

THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME



**Travel safety
and security
awareness guide
and protocol**



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GI travel safety and security awareness guide and protocol

Travelling abroad will always present additional challenges depending on final destination, travelling experience, awareness to safety and security triggers, cultural background and prevalent and emerging safety and security threats. Associated risks can be mitigated through preparation in good time, establishing and maintaining situation awareness and avoiding exposure to unnecessary risks.

The following text is intended to serve two purposes. The first is to act as a guide or checklist for field researchers; the second is for it to serve as a protocol to be used by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime management for the assessment and mitigation of fieldwork environments.

The diverse and ever-changing dynamics at play, that differ from one region to another, country to country will make a one size fits all solution unfeasible. However, some core principles, planning and preparation, coupled with a common-sense approach, go a long way in mitigating risks associated with carrying out fieldwork in challenging environments and will serve the purpose in any destination contemplated, from London to Mogadishu.

Preparation before departure

Preparation is key before travel. Up to date information on the general situation prevalent in a country of destination is a basic requirement when planning trips abroad, especially to more challenging destinations. Before you start your travel, it is mandatory that you register with GI's Travel Insurance, in order to get assistance if needed and all the necessary information, like a country of interest report. Guidance on how to register can be found on the OPS Manual under Insurance.

Establishing situation awareness

You can download from the website of our insurer, a country of interest report that will help you with your situation awareness and understanding of the local context: <https://www.garda.com/crisis24>

In addition, the following websites also provide a reliable source of information:

- UK FCO's Foreign Travel Advice website (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>)
- US Department of State website (<https://www.state.gov/>)
- Australia's Foreign Affairs Smart Traveller website (<http://smartraveller.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>)

These open-source websites provide a very good understanding of the general situation in the country of interest and will cover all aspects of travel, from entry requirements, and recommended immunization, to prevalent safety and security concerns.

Localised information can be obtained through the browsing of local media websites and contacts who may be familiar with the field such as security personnel, humanitarian workers, journalists and locals generally. Fixers and/or paid informants can also be hired to develop situational awareness. This will give the traveller a better understanding of the context at play. The research should cover key power brokers, areas of influence, key issues at play, communicated and planned disruption to services, and the general situation in regard to safety and security. Research based on multiple sources will provide a balanced understanding of what one might come across.

The aim of this exercise is to establish a good understanding of the context and the initial support one can expect in the case of a safety / security incident. A few points to consider are the following:

- General classification of the country of interest.



- Main threats and concerns.
- Cultural norms and associated legal proceedings and outcomes.
- Own country representation in country¹ (Consulate / Embassy location and emergency numbers, establish contact prior to departure).
- Status of security / safety forces including distinguishing insignia and uniforms.
- Status of emergency services and respective telephone numbers.
- Status of main entry points (airports, sea – ports and border crossing points) and alternates.

If you feel that the information you have is not good enough then there are number of risk mitigation companies that can provide detailed analysis and associated services, such as crises response and kidnap and ransom plans.

Accommodation and equipment

Accommodation. The requirement for accommodation will depend on the assigned tasks and on the travelling requirement. Premises that have a secure compound and security screening points are advisable if possible. If not possible then a few points to consider are the following:

- Structurally sound and secure.
- Multiple access / exit points including working fire escape exits.
- Secure and lockable door.

Equipment. Equipment requirements will be driven by the tasks at hand. One needs to keep the amount of equipment to the working minimum requirement with a few spares to be able to complete the assignment at hand. Prior research may indicate the level of equipment support one may expect in country. The flashier the equipment the more attention one will attract. In some countries even photographic equipment that would generally be considered innocuous can attract the attention of border or intelligence agents.

Communication equipment

Although most countries will have workable GSM networks expect difficulties in connectivity once you move away from the beaten track. To maintain communications consider taking a satellite phone to ensure continuity of communication. There are a number of innovative solutions on the market such as coupling devices² that effectively turn your iPhone or Android device into a sat – phone allowing you to use your favourite apps and have access to in-country required contacts. There are also innovative Push to Talk (PTT)³ solutions that allow for complete communication via satellite network at speeds comparable to GSM networks. Prior to selecting a device / service provider always ensure that satellite coverage is available in the region you intend to travel to.

Electronic Devices. Electronic devices such as smart phones / tablets / laptops. Ideally one travels with equipment that can be ditched. Hence devices are to be ‘wiped’ or ‘cleaned’ from excessive data / contacts, or data that is not required for your work in country.

