Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Beijing, with a population of almost 20 million people, is generally safe when compared with other major, urban areas. The police and security service presence throughout the city serves to deter most serious crimes, while petty crimes do occur with some regularity. The income disparity has been a source of social friction and has been identified as a root cause of much of the economic crime experienced in Beijing. This includes pick pocketing, credit card fraud, and various financial scams often targeting Americans and other foreigners. Violent crime is less common but does occasionally occur. These types of incidents garner significant media attention but are not considered the norm.

Crime Threats

The most common criminal incidents are minor petty crimes. Pick pocketing on public transportation, at shopping areas, and at tourist sites is quite common. Thieves commonly target cell phones, Blackberries, cameras, and high value items. At tourist sites, thieves are generally more interested in cash and will immediately abandon credit cards. In shopping areas, both cash and credit cards are sought.

Violent crimes at the workplace, such as assaults, are less common but do occur. Violent crime affecting the expatriate community most often occurs in the bars and clubs of Beijing’s nightlife districts. Bar fights are common, and the past year has seen an increase in reports of violence against Westerners. Cultural miscommunication, xenophobia, and alcohol all play a role, with certain bars garnering reputations for violence. Bouncers at these clubs and bars often play a role in the violence and have been physically aggressive with patrons. The legal age for consuming alcohol is 18; however, most establishments do not require identification.
Some bars are overcrowded, and safety standards are not routinely enforced. Prostitutes and drugs are known to be present in some clubs.

The distribution of counterfeit Chinese currency plagues official and private Americans. Unsuspecting Americans are passed fraudulent notes at restaurants, stores, and taxi cabs. Large numbers of 100 RMB and 50 RMB counterfeit notes continue to circulate, while fake 20 RMB and 10 RMB (roughly 3 and 2 dollars respectively) denominations have been introduced too.

**Overall Road Safety Situation**

The road conditions in larger cities are good; in contrast, driving conditions in rural areas are usually poor. Beijing adds some 1,200 newly registered vehicles to the roads every day, causing already congested roads to come to a standstill during rush hour. Additionally, there are a great number of pedestrians and bikers that weave through traffic, creating a hazardous mix of conditions.

The greatest road hazard remains the inexperienced Chinese driver; most have little experience operating motor vehicles and are either overly cautious or aggressive, resulting in several accidents per day. According to China Daily, traffic-related deaths were the leading cause of deaths for those under 45. Traffic laws are rarely adhered to, and policing is done remotely by video camera (mainly speed traps). Yielding to oncoming traffic or pedestrians is virtually unheard of, as is using turn signals. Traffic signals are absent at key locations, and road closures are either poorly marked or not marked at all. DWIs are also common.

RSO continues to respond to dozens of traffic accidents on an annual basis; most are minor and are resolved on the scene. In many cases, bicyclists strike a static or moving vehicle. In traffic accidents involving Embassy vehicles, the official American is often ruled at fault, regardless of the actual cause of the accident. RSO encourages employees and dependents not to argue with the other party involved in a traffic accident regardless of who is responsible. Employees are encouraged not to react to local nationals’ aggressive driving and to defuse the situation in a safe and expeditious manner.

The use of unregistered or “black” taxi cabs continues to be of concern. In a limited number of cases, foreigners have reported being sexually assaulted, have had their luggage stolen, or have been charged exorbitant fares. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to or from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded.
RSO continues to receive reports of foreigners taking rickshaws or pedi-cabs at tourist sites in Beijing and being driven through hutongs where they were shaken down for money (the victims were physically unharmed). These incidents have taken place at tourist sites, such as Tiananmen Square and Houhai Park.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

China's domestic counter-terrorism efforts remain primarily focused against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) (aka East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP)), a Pakistan-based terrorist group that seeks independence for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of northwest China. In public statements, government officials singled out the “Three Evils” of extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang as the main terrorist threat to the nation and characterized Uighur discontent as terrorist activity. Human rights organizations continued to maintain that China used counter-terrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the population of the XUAR.

During 2012, the government characterized two incidents in the XUAR as terrorist attacks. On February 28, nine "religious extremists" and "terrorists" armed with knives attacked a crowd in Kashgar prefecture, reportedly killing 15 and injuring 16 pedestrians. Seven of the attackers reportedly were killed in the ensuing clash with police, and the alleged "ringleader," an ethnic Uighur, was sentenced to death. Then on June 29, six ethnic Uighur men attempted to hijack a Chinese airliner en route from Hotan to Urumqi, reportedly using aluminum pipes from a dismantled pair of crutches and injuring 10 passengers. According to official Chinese media, three ethnic Uighurs were sentenced to death, and one received life in prison after reportedly confessing to the crimes of "organizing, leading or participating in a terrorist group," "hijacking," and attempting to detonate explosives on an aircraft.

