

Travel Warning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Bureau of Consular Affairs

Mexico

September 10, 2010

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens traveling to and living in Mexico about the security situation in Mexico. The status of authorized departure of family members of U.S. government personnel from U.S. Consulates in the northern Mexico border cities of Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey and Matamoros ended on September 10 following the expiration of the maximum 180 day period. Based upon a security review in Monterrey following the shooting on August 20, 2010, in front of the American Foundation School in Monterrey and the high incidence of kidnappings in the Monterrey area, U.S. government personnel from the Consulate General have been advised that the immediate, practical and reliable way to reduce the security risks for all children is to remove them from Monterrey. As of September 10, 2010, the Consulate General in Monterrey is a partially unaccompanied post, meaning no minor dependents of U.S. government employees are permitted to remain in the city. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Mexico dated August 27, 2010 to note the lifting of Authorized Departure status for U.S. Consulates along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year. This includes tens of thousands who cross the border every day for study, tourism or business and at least one million U.S. citizens who live in Mexico. The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations. Resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime reported in the border region and in areas along major drug trafficking routes. Nevertheless, crime and violence are serious problems. While most victims of violence are Mexican citizens associated with criminal activity, the security situation poses serious risks for U.S. citizens as well.

It is imperative that U.S. citizens understand the risks involved in travel to Mexico, how best to avoid dangerous situations, and who to contact if one becomes a victim of crime or violence.

Common-sense precautions such as visiting only legitimate business and tourist areas during daylight hours, and avoiding areas where criminal activity might occur, can help ensure that travel to Mexico is safe and enjoyable. U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are urged to contact the consular section of the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy for advice and assistance. Contact information is provided at the end of this message.

General Conditions

Since 2006, the Mexican government has engaged in an extensive effort to combat drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs). Mexican DTOs, meanwhile, have been engaged in a vicious struggle with each other for control of trafficking routes. In order to prevent and combat violence, the government of Mexico has deployed military troops and federal police throughout the country.

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U.S. citizens should expect to encounter military and other law enforcement checkpoints when traveling in Mexico and are urged to cooperate fully. DTOs have erected unauthorized checkpoints, and killed motorists who have not stopped at them. In confrontations with the Mexican army and police, DTOs have employed automatic weapons and grenades. In some cases, assailants have worn full or partial police or military uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles. According to published reports, 22,700 people have been killed in narcotics-related violence since 2006. The great majority of those killed have been members of DTOs. However, innocent bystanders have been killed in shootouts between DTOs and Mexican law enforcement or between rival DTOs.

Recent violent attacks and persistent security concerns have prompted the U.S. Embassy to urge U.S. citizens to defer unnecessary travel to Michoacán and Tamaulipas, to parts of Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, and Coahuila, (see details below) and to advise U.S. citizens residing or traveling in those areas to exercise extreme caution.

Violence Along the U.S.-Mexico Border

Much of the country's narcotics-related violence has occurred in the northern border region. For example, since 2006, three times as many people have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez, in the state of Chihuahua, across from El Paso, Texas, than in any other city in Mexico. More than half of all Americans killed in Mexico in FY 2009 whose deaths were reported to the U.S. Embassy were killed in the border cities of Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana.

Since 2006, large firefights have taken place in towns and cities in many parts of Mexico, often in broad daylight on streets and other public venues. Such firefights have occurred mostly in northern Mexico, including Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, Chihuahua City, Nogales, Nuevo Laredo, Piedras Negras, Reynosa, Matamoros and Monterrey. Firefights have also occurred in Nayarit, Jalisco and Colima. During some of these incidents, U.S. citizens have been trapped and temporarily prevented from leaving the area.

The situation in northern Mexico remains fluid; the location and timing of future armed engagements cannot be predicted. U.S. citizens are urged to exercise extreme caution when traveling throughout the region, particularly in those areas specifically mentioned in this Travel Warning.

The level of violence in Monterrey is increasing and has spread to areas near a school which many U.S. citizen children attend. Local police and private patrols do not have the capacity to deter criminal elements from areas around the schools. Given the increasing level of violence that is occurring all over Monterrey, school children are at significantly increased risk. Based on this, and combined with the high incidence of kidnappings in the Monterrey area, U.S. government personnel from the Consulate General have been advised that the immediate, practical and reliable way to reduce the security risks for all children is to remove them from Monterrey. On September 10, 2010, the Consulate General in Monterrey became a partially unaccompanied post with no minor dependents of U.S. government employees.