This will allow for easier navigation through check points both upon arrival or when travelling in country. There are precautionary measures that should become basic practice for all travellers whose electronic devices could be targeted for surveillance or extraction of information. Always work under the assumption that your electronic

1 When your own country is not represented inquire about any bilateral agreements or try and locate other embassies that may provide support.

2 Thuraya product - <http://www.thuraya.com/sites/all/modules/ckeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/thuraya-satsleeve/SatSleeve%20Brochure.pdf>

3 Iridium product - <https://www.iridium.com/products/iridium-extreme-ptt/>



communication is not entirely safe and may be monitored. Be extra careful to use strong passwords and avoid using the same password for multiple applications and/or devices. Always keep your devices as clean as possible. Accumulated data because of ongoing fieldwork should be stored on physical external hard drives and/or encrypted cloud storage systems. During sensitive fieldwork, particularly in hostile environments, make sure to delete from your electronic devices any sensitive and/or compromising data.

Tracking Devices. There are several tracking devices that are available on the market. Most will utilise GSM, satellite or a combination of both. The advantage of having such a device, either as a standalone or through a phone is that next of kin / colleagues can keep track of your whereabouts. The disadvantage is that the gadget may attract unwarranted attention especially when negotiating illegal check points or engaging with persons that may want to keep their location as unknown. Utilising such a device will be one's own judgement call and must be considered in light of the pros and cons that such a device will provide.

The Pros are:

- Tracking of own location that can be set at regular intervals.
- Tracking is received by next of kin / colleague anywhere in the world.
- Emergency button activation in the case of an incident.
- Ability to send emergency messages even when cell phone networks are down.

The Cons are:

- Most devices will need to be in a position that allows line of sight to the sky
- May be seen as an attempt to track the whereabouts of third parties / check points etc.

One of the better off the shelf devices is the following and will need to be configured before entering the country of interest:

- SPOT GEN 3 – (satellite driven system, works practically anywhere in the world <https://www.findmespot.eu/en/index.php?cid=100>)

Training and health

Training. Training is a core part of preparation. Through training one acquires a mindset and skillset that improves one's ability to gain awareness of surroundings and potential incidents and mitigate risks that present themselves. Furthermore, when travelling to countries where insecurity prevails training in first aid, awareness of weapons, ammunition and explosives, negotiating checkpoints and reacting to incidents may well and truly be lifesaving. Two training courses that may be considered and sometimes mandatory depending on the threat category of the country are the following:

Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) – exposes candidates to theoretical principles and practical exercises in preparation for deployment to hostile environments – Subjects covered will include, first aid, management during incidents, basic negotiation and actions on incidents such as:

- Illegal arrest and detention
- Bombings
- Violent crime
- Mass incident
- Contact (being fired at)
- Encountering unexploded ordnance (UXO).



Hostile Environment and Emergency First Aid Training (HEFAT) – Same as the above but with a greater emphasis on emergency first aid.

Health. Health issues may pose as great, if not greater, a risk as security challenges. Prior to departure it is recommended that travellers follow the recommended immunisation programme. The national health authorities will be able to advise on the required immunisation requirements. Failing this the World Health Organisation (<http://www.who.int/en/>) will be a useful source for information.

Dental and physical health need to be assessed and confirmed prior to deployment as the quality of services may be poor or unavailable altogether. It will always pay to organise a small first aid kit that will provide for some immediate relief and treatment for minor injuries. A trip to your local doctor will ensure that you are guided accordingly.

To be better prepared it is recommended that one notes the location of private / public medical facilities that provide western standard level of care. In this regard, it is also recommended that emergency medical insurance or a comprehensive travel insurance that includes emergency medical evacuation is taken out. Medical facilities may demand payment in advance and having insurance will ensure that one can seek medical care without having to fork out money in advance.

Tether and Next of Kin

Whether or not the research is being carried out in a hostile environment, it is good practice to let at least one trusted designated person know about your movements and to agree a regular check-in. The level of detail and frequency of the information relayed depends on the environment where the research is being carried out and the level of risk the fieldwork is assessed to carry.

There will be confidentiality constraints on the sort of information that can be relayed. However, in scenarios where there is a risk of abduction, your designated tether should have as much information as possible and should be informed of any changes of plan. He or she will need to have in place a protocol of who to call and in which sequence should something go wrong.

Being able to communicate is vital therefore researchers should make sure they have adequate communications equipment (such as satellite phones when necessary) and redundancy. In scenarios that entail an abduction risk, it is advisable to carry a tracking device that feeds information on your movements onto a platform accessible to the tether. There are commercial off-the-shelf systems, as discussed below, that perform this function and allow you to communicate via satellite simultaneously.

