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INTERNATIONAL SOS

Colombia: Cauca department: Abduction of foreign national highlights kidnap risk, need for precautions


OVERVIEW

 Level:


Notice

 Location:

Toribio - Colombia

 Category:

Kidnap

 Active:

07 Dec 2020 - 28 Dec 2020

Last Updated: 07 Dec 2020 17:49 (GMT)

The table below shows the number of impacted and potentially impacted individuals and assets at the date/time the alert was issued. The counts include individuals within the impact radius of the alert and may not reflect the total number of people in each area listed.

Please log into [Tracker](#) for the latest information or [click here](#) for an up-to-date list of affected individuals and assets in the impacted area.

EXPOSURE IN IMPACTED AREA ONLY

Location	There Now	There in next 24 hours	There in next 1-7 days	There while the alert is active
Affected cities	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0

EXPOSURE BY COUNTRY

Location	There Now	There in next 24 hours	There in next 1-7 days	There while the alert is active
Colombia (Medium Risk)	6	6	10	14

The authorities said that a Spanish national was kidnapped on 5 December in [Toribio municipality](#) (Cauca department). The incident occurred while the victim was driving to the city of Neiva (Huila department). He was intercepted at an illegal checkpoint by a group of unknown gunmen. The victim, who had been living in Colombia since March, regularly travelled to the remote Amazon region. The authorities have said that efforts are underway to secure his release. Travel to areas of high guerrilla, criminal and paramilitary activity should be for essential business purposes only.

MORE DETAIL

While the motive behind the abduction and the identity of the assailants are unknown, the incident underscores the risk of kidnapping in many rural areas of the country, particularly in areas with a notable presence of guerrilla or criminal groups. Both National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) elements are believed to be active in Cauca, where these armed groups vie for control of drug trafficking routes and illegal coca crops. While violent crime occurs with greater frequency in HIGH risk areas which experience significant organised criminal activity, no area of Colombia should be considered immune to crime.

Kidnaps by illegal armed groups such as the ELN have decreased significantly in recent years, and most abductions that take place are carried out by common criminals. While most kidnappings target locals, foreigners may be targeted due to their perceived wealth. However, there remains a risk of foreigners being targeted for abduction by these guerrilla groups, especially in remote rural areas where such organisations primarily operate. Foreign nationals and short-term travellers in cities are more vulnerable to express kidnappings (paseo millonario), during which the victim is usually held for several hours while the perpetrators withdraw cash from the victim's bank accounts through ATMs.

WHAT WE ADVISED YOUR PEOPLE

Travel to HIGH travel risk areas, which include rural areas of Cauca, should be for essential purposes and should be arranged in close liaison with local contacts. Members should carefully plan all aspects of their itinerary and be confident in their accommodation, transport, communication and security arrangements prior to travel. Staff intending to visit such areas should receive a pre-travel briefing to ensure familiarisation with the geographical risk environment and local hotspots, as well as how to respond in the event of an incident. Avoid overland travel outside major urban areas. Necessary overland travel should be undertaken after seeking itinerary-specific advice, in daylight hours, and after ascertaining that the route remains secure immediately prior to departure. For more information on internal travel options, please refer to our country travel pages.

Criminals are often armed. If accosted by a criminal do not attempt to resist or antagonise them. Short-term 'express' kidnapping poses a risk to foreign personnel, who are rarely targeted in kidnap-for-ransom. Members should maintain a low profile as a precaution, while longer-term visitors should avoid establishing routines and vary the timings and routes of journeys.

ASSISTANCE



+1 215 942 8226
Philadelphia, USA

+33 155 633 155
Paris, France

+44 208 762 8008
London, UK

+65 6338 7800
Singapore

+971 4601 8777
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