In recent months, DTOs have used stolen trucks to block major highways and thus prevent the military from responding to criminal activity, most notably in the area around Monterrey. Also in Monterrey, DTOs have kidnapped guests out of reputable hotels in the downtown area, blocking off adjoining streets to prevent law enforcement response. DTOs have also attacked Mexican government facilities such as military barracks and a customs and immigration post.

The situation in the state of Chihuahua, specifically Ciudad Juarez, is of special concern. Mexican authorities report that more than 2,600 people were killed in Ciudad Juarez in 2009. Three persons associated with the Consulate General were murdered in March, 2010. U.S. citizens should defer unnecessary travel to Ciudad Juarez and to the Guadalupe Bravo area southeast of Ciudad Juarez. U.S. citizens should also defer travel to the northwest quarter of the state of Chihuahua. From the United States, these areas are often reached through the Columbus, NM and Fabens and Fort Hancock, TX ports-of-entry. In both areas, American citizens have been victims of drug related violence. There have been recent incidents of serious narcotics-related violence in the vicinity of the Copper Canyon in Chihuahua.

The Consular agency in Reynosa, Tamaulipas was closed temporarily in February 2010 in response to firefights between police and DTOs and between DTOs. In April 2010, a grenade thrown into the Consulate compound at 11:00 PM caused damage to the U.S. Consulate General in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. The Consulate General in Nuevo Laredo and the Consular Agency in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, were closed for one day as a result. The Consulate General in Nuevo Laredo prohibits employees from entering the entertainment zone in Nuevo Laredo known as "Boys Town" because of concerns about violent crime in that area.

Between 2006 and 2009, the number of narcotics-related murders in the state of Durango increased ten-fold. The cities of Durango and Gomez Palacio, and the area known as "La Laguna" in the state of Coahuila, which includes the city of Torreon, have experienced sharp increases in violence. In late 2009 and early 2010, four visiting U.S. citizens were murdered in Gomez Palacio, Durango. These are among several murders in the state of Durango that have been cause for particular concern and that remain under investigation.

Travelers on the highways between Monterrey and the United States (notably through Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros) have been targeted for robbery that has resulted in violence and have also been caught in incidents of gunfire between criminals and Mexican law enforcement. Travelers should defer unnecessary travel on Mexican Highway 2 between Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo due to the ongoing violent competition between DTOs in that area. Criminals have followed and harassed U.S. citizens traveling in their vehicles in border areas including Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, and Tijuana. U.S. citizens traveling by road to and from the U.S. border through Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Durango, and Sinaloa should be especially vigilant. Criminals appear to especially target SUVs and full-size pick-up trucks for theft and car-jacking along these routes.

Continued concerns regarding road safety along the Mexican border have prompted the U.S. Mission in Mexico to impose certain restrictions on U.S. government employees transiting the area. Effective July 15, 2010, Mission employees and their families may not travel by vehicle across the U.S.-Mexico border to or from any post in the interior of Mexico. This policy also applies to employees and their families transiting Mexico to and from Central American posts. This policy does not apply to employees and their family members assigned to border posts (Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros), although they may not drive to interior posts as outlined above. Travel is permitted between Hermosillo and Nogales, but not permitted from Hermosillo to any other interior posts.

Crime and Violence Throughout Mexico

Although narcotics-related crime is a particular concern along Mexico's northern border, violence has occurred throughout the country, including in areas frequented by American tourists. U.S. citizens traveling in Mexico should exercise caution in unfamiliar areas and be aware of their

surroundings at all times. Bystanders have been injured or killed in violent attacks in cities across the country, demonstrating the heightened risk of violence in public places. In recent years, dozens of U.S. citizens living in Mexico have been kidnapped and most of their cases remain unsolved.

One of Mexico's most powerful DTOs is based in the state of Sinaloa. Since 2006, more homicides have occurred in the state's capital city of Culiacan than in any other city in Mexico, with the exception of Ciudad Juarez. Furthermore, the city of Mazatlan has experienced a recent increase in violent crime, with more murders in the first quarter of 2010 than in all of 2009. U.S. citizens should defer unnecessary travel to Culiacan and exercise extreme caution when visiting the rest of the state.

