



# ROAD SAFETY IN AFRICA

SECURITY BEST PRACTICES FOR CARJACKING, THEFT, AND ROAD SAFETY



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# Overview

- **Travel by road in Africa is uniformly hazardous due to:**
  - Constant threat of banditry/carjacking/kidnapping
  - Poorly maintained roads and infrastructure (e.g. unpaved roads, poorly marked signage)
  - Road hazards (e.g. pedestrians, livestock, abandoned vehicles)
  - Lack of trusted law enforcement (e.g. bribe requests, illegal checkpoints, traffic rules poorly enforced)
- **All risk factors are magnified during late night or early morning travel or when traveling to rural or remote regions**







# Common Banditry, Carjacking, and Kidnapping Methods

- Several commonly reported tactics used by road criminals are:
  - "The Bump"- Criminal drives behind the victim's car and bumps them. When the victim stops to pull over, thinking it was an accident, the criminal then assaults the victim. Do not stop if a car hits you from behind.
  - "Good Samaritan/Ruse"- Criminals stage a scene to entice drivers to stop (injury, broken vehicle, etc.) or signal to the driver to pull over (flashing headlights, waving arms, signaling, etc). The crime occurs once the victim's vehicle stops or pulls over.





# Common Banditry, Carjacking, and Kidnapping Methods

*"The Trap"*- Carjackers surveil the victim over a period of time. When the victim pulls into a driveway or garage, the criminals block them in from behind and rapidly surround the vehicle.



*Roadblocks*- Roadblocks operated by criminals are common source of income throughout Africa, sometimes masquerading as police. They stop and ask drivers for cash bribes or valuables and could resort to violence if the vehicle refuses. Roadblocks can consist of officially constructed gates to vehicles to large rocks laid across the street.





# Crime Avoidance and Mitigation: Plan Ahead

## Plan ahead of time to avoid or account for:

- High-Crime Areas (HCAs)
  - *How do HCAs change based on the time of day/day of week?*
  - *Refer to OSAC Crime & Safety Reports, State Department Travel Warnings, local news reports*
- Rural or less traveled roads
  - *Where do motorists make frequent stops and become easy to trap?*
- Residential roads
  - *Where do criminals anticipate large numbers of vehicles stopping?*



