the same thing, which was essentially as follows:

“We learn of a foreigner getting held hostage in China probably once a month. We learn about this from the media (as in the case of Chip Starnes), from spouses and co-workers calling us to see what we can do, and from readers who simply email us. My law firm has worked on a handful of these cases over the last five years. They really are not all that complicated in that one almost never has any choice but to negotiate. We have used Chinese lawyers to try to get the police to end the stand-off, but that has never worked. Heck, in at least two of the cases we have

handled, the police were actually assisting.

The common theme in every hostage taking we have handled (and I think of which I am aware) is money; money allegedly owed for a breach of contract, for wages, or for a personal injury. But the person with whom you really should be talking is my friend in Shanghai at an international risk consultancy company because I know that his company *constantly* handles China hostage situations.”

As for whether these hostage takings in China are getting more or less common, my answer is yes and no. How’s that for a lawyer answer? I do not think they are getting either less or more common in the sense that they are either increasing or tapering off due to societal or legal or cultural reasons. Instead, I think that they are starting on a new increase and I expect that they will continue to increase as China’s economy slows. As I mentioned earlier, these hostage situations stem from money allegedly owed and now that China’s economy is in a downturn, we can expect there to be more situations where Chinese companies and individuals believe they are owed money and more situations where Chinese companies and individuals will feel compelled to take things into their own hands to get paid. With this we will no doubt see more hostage situations.

Does this sort of thing happen outside China and as much? I don’t know enough to make comparisons, but I assume this sort of thing goes on in most emerging market countries. I know it has happened in Vietnam and I know it has happened in Russia, where someone I know was held upside down out a third floor window until he agreed to pay a dubious debt. So yes, it definitely happens outside of China but I just cannot quantify it. ***(Find more at www.chinalawblog.com/2013/06/china-kidnappings-common-but-not-really-an-issue.html)***

Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Warnings** for the following countries:

Mali	07/18/2013
Yemen	07/16/2013
Niger	07/15/2013
Mexico	07/12/2013
Philippines	07/05/2013
Kenya	07/05/2013
Egypt	07/03/2013

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the

U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1764.html.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Alerts**:

Mali	07/10/2013
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Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events

such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and **prohibited items** on flights can be viewed online at www.tsa.gov.

For additional information, please visit "**Americans Traveling Abroad**" on the website of the U.S. Department of State http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html.

Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

Upcoming Holidays & Other Closures

A full list of all of our closures is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>. The ACS Unit will be **CLOSED** to the public on:

<u>July 26, 2013, Friday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì
<u>August 16, 2013, Friday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì
<u>September 2, 2013, Monday</u>	Labor Day	劳动日	Láodòng Rì

American Citizen Services (ACS) Contact Information

U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai, China, 1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场 (Méi Lóng Zhèn Guǎng Chǎng)

Routine Services: 8:00am - 11:30am

Passport Pickups: 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Mon - Fri *Closed on Wednesday afternoons, weekends, and holidays.

After Hours Emergencies: (86-21) 3217-4650

Homepage: shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html

Beijing Airport Scores As Worst For Flight Delays Globally In H1

By Yang Jian, July 12th, 2013, Shanghai Daily

Only Beijing was worse than Shanghai for flight delays in the first six months of the year, according to a survey of 35 major airports around the world.

Pudong International Airport had a punctuality rate of less than 30 percent, US-based aviation data provider FlightStats said yesterday, while Beijing Capital International Airport was the world's worst at just 18.3 percent.

Only 28.7 percent of flights took off and landed at Pudong on time in the first half of the year, the survey revealed.

FlightStats record a delay if an aircraft fails to take off within 15 minutes of its scheduled time.

The average of all 35 airports, including London's Heathrow and

JFK in New York, was 69.2 percent in June, compared to May's 75 percent, the survey said.

The survey results didn't include the recent massive delays caused by the weather on China's busiest domestic route, Shanghai-Beijing.

Chinese passengers have also long been complaining about the low timekeeping rate of almost all domestic flights although the Civil Aviation Administration of China said that last year's 75.8 percent punctuality rate was the lowest for five years.