Prior to deploying abroad, it is recommended that a home contact is established. This can be a single point or multiple points of contact. The point of contact can also be your immediate next of kin. If the point of contact is not your immediate next of kin, then the point of contact should have the contact details of the next of kin.

Home contact allows for peace of mind and will be necessary to initiate emergency support, if and when required. Establish a single word confirmation code that all is ok, another to indicate that you are in trouble. Establish reporting times and communicate intentions in advance. If using a tracking device this process is done automatically once the service is activated and set up and the device is switched on once in country.

Provide your home contact with a tentative itinerary and contact telephone numbers for emergency support, such as travel and medical insurance, crises response specialists etc.

Documentation

Ensure that all travel documents are copied and covered in plastic (weather proofing). Multiple sets of good quality copies will ensure redundancy if original travel documents are damaged / lost / stolen or retained. Copies of documents can also be uploaded to a secure cloud to be utilised if and when required.



Passport, visa, entry stamp page, travel tickets, national identity card, professional identity card, driving licence and immunisation record are some of the documents that you may want to consider duplicating. It is a good idea to have the copies waterproofed to make them more resistant to wear and tear.

Make sure that copies are held in different bags / locations so that the redundancy is enhanced. Always present documents that are easiest to replace.

Be aware that some countries will immediately deny entry if the presence of an entry stamp to particular countries is present in your passport. You may wish to consider having a new passport issued if travel to previous countries may be seen as contentious by authorities in the intended country of travel.

Emergency medical assistance and crises response specialists

The Global Initiative has provided medical care, evacuation and emergency insurance for you, including for high-risk jurisdictions. Ensure you are carrying the details of the plan with you when you travel. They can be downloaded from the GI Operations Manual.

Crises Response. The Insurance provides for experts in this field have the ability to deliver emergency response that focuses on safety and security incidents; including kidnap and ransom. The same specialists will probably have specialists in the country of interest or relationships with other trusted service providers operating in country. This will allow them to provide more detailed analysis on the area or country of interest including a detailed threat assessment.

Fixers

It may be a requirement to engage a fixer to support your activities in the field. Try and utilise internationally recognised fixing agencies or those recommended to you by a trustworthy person. Fixers will help source support and facilitate interaction with the locals. Always remember that you own the decision-making process and therefore your fixer needs to understand that you need to be kept in the loop of all that is happening so that you can make decisions supported by the advice being provided by the fixer.

Security personnel

There may be a requirement to engage security personnel. Once again try and utilise companies that are internationally recognised or are recommended to you by a person of trust. There are many security companies, but one with local knowledge and experience will be better suited to providing the required level of security without being intrusive. Establish the requirement and demand to be briefed on security arrangements. Feel free to challenge proposed options.

As can be seen preparation will require a meticulous approach and will require time. The amount of time for preparation cannot be quantified, as each country will have its own requirements pertaining to the prevalent situation. However, keep in mind that time spent in preparation is never 'time wasted' and may make the difference when facing challenging situations.

Maintaining situation awareness in country

Upon arrival in country prioritise planning and preparation to update and maintain situation awareness garnered prior to arrival in country. The aim is to attune awareness to the localised context. Upon arrival try to blend in as best as is possible and do not attract unnecessary attention to yourself.



Some Dos and Don'ts to follow:

Do

- Familiarise yourself with the immediate surroundings, check the safety and security of your accommodation / premises. Think about access and exit routes, should an incident occur whilst you are in the building.
- Establish and maintain communication with Tether / NoK and communicate intentions of the next 24 - 48 hrs.
- Test connectivity of communications equipment; ensure that batteries are fully charged.
- Listen to the latest local and international news, paying particular attention to the local news.
- Test tracking equipment if available.
- Wear clothes that are fit for purpose, try and blend in.
- Prior to attending a meeting try and conduct reconnaissance of the location, paying particular attention to:
 - Routes and alternate routes to and from the location of the meeting.
 - Access to the venue.
 - Routes in and out in the case of a mass incident.
 - Places to take cover (hard walls, secure doors, sturdy furniture) in the case of a bomb or small arms attack.
- Change timing and venue to one of your choice at the last moment.
- Carry copies of your documents.
- Carry money in the smallest denomination possible.
- Travel as lightly as possible.
- Locate public transport stations / stops / ranks.
- Use 'clean' phone / tablet / laptop.

Don'ts

- Advertise your presence through the wearing of flashy clothes or behaving conspicuously.
- Display wealth through the wearing of expensive jewellery and accessories or demonstration of cash.
- Don't communicate plans in advance to anyone other than your intended meeting person and your home contact.
- Maintain a routine – vary timings for meals, movement.
- Stay out after last light.
- Use the same routes continuously.
- Use transport arrangements provided by random strangers.