The state of Michoacán is home to another of Mexico's most dangerous DTOs, "La Familia". In June 2010, 14 federal police were killed in an ambush near Zitacuaro in the southeastern corner of the state. In April 2010, the Secretary for Public Security for Michoacán was shot in a DTO ambush. Security incidents have also occurred in and around the State's world famous butterfly sanctuaries. In 2008, a grenade attack on a public gathering in Morelia, the state capital, killed eight people. U.S. citizens should defer unnecessary travel to the area. If travel in Michoacán is unavoidable, U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution, especially outside major tourist areas.

U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution when traveling in the northwestern part of the state of Guerrero, which likewise has a strong DTO presence. U.S. citizens should not take the dangerous, isolated road through Ciudad Altamirano to the beach resorts of Ixtapa and Zihuatanejo. The popular beach resort of Acapulco has been affected by narcotics-related violence. In April 2010, three innocent bystanders were killed in a shootout between Mexican police and DTO members in broad daylight in one of the city's main tourist areas. In the same month, numerous incidents of narcotics-related violence occurred in the city of Cuernavaca, in the State of Morelos, a popular destination for American language students.

U.S. citizens should also exercise extreme caution when traveling in southern Nayarit in and near the city of Tepic which has recently experienced unpredictable incidents of DTO violence. The number of violent incidents involving DTOs has increased in recent months throughout Jalisco, Nayarit and Colima.

U.S. citizens traveling to towns and villages with large indigenous communities located predominantly but not exclusively in southern Mexico, should be aware that land disputes between residents and between residents and local authorities have led to violence. In April 2010, two members of a non-governmental aid organization, one of whom was a foreign citizen, were murdered near the village of San Juan Capola in Oaxaca.

Safety Recommendations

U.S. citizens who believe they are being targeted for kidnapping or other crimes should notify Mexican law enforcement officials and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City or the nearest U.S. consulate as soon as possible. Any U.S. visitors who suspect they are a target should consider returning to the United States immediately. U.S. citizens should be aware that many cases of violent crime are never resolved by Mexican law enforcement, and the U.S. government has no authority to investigate crimes committed in Mexico.

U.S. citizens should make every attempt to travel on main roads during daylight hours, particularly the toll ("cuota") roads, which generally are more secure. When warranted, the U.S. Embassy and

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consulates advise their employees as well as private U.S. citizens to avoid certain areas, abstain from driving on certain roads because of dangerous conditions or criminal activity, or recommend driving during daylight hours only. When this happens, the Embassy or the affected consulate will alert the local U.S. citizen Warden network and post the information on their respective websites, indicating the nature of the concern and the expected time period for which the restriction will remain in place.

U.S. citizen visitors are encouraged to stay in the well-known tourist areas. Travelers should leave their itinerary with a friend or family member not traveling with them, avoid traveling alone, and check with their cellular provider prior to departure to confirm that their cell phone is capable of roaming on GSM or 3G international networks. Cell phone coverage in isolated parts of Mexico, for example, the Copper Canyon, is spotty or non-existent.

Do not display expensive-looking jewelry, large amounts of money, or other valuable items. Travelers to remote or isolated venues should be aware that they may be distant from appropriate medical, law enforcement, and consular services in an emergency situation.

U.S. citizens applying for passports or requesting other fee-based services from consulates or the Embassy are encouraged to make arrangements to pay for those services using a non-cash method. U.S. citizens should be alert for credit card fraud, especially outside major commercial establishments.

American employees of the U.S. Embassy are prohibited from hailing taxis on the street in Mexico City because of frequent robberies. American citizens are urged to only use taxis associated with the organized taxi stands ("sitios") that are common throughout Mexico.

U.S. citizens should be alert to pickpockets and general street crime throughout Mexico, but especially in large cities. Between FY 2006 and FY 2009 the number of U.S. passports reported stolen in Mexico rose from 184 to 288.

Demonstrations and Large Public Gatherings

Demonstrations occur frequently throughout Mexico and are usually peaceful. However, even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate to violence unexpectedly. Violent demonstrations have resulted in deaths, including that of an American citizen in Oaxaca in 2006. During demonstrations or law enforcement operations, U.S. citizens are advised to remain in their homes or hotels, avoid large crowds, and avoid the downtown and surrounding areas.

Demonstrators in Mexico may block traffic on roads, including major arteries, or take control of toll-booths on highways. U.S. citizens should avoid confrontations in such situations.