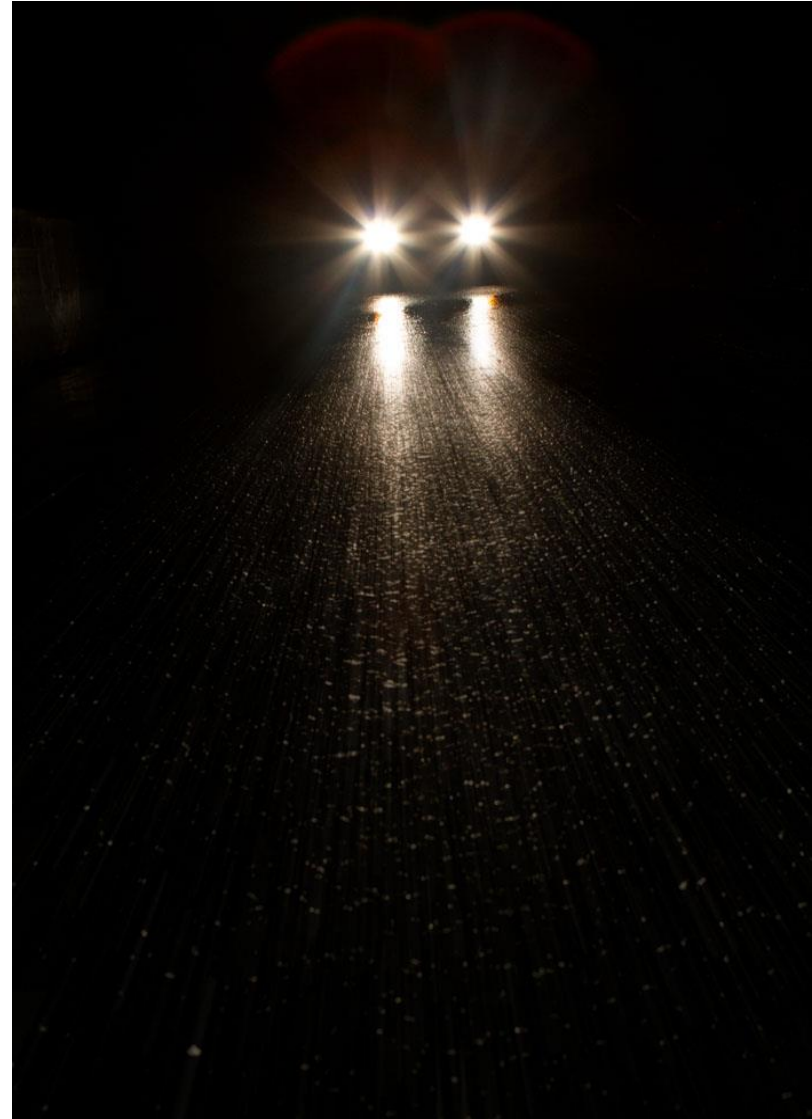




# Crime Avoidance and Mitigation: Be Proactive

## Low-level security measures can minimize your risk:

- Lock all car doors and windows
- Contact OSAC & the RSO for security trends
  - *Crime behaviors and local norms can differ by location*
- Always carry a mode of communication to report security incidents against you or others
- Do not stop to help or assist anyone
  - *Instead, report a motorist in distress to police*
- Watch for suspicious activity (e.g. cars following you, people watching you)
  - *If followed, call ahead and have the guards open the gate beforehand so you avoid stopping*
- Always have a way out!
  - *Leave one and a half car lengths between you and the car in front, wait on the street while waiting for a gated driveway to open*





# If you are the victim of a road crime...

## The goal is to survive, not thwart the criminals!

- Avoid antagonizing or forcing criminals to act
  - Speeding away, quick movement, not exiting the vehicle or paying the bribe can lead to the criminal becoming more aggressive and likely to resort to violence
- Seek a non-confrontational solution
  - Consider when deciding on a solution:
    - Mental state of attacker (agitated, angry, calm, intoxicated, etc.)
    - Number of attackers
    - Number and kinds of weapons used by criminals
    - Avenues of escape
- Familiarize yourself with the State Department page on [how to act in a carjacking or roadside robbery](#)





# If you are the victim of a road crime...

- Travel to a safe location immediately
- Inform your organization's security manager
- Report the crime to the police:
  - *Describe the event, attackers, their vehicle, and your vehicle in detail*
  - *If you aren't sure of a detail, don't guess*
- Report the crime to the RSO
- Submit an [Incident Report](#) at OSAC.gov



*Reporting an incident allows other OSAC members to see the anonymous report while allowing OSAC staff to contact your organization for follow up information if needed*





# Police & Military Roadblocks



- Roadblocks, both illegal and official, are unavoidable when traveling on roads in Africa
  - *When budgeting operating costs, account for extra cash to use at roadblocks*
- Official checkpoints are commonly placed on major roads or highways into cities during daytime hours
- Traffic build up and accidents often occur behind checkpoints
- Random vehicle searches; delays; and requests for various paperwork, licensing, and permits are extremely common
  - *Compliance with demands is often the quickest and safest method to pass some roadblocks*
  - *Always carry photocopies of required documents*  
*(e.g. driver's license, passport biodata page, visas, permits, certificates)*



# Road Safety

- According to the [World Bank](#), Africa has 2% of the world's registered vehicles, but experiences 16% of global traffic fatalities
- Routine accidents involving foreigners can rapidly escalate in severity due to the attention they attract