Classification of risk in country of interest

Members of the management at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime who are responsible for staff and/or contractors carrying out fieldwork should seek to mitigate the risks and have a preparedness plan based on a risk classification of the area where the research is to be carried out.

Risk classification should be determined by the potential and capability of an event happening and the probability of that event being executed. Classification of risk should also take into consideration threat perception, and the appetite for assuming risk.



Classification of risk by country is challenging enough given the fluidity, the multitude of factors at play and the fast pace of information flow in the digital age. Indeed, it would be perfectly normal to have varying risk levels within a single region or country. To attempt a generalisation does not work as the classification may be skewed by forthcoming information, misinformation and other agendas.

With this in mind, the recommended risk classification should take into account:

- Assessed threat levels towards foreign / local professionals working in the field.
- Current status of law enforcement / security forces.
- Current status of emergency services.
- General status of rule of law.

Countries or regions will be classified in the following three categories:

- **Severe to High (Amber)** – Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is highly likely and militants / terrorists / criminals are actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians. Law enforcement entities are weak, hostile or non-existent. Emergency services in the area where the fieldwork is to be conducted are weak, hostile or non-existent and/or the area where fieldwork is to be carried out is difficult to access or inaccessible. This sort of scenario would include conflict zones with intense ongoing activity such as during a military siege or a clan war. General rule of law is extremely poor to non-existent.
- **Medium (Yellow)** - Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is a possibility but not likely. Militants / terrorists / criminals are not actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians but will seize targets of opportunity. Law enforcement and emergency services are present but not consistent. General rule of law is weak.
- **Low to Basic (Green)** – An Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is unlikely. Militants / terrorists / criminals are not actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians, with main threats being presented through civil unrest, corruption. Law enforcement and emergency services are present, have an acceptable level of coverage and are generally regarded to be effective. General rule of law is acceptable.

Threat Category	Severe - High (Amber)
Pre-Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training (HEAT or HEFAT) • Request Specialist Report indicating updated threat assessment specific to the area where the fieldwork will be carried out. • Put in place an evacuation plan with an agency capable of assisting in case of emergency and/or engage in-country security services, focusing on pick – up points, transport, accommodation, general security guidelines, communications, extraction options, incident contingencies, daily routine. • Procure and setup tracking device • Establish communication with embassy / diplomatic mission in country or in adjacent country. • Identify alternate options for access / exit into country of interest.



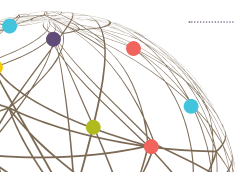
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RV with security point asap • Plan activities, taking note and consideration of specialist advice provided. • Activate tracking device and other comms equipment • Confirm presence with respective diplomatic missions • Avoid presenting oneself as a target • Limit unnecessary movement • Tune in to local news • Request updated situation awareness from security provider/s. • Do not communicate plans too much in advance and be prepared to change venue. • Communicate intentions and movement plans on a need to know basis. • Avoid establishing routines. • Prepare a grab bag with essential document and equipment only, containing essential items that will be required in an emergency • Ensure Home Contact comms are up and running, report in in line with agreed terms. • Avoid mass protests, improvised gatherings and situations of general mayhem. • If you do get caught up, seek to move away quickly, without drawing attention to yourself. • If you hear firearms going off try to get into cover, as a minimum conceal yourself from view.
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Sense Approach • Maintain updated situation awareness, multiple times a day, or as frequently as possible. • Security providers will provide options. Challenge and question, until you are satisfied with the arrangements – remember that you are the principal. • Ensure that messaging to home contact is in line with agreed terms. • Take time to review day's activities, to identify lessons that can be implemented in forthcoming events. • Risk appetite will depend on subjective experiences, gut feeling and indicators that something is not just right. • Whatever the incident, try and maintain calm – panic will confuse and make you act irrationally. • Fleeing from situations that may result in violence is preferred. Try and do so without drawing unnecessary attention. • If cornered, you can be submissive or fight back. If you are considering a fight, be prepared to fight for your life. • If you do come across unattended weapons or unexploded ordnance, move away and do not touch anything at all. • Keep in mind that following bomb attacks, likely mustering / staging points may be targeted to maximise the effect of the attack. These places need to be avoided.
Threat Definition	<p>Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is highly likely and militants / terrorists / criminals are actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians. Law enforcement entities are weak, hostile or non-existent. Emergency services in the area where the fieldwork is to be conducted are weak, hostile or non-existent and/or the area where fieldwork is to be carried out is difficult to access or inaccessible. This sort of scenario would include conflict zones with intense ongoing activity such as during a military siege or a clan war. General rule of law is extremely poor to non-existent.</p>

