



Philippines 2012 Crime and Safety Report

Threats; Stolen items; Surveillance; Information Security; Financial Security; Theft; Fraud; Carjacking; Kidnapping; Assault; Transportation Security; Elections; Right-wing; Bribery; Extortion; Left-wing; Anti-American sentiment; Natural Disasters; Maritime; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > Philippines > Manila

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Travel Warning

For the last several years, the Department of State has warned U.S. citizens of the risks of terrorist activity in the Philippines. The Department maintains a Travel Warning for American citizens, urging extreme caution if traveling to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago and reminding Americans that terrorist attacks could be indiscriminate and could occur in any area of the country, including in Manila. For the complete text of the Travel Warning, go to http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5639.html.

Crime Threats

Crime is a significant concern in urban areas of the Philippines. Typical criminal acts include pick pocketing, confidence schemes, acquaintance scams, and, in some cases, credit card fraud. Carjacking, kidnappings, robberies, and violent assaults sporadically occur throughout metro Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines. Americans need to maintain awareness of their surroundings and exercise good judgment coupled with basic personal security habits while in country.

Crime data gathered by the Philippine National Police (PNP) showed that overall crime statistics for 2011 were similar to those reported in 2010. From January to November 2011, the PNP recorded 230,817 crime incidents. This number still represents a significant reduction in crimes compared to the reported total in 2009 (333,416). For 2011, physical assault and theft were the two largest contributors to the total number of incidents.

Road Safety



Traffic in the Philippines, especially Manila, is dense, chaotic, and unpredictable. The road system is crowded and drivers are undisciplined. Driving off the national highways and paved roads is particularly dangerous, especially at night, and should be avoided.

Political Violence

Past incidents have shown that there is potential for political violence in the Philippines. On November 23, 2009, a politically-motivated massacre took place in the province of Maguindanao, claiming 57 victims, including 30 journalists, making it one of the worst election-related acts of violence in recent history. As a result, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) instituted a gun ban prior to all future election cycles in an attempt to both curb violence among political rivals and to curtail the politically-related activities of armed partisan groups.

The 2010 elections that included the presidential race proved to be the peaceful. There were no major elections in 2011.

Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Terrorist groups and criminal gangs continue to operate in most regions of the Philippines. The communist New People's Army (NPA) has not targeted foreigners in recent years but could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities. The NPA frequently demands "revolutionary taxes" from local and, at times, foreign businesses and business people, and sometimes the NPA attacks infrastructure such as power facilities, telecommunication towers, and bridges to enforce its demands. In October 2011, armed rebels believed to be associated with the NPA raided multiple nickel mining facilities in Surigao del Norte. In a separate incident, five members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were killed and two went missing after communist rebels attacked a municipal hall in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur.

Since 2008, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and rouge elements formerly associated with the MILF have sporadically clashed with the AFP in the Mindanao provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga, Zamboanga Sibugay, and the Sulu Archipelago. In October 2011, members of the MILF ambushed an Army Special Forces unit in Basilan. A total of 19 soldiers were killed in the incident, which threatened to derail rejuvenated peace talks between the government and the MILF.

International or Transnational Terrorism



In 2011, there were no confirmed reports of international or transnational terrorism in the Philippines.

Civil Unrest

There were 50 non-violent demonstrations held near the U.S. Embassy in 2011, more than doubling the number of demonstrations reported in 2010. These demonstrations all contained an element of anti-American sentiment, and each group's goal was to reach the U.S. Embassy. As in 2010, most of the protest groups were intercepted by the PNP before reaching Embassy grounds.

Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

The Philippines is vulnerable to almost all types of environmental hazards due to its proximity to the circum-Pacific belt of fire and its vulnerability to regional typhoons. The country experiences an average of 20 typhoons per year that result in numerous floods, flashfloods, landslides, and even tsunamis. There are 300 volcanoes, 22 of which are active scattered throughout the country.

In 2011, the country was affected by 13 tropical storms, five of which became typhoons. In late September 2011, Typhoon Pedring devastated the Manila metropolitan area, causing billions in property damage while bringing the region to a standstill. In December, Typhoon Sendong took an unexpected course and struck Mindanao, killing nearly 1,500 people.

Flashfloods and landslides associated with heavy rain can occur in all regions of the country. Severe thunderstorms are often accompanied by rain that can quickly overwhelm drainage systems and cause flooding in streets.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Transportation safety involving maritime ferries tends to be substandard, and Embassy personnel are advised to avoid using such modes of transportation. On average, over 200 sea mishaps happen yearly. In 2009, within two days, two aging ferries sank, resulting in significant loss of life and property.

In 2011, no major industrial or transportation incidents were reported.



