



Security Is 90 Percent Prevention

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According to global forecasters, demand for travel risk management services in Latin America is on the rise. It's difficult to gauge from the data, however, whether traveling abroad has become more or less hazardous. In some reports, much of South America has become safer for travelers. Others note that recovery in Latin America will be a key factor for growth in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, reflecting a strong demand for travel.

Can these upbeat predictions be trusted? In many Latin American countries, freedom of the press is rare, and governments control what statistics are released and in what manner, which significantly affects the perception of violence. With little confidence in the judicial process, and unchecked corruption, the majority of victims do not report crimes, fearing retaliation by criminals who may bribe or make payments to judges or police to secure release or reduced prison sentences.

Internal or contract security service providers are critical to the protection of business personnel through security training and awareness. Most people think of security as bodyguards and martial arts experts who know how to

shoot a gun. That's all true and very important. But security professionals never want to get to the point where they have to show their skills.

One such provider, AFIMAC, believes that 90 percent of mitigating the risk of international travel is prevention, five percent is reaction, and five percent is bad luck—being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Clearly, the majority of the responsibility of any security travel program must be prevention, knowing the profile of corporate travelers, their medical conditions, and detailed itinerary, including hotel and business meeting locations.

The way victims react can affect the outcome of even seemingly mundane car accidents. At a minimum, corporate travelers should be given a personal security awareness or travel security briefing to elevate their security consciousness when abroad.

The contents of such briefings should give the traveler a good overview of his or her destination and itinerary as well as tips on how to keep a low profile while in the locale. The purpose of the briefing should focus on how to determine the risks, increase personal awareness, and reduce the chances of being selected as a target.

The goal in all cases is prevention—having a personal plan for acting in a way that prevents an attack from happening. Prevention means having a plan for safeguarding valuables, selecting streets safe for travel, walking with confidence and awareness of persons who might be following, knowing where to park and being conscious of persons lingering near the car, and avoiding the use of ATMs. The goal is to teach the corporate traveler how to detect and deter becoming a criminal target.

One way to bring home these concepts is to step into the shoes of the criminal. As a rule, criminals do not want to be exposed; they always select a victim before an attack, opting for the easiest victim that offers the greatest reward with the least amount of risk. They can take time to select their targets, identify a specific victim, evaluate the individual looking for an opportunity to attack, plan the attack by looking for times, places, and methods where the person is vulnerable, and finally springing into action. At this point, the victim

no longer has the possibility of prevention. If the target is something of sentimental value, the traveling employee may hesitate when confronted with a .38 revolver, leading the perpetrator to feel challenged or not in control—then shots are fired. The best advice? Employees should not take anything into a country that they are not willing to lose.

To counter kidnappings, for example, the latest GPS solutions are often used in company vehicles. But if the victim is separated from the vehicle, the positioning information is useless. A more effective solution is smartphone GPS technology, such as AFIMAC's MyTrac, which constantly relays GPS location information to an online platform. In this way, an organization can track travelers as they board their flight, check in at a local hotel, and proceed from meeting to meeting. In a typical kidnapping, the criminals often make their first call from the victim's phone, hoping the family will pick up so they can make demands. With MyTrac, the phone's GPS can pinpoint the exact location of that call. Coupled with Crisis Assistance Plus, a travel assistance membership, immediate help can be provided to a distressed employee.

Traveling employees can internalize the concept of prevention in two ways: the wrong way—assume that nothing is going to happen and allow it to occur; or the right way—act in a manner that prevents an attack from happening in the first place. The prevention part of security may seem like minutia, but it is vital when protecting corporate employees traveling for business in Latin America.

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