

Advice Sheet - Assault and Robbery Security Advice

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Categories: Security

An assault is where a person intentionally or recklessly uses unlawful force against someone else. Assaults are usually categorized by the injuries caused. Common assault, actual bodily harm (ABH) and grievous bodily harm (GBH) are all criminal offences and cover a range of injuries from bruises or scratches through to life threatening injuries. However, an assault can take place even if no force is used.

Robbery and assault are amongst the most frequent security incidents that occur to foreign travelers. While it is important to consider your immediate health and safety, other factors should be considered to determine how the incident can affect your safety in the medium term such as establishing communication if your devices were taken, safety of your accommodation, etc.

The majority of assaults and robbery overseas are conducted by opportunist criminals who believe that westerners and non-residential persons are wealthy and better off than they are. Most opportunist criminals do not plan to hurt anyone, but in many cases, opportunist criminals will resort to violence if resistance is shown or the possibility of capture is imminent.

Mitigating against Assault and Robbery

- Maintain situational awareness at all times. Situational awareness is the conscious and subconscious mindset of knowing what's going on all around you as well as just what's in front of you.
- To improve your situation awareness, practice when you are out and about, what's going on around you, people, vehicles, objects, places. Try and use your peripheral vision to see people but without looking directly at them.
- If you're in a strange location, reduce your alcohol intake and have a friend or colleague to watch your drinks when you go to the restroom. Buy bottled drinks and keep your thumb over the opening to prevent your drinks being spiked.
- Book vetted, trusted transportation when travelling around. If you're in a higher risk area, book secure transportation and limit your time off to the hotel facilities.
- Keep to well lit tourist areas. Most tourist areas will have extra police patrolling, CCTV, and workable lights, but they continue to remain a hot spot with pickpockets and scammers.
- Beware of scams, don't offer your hand, if some touches you, politely ask them not to touch you in a firm, confident posture, continue walking and continue to inform them "no, thank you".

- If you believe your being harassed or followed, head towards a hotel, bank, restaurant, police station, etc. and seek help. Keep to a busy area, don't think you can lose them through alleys, parks, housing estates, etc. as criminals will use these areas to their advantage.
- Dress down for the area you are visiting, leave valuables at home or in the hotel safe. Conceal your mobile phone and only use it in safe areas such as cafes, restaurants, offices, etc.
- Visit your location with confidence, look confident in where you are going and if you are unsure of where you are, go into a café, restaurant, bank, etc. and get your bearings before leaving.
- Get into a habit of locking your door either your room or vehicle. Don't open your door to strangers and use the hotel door peephole to see who is there.
- Have a dummy wallet or purse, this is a decoy to give the impression to your thief they have succeeded in their objective. Place old cards, outdated, old ATM card, door card keys, details of an old hotel and a little money in the wallet or purse to make it look worthwhile to the thief.
- Walk facing traffic as a person walking with traffic can be followed, forced into a car, and abducted more easily than a person walking against traffic.
- Carry a non-lethal protection device such as a whistle or other type of alarm.
- Avoid confrontation, for example: if you see a group of intoxicated men, cross the road, go into a hotel, restaurant etc. Don't make eye contact, ignore comments and don't antagonize them.
- If you have a rental vehicle, request a vehicle without any rental markings on the body work, pre-program the satnav with police stations and hospitals and keep the doors locked and windows closed, open an inch to let fresh air in if there is no AC.
- Ensure you have no valuables such as mobile phones, laptops, jackets, etc, on show in the vehicle. Have the sun visor down to partially hide who you are.
- Leave sufficient room to maneuver the vehicle when stationary at lights, stop signs, junctions, etc. if you are to drive off quickly due to an emergency.

If you are assaulted / robbed

- Do not risk your safety over material items, hand over everything that the assailant demands. Covered insurance will replace money, jewelry, phones, etc.
- Do not resist even if you think you may be stronger or you may believe you could get yourself out of the situation. You will not know if the person has a weapon and how desperate they are use it.
- Act compliant, an assailant will want to spend as little time as possible with you. Follow the demands and make no sudden threatening movements.
- Don't follow the assailant, this could antagonize them if seen. They may also be working in pairs and watching you.

Considerations When Situation is Secure and Safe

- If you have been injured in the attack/robbery, contact the emergency services immediately, if you are able to take yourself to seek medical assistance, do so. Some countries do not have the responsive emergency times as other western countries.
- Contact your medical provider who will assist you with your injuries and medical location.
- Inform the authorities as soon as you are safe. It is also recommended to inform your embassy/consulate, business POC, insurance and family and friends.
- If you have a in-country contact for support, use them. You may need a new phone and laptop, to change hotels, to leave the country, etc.
- If the attacker has left the location and there were witnesses, it can also be useful to ask them to remain with the person until the help arrives.
- Note down everything you can remember that happen, what was taken and as much information about your assailants as possible as this will assist the police and insurance.

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