Since the timing and routes of scheduled marches and demonstrations are always subject to change, U.S. citizens should monitor local media sources for new developments and exercise extreme caution while within the vicinity of protests.

The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. U.S. citizens are therefore advised to avoid participating in demonstrations or other activities that might be deemed political by Mexican authorities. As is always the case in any large gathering, U.S. citizens should remain alert to their surroundings.

Further Information

AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 10092236. (Posted on 09/22/10).

U.S. citizens are urged to monitor local media for information about fast-breaking situations that could affect their security.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to review the [U.S. Embassy's Mexico Security Update](#). The update contains information about recent security incidents in Mexico that could affect the safety of the traveling public.

For more detailed information on staying safe in Mexico, please see the State Department's [Country Specific Information for Mexico](#). Information on security and travel to popular tourist destinations is also provided in the publication: "[Spring Break in Mexico- Know Before You Go!!](#)"

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the [State Department's internet web site](#), where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers from Mexico, a regular toll line at 001-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, 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](#).

For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens in Mexico, please contact the [U.S. Embassy](#) or the closest U.S. Consulate. The numbers provided below for the Embassy and Consulates are available around the clock. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by [e-mail](#).

Consulates (with consular districts):

[Ciudad Juarez](#) (Chihuahua): Paseo de la Victoria 3650, tel. (011)(52)(656) 227-3000.

[Guadalajara](#) (Nayarit, Jalisco, Aguas Calientes, and Colima): Progreso 175, telephone (011)(52)(333) 268-2100.

[Hermosillo](#) (Sinaloa and the southern part of the state of Sonora): Avenida Monterrey 141, telephone (011)(52)(662) 289-3500.

[Matamoros](#) (the southern part of Tamaulipas with the exception of the city of Tampico): Avenida Primera 2002, telephone (011)(52)(868) 812-4402.

[Merida](#) (Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo): Calle 60 no. 338-K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico 97050, telephone (011)(52)(999) 942-5700 or 202-250-3711 (U.S. number).

[Monterrey](#) (Nuevo Leon, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, and the southern part of Coahuila): Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente, telephone (011)(52)(818) 047-3100.

[Nogales](#) (the northern part of Sonora): Calle San Jose, Nogales, Sonora, telephone (011)(52)(631) 311-8150.

[Nuevo Laredo](#) (the northern part of Coahuila and the northwestern part of Tamaulipas): Calle Allende 3330, col. Jardin, telephone (011)(52)(867) 714-0512.

Tijuana (Baja California Norte and Baja California Sur): Tapachula 96, telephone (011)(52)(664) 622-7400.

All other Mexican states, and the Federal District of Mexico City, are part of the Embassy's consular district.

Consular Agencies:

Acapulco: Hotel Continental Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 - local 14, telephone (011)(52)(744) 484-0300 or (011)(52)(744) 469-0556.

Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina local c-4, Plaza Nautica, col. Centro, telephone (011)(52)(624) 143-3566.

Cancún: Plaza Caracol two, second level, no. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulcan, km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera, telephone (011)(52)(998) 883-0272 or, 202-640-2511 (a U.S. number).

Ciudad Acuña: Closed until further notice.

Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en el Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th ave.) 2nd floor, locales #8 and 9, telephone (011)(52)(987) 872-4574 or, 202-459-4661 (a U.S. number).

Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa, telephone (011)(52)(755) 553-2100.

Mazatlán: Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada, telephone (011)(52)(669) 916-5889.

Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcalá no. 407, interior 20, telephone (011)(52)(951) 514-3054, (011)(52)(951) 516-2853.

Piedras Negras: Abasolo #211, Zona Centro, Piedras Negras, Coah., Tel. (011)(52)(878) 782-5586.

Playa del Carmen: "The Palapa," Calle 1 Sur, between Avenida 15 and Avenida 20, telephone (011)(52)(984) 873-0303 or 202-370-6708(a U.S. number).

Puerto Vallarta: Paradise Plaza, Paseo de los Cocoteros #1, Local #4, Interior #17, Nuevo Vallarta, Nayarit, telephone (011)(52)(322) 222-0069.

Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Esq. Sinaloa, Colonia Rodríguez, telephone: (011)(52)(899) 923 - 9331.

San Luis Potosí: Edificio "Las Terrazas", Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco, telephone: (011)(52)(444) 811-7802/7803.

San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72, telephone (011)(52)(415) 152-2357 or (011)(52)(415) 152-0068