

## U.S. EMBASSY, NASSAU, BAHAMAS

### Security Message: Personal Security Awareness

July 12, 2016

This message is to remind U.S. Citizens resident and visiting New Providence Island (Nassau) and Paradise Island to be mindful of their surroundings at all times and employ practical personal security awareness when in public and at home to avoid being a victim of crime.

Over the course of the past six months, the U.S. Embassy has received reports of a significant increase in armed robberies throughout New Providence, specifically targeting patrons of ATM machines, parking venues at various retail locations, and armed car-jackings.

For your safety, you should:

- 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.
- Keep your car doors locked and your windows rolled up as you drive. Keep valuables out of sight in your vehicles when parked (cell phones, laptops, cash, GPS or other valuables).

Armed robberies and violent crimes continue to be the primary criminal threat in The Bahamas – which in many instances have occurred in areas frequented by tourists.

If you encounter a violent or threatening situation, try to remain calm and immediately get yourself out of harm's way. Do not get directly involved in the situation. Once you have removed yourself from a threatening situation and your safety has been ensured, **call the Royal Bahamas Police Force at 911 or 919 and inform them of the matter.**

If you are being followed, **DO NOT GO HOME**. Call the police at 911 or 919. You should stay on the phone with the police and give them your location so they can provide assistance and drive to the nearest police station.

If an attacker tries to box your vehicle in from the front and rear and you determine that you are under attack, you should take immediate evasive action to get out of the danger area. Drive to the nearest police station.

Please take a moment to consider the following security tips:

- We strongly encourage you to use home security systems and door locks at all times. Doors should not be opened for unknown or unidentified callers. If you sense someone is trying to gain access into your residence or hotel room, contact the police at 911 or 919 and hotel security. Perpetrators of these types of crimes typically conduct prior surveillance by watching the intended target property and the movement of the intended victims. This underscores the need for an increased awareness of common activities which can directly impact personal security.
- 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 - and vary your routes and times.
- Pay close attention to any unusual activity that may have occurred since leaving home and 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.
- At night, park in lighted areas observable by shops, passersby, or attendants when possible. Avoid unlit areas where persons could hide and ambush. Use the buddy system and walk in groups.
- Avoid walking alone in dark, isolated areas such as parking lots.

- Keep your wallet or purse close to your body; never leave your purse or wallet unattended in a shopping cart or restaurant.
- 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 your home. Use your alarm system when at home and away and be familiar with the emergency panic alarm codes. Close and lock all windows and doors. Don't forget to lock garage or gate doors. Have an escape plan for you and your family.
- Secure valuables at home in a locked safe that is not easily removed.
- Consider purchasing timers to turn on outside and inside lights automatically at various times throughout the night, especially if you are off island. 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. (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 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 to provide an escape path. This also prevents a chain reaction accident in the event that you get hit from behind and pushed into the car in front of you.
- If you believe you are being followed, drive immediately to a safe location such as a police station, a gas station, or a hotel and call the Police.
- Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times and use a GPS system if you are traveling in unfamiliar areas.
- Notify the police (call 911 or 919) if you are in a vehicle accident or need assistance.

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.