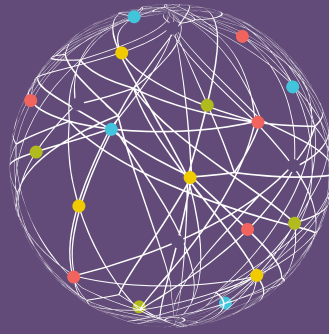


Threat Category Medium (Yellow)	
Pre-Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training (HEAT) • Procure and setup tracking device • Establish communication with embassy / diplomatic mission in country or in adjacent country. • Identify alternate options for access / exit into country of interest.
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan activities, taking note and consideration of specialist advice provided. • Confirm presence with respective diplomatic missions • Avoid presenting oneself as a target • Limit unnecessary movement • Tune in to local news • Do not communicate plans too much in advance and be prepared to change venue. • Communicate intentions and movement plans on a need to know basis. • Avoid establishing routines. • Prepare a grab bag with essential document and equipment only, containing essential items that will be required in an emergency • Ensure Home Contact comms are up and running, report in line with agreed terms. • Avoid mass protests, improvised gatherings and situations of general mayhem.
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Sense Approach • Maintain updated situation awareness • Ensure that messaging to home contact is in line with agreed terms. • Take time to review day's activities, to identify lessons that can be implemented in forthcoming events. • Risk appetite will depend on subjective experiences, gut feeling and indicators that something is not just right. • Whatever the incident, try and maintain calm – panic will confuse and make you act irrationally. • Fleeing from situations that may result in violence is preferred. Try and do so without drawing unnecessary attention. • If cornered, you can be submissive or fight back. If you are considering a fight, be prepared to fight for your life. • If you do come across unattended weapons or unexploded ordnance, move away and do not touch anything at all. • Keep in mind that following bomb attacks, likely mustering / staging points may be targeted to maximise the effect of the attack. These places need to be avoided.
Threat Definition	<p>Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is a possibility but not likely. Militants / terrorists / criminals are not actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians but will seize targets of opportunity. Law enforcement and emergency services are present but not consistent. General rule of law is weak.</p>



Threat Category Low – Basic (Green)	
Pre-Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct first aid training • Establish communication with embassy / diplomatic mission in country or in adjacent country. • Conduct own research about country of interest • Ensure vaccinations in line with national / international health recommendations • Select suitable accommodation options • Set-up equipment – wiping / cleaning, setting up / pairing tracking devices / satellite phones. • Confirm GSM / satellite coverage • Brief NoK and establish home contact – communicate intended itinerary and establish prowords for ‘all ok’; ‘minor difficulty / delay but nothing to worry about’; ‘emergency – support required’ as a minimum • Take out travel / medical insurance – communicate policy details and telephone # to NoK / home contact. • Prepare multiple, waterproofed copies of relevant documents (travel, ID, professional) • Confirm travel itinerary • Organise small First Aid kit in line with training level, and other travel regulations • Procure clothes and equipment that are fit for purpose, ensure proper fit and worn in.
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan activities, taking note and consideration of specialist advice provided. • Confirm presence with respective diplomatic missions • Avoid presenting oneself as a target • Tune in to local news • Do not communicate plans too much in advance and be prepared to change venue. • Communicate intentions and movement plans on a need to know basis. • Avoid establishing routines. • Prepare a grab bag with essential document and equipment only, containing essential items that will be required in an emergency • Ensure Home Contact comms are up and running, report in line with agreed terms. • Avoid mass protests, improvised gatherings and situations of general mayhem.
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Sense Approach • Gain and maintain updated situation awareness • Ensure that messaging to home contact is in line with agreed terms. • Take time to review day’s activities, to identify lessons that can be implemented in forthcoming events. • Risk appetite will depend on subjective experiences, gut feeling and indicators that something is not just right. • Whatever the incident, try and maintain calm – panic will confuse and make you act irrationally. • Fleeing from situations that may result in violence is preferred. Try and do so without drawing unnecessary attention. • If cornered, you can be submissive or fight back. If you are considering a fight, be prepared to fight for your life. • If you do come across unattended weapons or unexploded ordnance, move away and do not touch anything at all. • Keep in mind that following bomb attacks, likely mustering / staging points may be targeted to maximise the effect of the attack. These places need to be avoided.
Threat Definition	An Attack or acts of aggression against field workers is unlikely. Militants / terrorists / criminals are not actively targeting field workers and innocent civilians, with main threats being presented through civil unrest, corruption.





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