RSO is unaware of a significant transnational terrorist presence in China.

**Post-specific Concerns**

Environmental Hazards

Natural disasters are not uncommon. A 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan province in May 2008, killing more than 69,000 people and leaving nearly five million people homeless. Severe weather, such as large snowstorms, has brought parts of the country to a virtual
standstill at times. Even smaller-scale storms often lead to multiple traffic accidents; snow removal is typically slow and is accomplished by employing thousands of laborers armed with shovels and brooms. China’s southern coast is subject to heavy rainfall, flooding, and monsoons during key times of the year. Southern China experienced massive mudslides in 2010, causing significant property damage.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China’s heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking.

Commercial transportation accidents involving motorized vehicles are not uncommon. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers are poorly trained. Bus accidents are also common. Poor driver training, overloaded buses, and the lack of safety checks are major contributors to accidents.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Security personnel carefully watch foreign visitors and may place you under surveillance. Hotel rooms (including meeting rooms), offices, cars, taxis, telephones, Internet, and fax machines may be monitored onsite or remotely, and personal possessions in hotel rooms, including computers, may be searched without your consent or knowledge. Business travelers should be particularly mindful that trade secrets, negotiating positions, and other business sensitive information may be taken and shared with competitors, counterparts, and/or Chinese regulatory and legal entities.

Privacy Concerns

All visitors should be aware that they have no expectation of privacy in public or private locations. The Embassy and Consulates regularly receive reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. private businessmen and visiting U.S. citizens. The areas around U.S. and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance - dozens of security personnel are posted outside of facilities and around residences, while video cameras are visible throughout diplomatic quarters (offices and residential neighborhoods) of Beijing. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in taxis.

All hotel rooms and offices are considered to be subject to on-site or remote technical monitoring at all times. Hotel rooms, residences, and offices may be accessed at any time
without the occupants’ consent or knowledge. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are also under continuous surveillance.

Embassy employees are warned not to discuss sensitive information in their homes, vehicles, or offices. The Embassy strongly encourages members of the private sector to take similar precautions to safeguard sensitive, personal, and/or proprietary information.

All means of communication—telephones, mobile phones, faxes, e-mails, text messages, etc.—are likely monitored. The government has access to the infrastructure operated by the limited number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and wireless providers in China. Wireless access to the Internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming more common. As such, the Chinese can more easily access official and personal computers. The government has publicly declared that it regularly monitors private e-mail and Internet browsing through cooperation with local ISPs. Some bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny in China where such activity is often carefully monitored and in some cases, depending upon the subject matter, blocked. Common Western social media websites, including You Tube, Facebook, and Twitter, are blocked.

Drug-related Crimes

The government is concerned about domestic drug use, and enforcement efforts are widespread; however, illicit drugs are available in Beijing to both Chinese and expats.

Police Response

Police response for foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim (private citizen, diplomat, VIP, etc.). Urban forces in Beijing and other first-tier cities are better trained and equipped than in other locales because authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Local police are semi-effective at deterring crime; most responses to alarms/emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police are informed that the victim is a Westerner or person of importance. In some cases, local police authorities will serve as a mediator between the victim and criminal to agree upon financial compensation (sometimes in lieu of jail time).

Investigative training and forensic equipment is improving but remains substandard in comparison with Western countries.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment
Local police cooperation with the RSO remains scant, and requests for assistance from the RSO are often not met.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

If private U.S. citizens become the victim of a crime, he should contact the police by dialing 110 regardless of location (English language capabilities will vary). He may also contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the Embassy or nearest Consulate for assistance (contact information is listed below). ACS officers can recommend appropriate medical facilities, provide contact information for local attorneys, notify family members, and explain how to transfer funds to China.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care continues to improve in many urban areas. In Beijing, some medical facilities provide acceptable Western style medical care.

Both municipal and private ambulance service remain substandard. Response time is typically very slow, and transport to the nearest hospital can take a considerable amount of time due to congested traffic conditions. Most ambulances are poorly equipped, staffed by individuals those without English skills, and lack EMT training akin to that found in the U.S. or Western Europe.

Medical evacuation by air is expensive: $60,000 - $100,000 per flight, depending upon the patient's condition and final medevac destination. Visitors are strongly encouraged to purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling to China.

Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

It is recommended that American citizens use Western medical centers whenever possible or, when necessary, seek out the VIP section ("gao gan bing fang") of the hospital where there are more likely to be Western-trained physicians and more modern medical equipment.