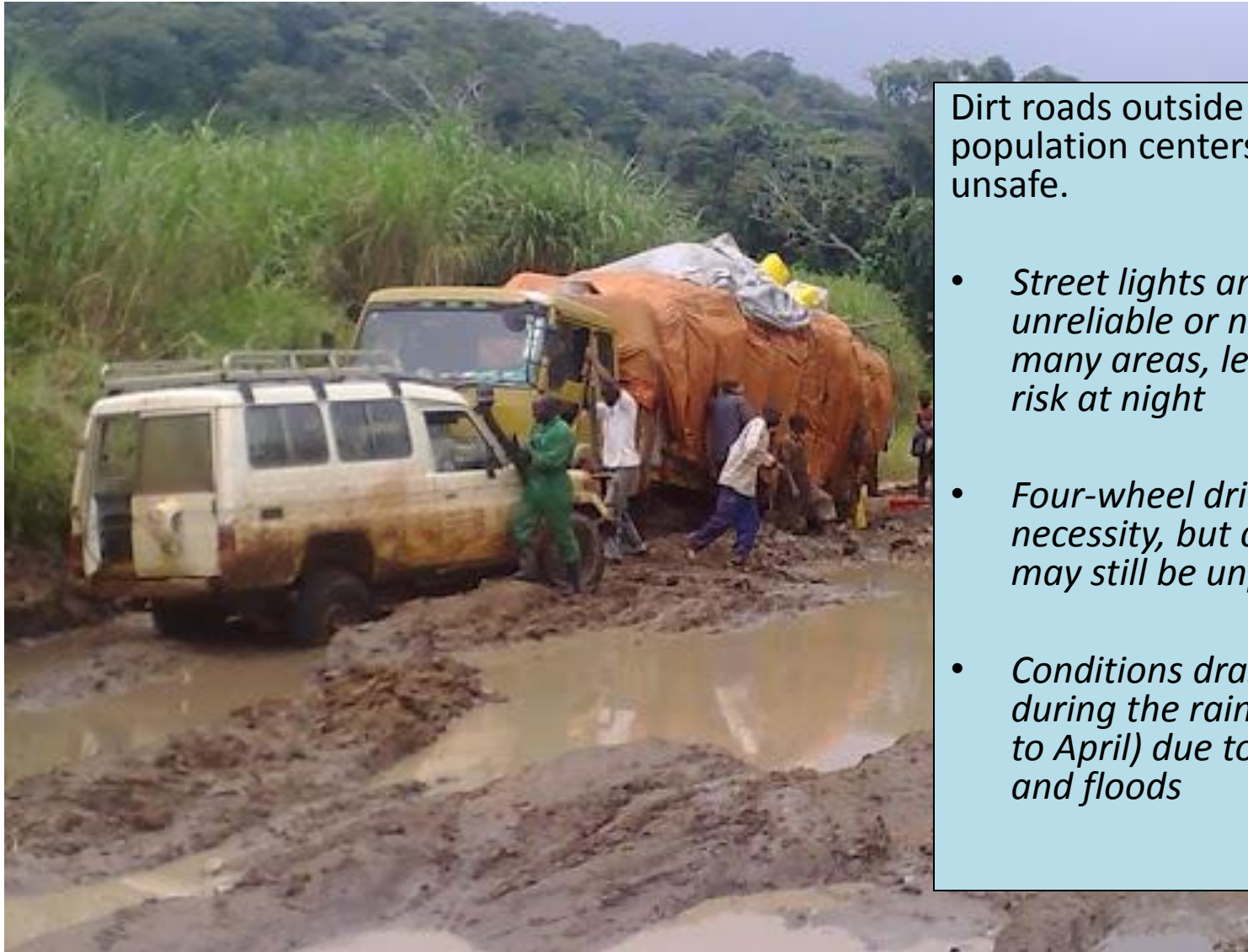


*Vigilantism or mob violence can break out depending on the time and location of an accident, as locals can assume the foreigner is at fault. U.S. government-affiliated personnel in the past have been assaulted in this manner after a routine traffic accident.*





# Road Conditions



Dirt roads outside or between major population centers can be extremely unsafe.

- *Street lights and signage are unreliable or nonexistent in many areas, leading to increased risk at night*
- *Four-wheel drive vehicles are a necessity, but certain conditions may still be unpassable*
- *Conditions drastically decrease during the rainy season (October to April) due to erosion, debris, and floods*





# OSAC's Best Practices for Road Travel

- Regularly train drivers how to avoid accidents, act at checkpoints, and handle ambushes or robbery attempts
- Require drivers to report in at certain time intervals or locations along route
- Have sufficient fuel on hand for emergencies
- Check routes with other organizations in the area
- Do not carry bank cards unless necessary, use paper currency
- Contact the local RSO at the consulate or Embassy for country-specific security trends





# Resources

- Contact OSAC's Africa team at [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov) for regional specifics
- Download and read your country's [Crime & Safety Report](#) before you go
- Read the State Department pamphlet ["Carjacking—Don't be a Victim"](#)