Security Message: Recent Criminal Activity in Popular Areas of Nassau & Holiday Season Security Awareness

November 3, 2014

The U.S. Embassy in Nassau advises U.S. citizens residing in and traveling to The Bahamas to be aware of their surroundings and remain on heightened alert to avoid being victims of crime.

While U.S. citizens have not been targeted directly, over the past several weeks there has been an increase in the level of crime in areas where U.S. citizens live and frequent. We also have noticed criminals increasingly becoming more brazen and creative in their methods. For example, three armed robberies of U.S. citizens have occurred in daylight hours in heavily frequented tourist areas, including an armed assailant assaulting and robbing a woman walking near Ardastra Gardens. In mid-October during daylight hours in a heavily populated area, two men armed with handguns robbed customers waiting in the drive-thru line at a local restaurant. Armed assailants have placed random items in the street as impromptu roadblocks so unassuming drivers would stop and could be robbed. A man was shot at Potter's Cay, near the base of the Paradise Island bridge, at a time when tourists would still be frequenting the area.

Police recently warned women to be extra vigilant after a recent spike in the number of reported sexual assaults in Nassau. In October, a U.S. citizen who resides in The Bahamas was kidnapped and violently raped while walking home. The water sports rental industry is only loosely regulated; since July, there have been three reported sexual assaults on U.S. citizens, including minors, by jet ski operators on Paradise Island.

Home invasions in Nassau have become more numerous and violent. A home invasion on October 28 resulted in the murder of the homeowner. In August, a U.S. citizen was the victim of a home invasion and attempted sexual assault in the Cable Beach area.

As the holiday season nears with its 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.

In light of these events, 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.

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.

If you encounter a violent or threatening situation, try to remain calm and immediately get yourself out of harm's way. If confronted by armed criminals, remember your vehicle or valuables are not worth your life or anyone else's life.
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 the Department's "Traveler's Checklist".

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. In The Bahamas, the Embassy is located at 42 Queen Street in downtown Nassau, and can be reached at 242-322-1181.