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Some conditions that previously led to a medical evacuation can now be safely treated in-country. Air ambulance service varies by city. International SOS is the main Western air ambulance provider along China's east coast.
International SOS maintains a 24-hour alarm center for visitors to China. SOS representatives will advise on the availability of care in most urban areas. Collect calls are accepted. Contact information is as follows:
Beijing: 86-10-6462-9000
Hong Kong: 852-2528-9900
USA: 215-942-8226

MEDEX also provides regional air ambulance services; its representatives can be contacted via: http://www.medexassist.com/.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For health guidance, please visit the CDC at:

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Crimes/Scams

Criminals use various scams to make money from victims and have sent text messages and emails of fraudulent bills and traffic tickets to trick people into paying money. Other techniques involve criminals posing as police, levying fake criminal charges against their victims, and then extorting money from them.

Areas to be Avoided and Best Security Practices

Travelers are strongly encouraged to be aware of their surroundings while in China. Continued vigilance is necessary to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. As a general rule, lesser developed areas in major cities have a higher rate of crime. Statistically, more crimes of opportunity transpire during early morning hours; for example, individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs, and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations after midnight.

Travelers should not flash large amounts of money, jewelry, or electronics, all of which can be an indicator of wealth. The Embassy recommends that visitors disperse money in more than one location on their person, taking care to separate small and large denominations. Men should place their wallets in front pockets, while women should drape the shoulder straps of purses across their body, keeping them in view and under positive control at all times. If you
use a backpack, do not place items of worth inside.

Hotel safes should be used but are not a fail-safe method to safeguard your belongings. Travelers are encouraged to make copies of their passport photo and visa pages and retain credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information in the event the card is stolen); these copies should be stored in their hotel or residence in the event the actual items are stolen.

Public payphones are becoming less common in urban areas. The Embassy recommends that long-term visitors purchase cellular telephones and that short-term travelers contact their cellular phone provider to determine if it provides coverage in both Mainland China and Hong Kong.

Individuals are encouraged to use official taxis (two-tone sedans in Beijing) that employ meters. If a driver refuses to use a meter, exit the vehicle and use another taxi. Some hotels can provide guests with taxi cards written in English and Mandarin that include the hotel name/address and several common points of interest.

Counterfeit products are readily available, but it is illegal to import them into the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials have the authority to seize suspect goods and impose fines on travelers caught attempting to enter the U.S. with counterfeit items.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Location and Contact Information

Normal hours of operation are 0800 to 1700, Monday-Friday. Mission facilities are normally closed for U.S. federal and Chinese holidays.

U.S. Embassy Beijing:
Address: No. 55 An Jia Lou Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100600
Telephone: 86-10-8531-4000 (24 hours)
Post One: 86-10-8531-4444
Fax: 86-10-8531-4000 (American Citizen Services)
Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov.
Internet: http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html
Medical Unit: 86-10-8531-4777
Consular Affairs: 86-10-8531-3333

U.S. Consulate Chengdu:
Address: 4 Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nan lu, Chengdu 610041
Telephone: 86-28-8558-3992, 8558-9642; after hours: 86-0-137-0800-1442
Fax: 86-28-8558-3520
Consular Section Fax: 8558-6229
E-mail: consularchengdu@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Guangzhou:
Address: 5th Floor of the Tianyu Garden Building, 136-146 Lin He Zhong Lu, Tianhe District, Guangzhou 510133
Telephone: 86-20-8518-7605; for after hours emergencies, please call 86-20-8121-8000.
Fax: 86-20-3884-4410
Email: GuangzhouACS@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Shanghai:
Main Address: 1469 Hauihai Zhonglu, Shanghai 2000031
Consular Section Address: 8th floor of the Westgate Mall, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041
Telephone: 86-21-3217-4650; after hours 86-21-6433-3936
Email: Shanghaiacs@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Shenyang:
Address: #52, 14 Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003
Telephone: 86-24-2322-1198; after hours 86-24-137-0988-9307
Fax: 86-24-2323-1465
Email: ShenyangACS@state.gov

U.S. Consulate Wuhan:
Address: New World International Trade Tower I, N. 568 Jianshe Avenue, Hankou, Wuhan 430022
Telephone: 86-027-8555-7791
Fax: 86-027-8555-7761
Email: chenz@state.gov (Consul General’s assistant)

For the latest security and other information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs at: http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings can be found, as well as important information for Americans who face emergencies abroad. U.S. citizens residing or traveling in China are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate by entering their travel itinerary and contact information at: https://step.state.gov/step/. In case
of difficulties registering online, please contact the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

**OSAC Country Council Information**

Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenyang, and Shanghai all have active OSAC Country Councils. The initial point of contact for each Council is the Regional Security Officer at the Embassy or Consulates who can be reached via the numbers listed above or the following e-mail addresses:

RSO James Lemarie (Beijing): LemarieJD@state.gov
RSO James Reynolds (Guangzhou): Reynoldsjm@state.gov
RSO Miguel Eversely (Shanghai): EverselyMA@state.gov
RSO Scott Kim (Shenyang): KimSP@state.gov