"The poor timekeeping performance should mainly be blamed on the aviation company, air traffic limits and the bad weather," the CAAC said. Airlines are mainly responsible for 40 percent of flight delays, it said.

In an effort to improve performance, the CAAC said yesterday that carriers would lose their right to fly routes if their operations caused

serious delays.

"If any single flight was delayed by several hours while all the other flights operate normally at the same airport, the carrier would be punished," the CAAC said in a statement. Air traffic controllers, airport operators and fuel suppliers will also be penalized for causing serious delays, it said.

Some 20 domestic flights with the lowest punctuality rates would be publicized every month, it added.

The CAAC will also make more airspace available for aircraft flying between Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou to improve timekeeping.

"The administration will focus on improving the operation of the Beijing-Shanghai route through 2015," said Wang Liya, director of the CAAC's Air Traffic Management Bureau. He added advanced navigation equipment will be to improve the on-time rate.

Local Kids More Likely To Have Asthma

By Cai Wenjun, June 27th, 2013, Shanghai Daily

Shanghai children were found to have the highest incidence of childhood asthma among 10 major cities in China - a level almost 56 percent higher than the average for those cities, according to a new study.

The Chinese Society for Environmental Sciences based the study in part on questioning the parents of thousands of children between three and six years old in Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an, Wuhan, Harbin, Taiyuan, Chongqing, Changsha, Nanjing and Urumqi. They combined that information with analysis of the children's residence, habits and outdoor environment, officials said on Monday.

The study, conducted from 2010 to 2011, is part of the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood.

The average incidence of children's asthma in the 10 cities was 6.8 percent, while it was 10.6 percent in Shanghai.

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Local Kids More Likely To Have Asthma

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The 10-city average was much higher than the 0.91 percent found in 1990 and 1.5 percent in 2000, officials said.

While several of those cities regularly register worse overall air pollution than Shanghai, officials

said outdoors pollution was not the only factor contributing to childhood asthma and other allergy-related illnesses.

Children living in areas with high humidity, where it is hot in summer and cold in winter and there may be insufficient heating equipment, have a higher incidence.

Researchers said the major reasons for indoor air pollution include the frequent use of new and synthetic materials in renovation; poor ventilation, especially in the kitchen and bathroom; improper installation and use of air-conditioning systems, and outdoor pollution.

80 New Breakfast Outlets To Offer Local Favorites

By Hu Min, June 27th, 2013, Shanghai Daily

The city plans to open another 80 subsidized breakfast stores featuring local favorites prepared in a hygienically safe environment, many near big residential complexes, the Shanghai Commerce Commission said yesterday.

While most of the popular, standardized stores will be built downtown, plans call for more to be located in the near future in suburban areas, where the only service sometimes available is food carts that are more difficult for food safety supervisors to closely monitor. Some street vendors have been reported to use illegally recycled swill oil.

The city has more than 20,000 stores or street stalls selling breakfast, but only 5,000 are licensed, officials said. Many residents still buy food from unlicensed vendors on their way to work or school despite hygiene risks.

Operators of the standardized stores must apply to the city government and are granted incentives like subsidies and cheaper rents.

'Four heavenly kings'

The city now has about 1,165 standardized breakfast stores, which have proven popular. They sell traditional Shanghai breakfast food known as "four heavenly kings," or si da jin gang. They include youtiao (a deep-fried dough stick), dou jiang (soybean milk), cifantuan (a steamed, glutinous rice ball) and dabing (a thin pancake spread with sesame seeds).

Some famous brands such as Babi, known for steamed buns, and Gil Wonton, famous for dumplings, as well as some big sesame seed cake and noodle stores have either opened standardized breakfast stores or plan them, officials said.

Twenty years ago, there was at least one breakfast stall serving the traditional breakfast at the entrance to each longtang, a small alley with Shanghai's traditional shikumen-style (stone-gate) houses. But most are long gone, replaced in many cases by bakeries.

Ling Anqi, a local white-collar worker, said she used to buy breakfast from street vendors.

After a breakfast store opened in the Liangcheng area in Hongkou District where she lives, she bought food there.

"I prefer the traditional local breakfast over bread or cakes, but I am concerned about the hygiene and cooking materials of street vendors," she said.