Kidnappings

The PNP Police Anti Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) unit is primarily responsible for kidnapping investigations. PACER officials report that kidnapping incidents in Mindanao are mostly perpetrated by Muslim individuals/groups that are members or allies of terrorist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Lawless MILF Group (LMG). Kidnappings remain most prevalent in Western Mindanao particularly in the Autonomous Region Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) area/provinces, the Zamboanga Peninsula, and in Cotabato-Central Mindanao Region, specifically in the provinces of South and North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, and in the Chartered Cities of Zamboanga, General Santos City, Cotabato, Iligan and Cagayan de Oro.

Kidnapping for ransom (KFR) remains a danger throughout the country. Several militant groups see KFR as way to fund their operations, and foreigners are often targeted. Philippine National Police statistics state that in 2011 there were 24 kidnap for ransom (KFR) cases throughout the country, down from 41 in 2010. In these 24 cases, there were a total of 38 victims.

In December 2011, an American citizen escaped from his captors after being held in Basilan for over five months. He and several members of his family—to include his mother, who was released in the fall of 2011—were taken over the summer and held for ransom. Also in December, Philippine police stormed a kidnappers' hideout and rescued a four-year old American boy who was held for ransom for eight days. Five suspects were arrested in the second recent case of a kidnapped U.S. minor in the Philippines. In October 2011 three South Koreans were lured from their hotel in the trading city of Cagayan de Oro and reportedly taken to Lanao del Sur, a heavily forested province about 50 kilometers (30 miles) away.

While kidnappings occur throughout the country, the majority of cases in 2011 were concentrated in Mindanao and the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Drug and Narco-terrorism

Production, trafficking, and consumption of illegal drugs are issues of concern. The trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine remains the foremost drug problem, followed by marijuana, and, to a lesser extent, ecstasy and cocaine. Transnational organized crime groups both exploit under-staffed and under-resourced Philippine law enforcement and a weak judicial system to establish clandestine drug laboratories and import wholesale quantities of methamphetamine to supply the Philippine domestic market. Methamphetamine laboratories



have been raided in Metro Manila and Luzon. Regionally, the Philippines is an identified source of methamphetamine for Guam and, to a lesser extent, Hawaii. The country also may be a transit location for cocaine, although there is not a significant cocaine domestic market.

Police Response

The PNP is capable but is limited in its capacity to respond and assist victims of crime and traffic accidents due to a lack of response vehicles, radios, and other essential equipment. All incidents of crime should be reported to the PNP, and it is important that foreigners remain calm and polite when interacting with the PNP to avoid misunderstandings and to get a more desired response. Reports of corruption and bribery are widespread, to include within the PNP; it is U.S. government policy not to pay or condone bribes to officials.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Should Americans feel they are being extorted by the police, they should contact that officer's commander and report it to the Embassy. In the event of arrest or detention by the police, call the American Embassy at 301-2000. There is a duty officer available 24 hours a day.

Local Police Telephone Numbers

The National Emergency Number is 117. It is accessible through both voice and text messaging.

Manila-523-3378

Makati City-843-7971

Pasay City-831-1359 and 831-8059

Quezon City-924-1018

Fire Contact Numbers:

Manila-527-3627 and 527-3653

Makati City-818-5150

Pasay City-843-6523

Quezon City-924-1922

Medical Emergencies

Adequate medical care is available in major cities, but hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and equipment provided by hospitals in the United States. Medical



care is limited in rural and remote areas. There are many western-trained Filipino doctors, who, in general, provide good, quality medical care even with substandard medical facilities.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost several thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees at the time of admission and full payment prior to discharge. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatment for non-payment. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is on the webpage of the U.S. Embassy Manila at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

The National Emergency Number is the only emergency telephone number in the world that is accessible through both voice telephony and text messaging.

Contact Information for Local Hospitals and Clinics

Makati Medical Center: 815-9911
St. Luke's Global Hospital: 789-7700
Manila Doctors Hospital: 524-3011
Asian Hospital: 771-9000/9001/9002

Air Ambulance Services

International SOS-Philippines (Air Ambulance) 687-0909

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Common sense and good situational awareness will keep most people out of harm's way. Criminals prey on people who pay little attention to their surroundings or do not take basic personal security precautions. Never show large amounts of cash, do not wear a lot of jewelry, and always use reliable transportation. Credit card and ATM fraud can occur, so it is best to use credit cards at major retail facilities and banks and always check bills or statements for suspicious charges. Date-rape drug use has occurred; never leave a drink unattended or accept drinks from a stranger. There are many guard companies who provide armed residential and facilities security, if needed.

Areas to be Avoided

Because of the security concerns highlighted in the State Department's Travel Warning for the Philippines (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5639.html), U.S. government



employees must continue to seek authorization for travel considered essential to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. Travelers to these regions should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas. Travelers are still advised to avoid Mindanao region.

Further Information

The Embassy operator is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week and can connect callers to the proper Embassy duty officer. The Embassy operator can be reached at 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizen's Services website is <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

OSAC Country Council

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